

Craig L. Frisby · Richard E. Redding  
William T. O'Donohue · Scott O. Lilienfeld  
*Editors*

# Ideological and Political Bias in Psychology

Nature, Scope, and Solutions

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# Chapter 1

## Ideological and Political Bias in Psychology: An Introduction



Craig L. Frisby, Richard E. Redding, and William T. O'Donohue

A longstanding problem is present in all aspects of contemporary psychology, including undergraduate and graduate education, research, policy and advocacy work, and clinical practice. That problem is a pervasive ideological and political bias.

Bias can be defined, in part, as the systematic distortion of results or findings from the true state of affairs, or any of several varieties of processes leading to this systematic distortion. In everyday usage, 'bias' often implies "the presence of emotional and political prejudices that influence conclusions and decisions" (Oxford Reference, 2022). Bias can also denote "a tendency to believe that some people, ideas, etc., are better than others that usually results in treating some people unfairly" (Morgan, n.d.). In this last sense, bias is akin to favoritism.

The claim that bias exists in psychology – as a distortion of research results or in the unfair treatment of individuals – is not new for psychology. To illustrate, the classic book *Even the Rat Was White* (Guthrie, 2003) correctly claimed that there was an historical bias in favor of Whites in the demographics of the field, the research questions advanced by researchers, and findings derived from such research. To cite another example, feminist psychologists have claimed that mental health constructs and psychological practices often display a gender bias that fails to adequately understand and meet the needs of women (e.g., Brown, 2018).

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Admittedly, bias can be somewhat difficult to measure objectively. In the abstract, when bias means a distorted result, this implies that the unbiased result is known. The quantitative measurement of a construct may be biased because of a deviation from the true score. For example, a bathroom scale that is biased toward higher readings can be shown to be inaccurate by comparing readings with a scale known to be accurate. However, this sort of direct comparison often cannot be done in many of the contexts we describe – e.g., the true, unbiased results of the experiment are not known. All that is actually known is that the circumstances seem biased or contain elements that seem to be consistent with bias occurring – e.g., the experimenters all share the same set of political beliefs, or the measures used seem to be imbued with their favorite ideology (such as using a right-wing authoritarianism scale but not a left-wing one, or using a symbolic racism scale that partly defines racism as being opposed to certain political policies); their hypotheses are consistent with their political commitments; or the results are described and interpreted in a manner that amplifies findings consistent with these biases while downplaying or explaining away findings that are not.

This volume investigates ideological and political biases in psychology. “Political bias” overlaps with ideological bias, but is generally associated with a particular political viewpoint or affiliation, and it can come from any position on the political spectrum. “Ideological bias” reflects something broader in scope. A complex set of ideas and attitudes related to human nature, sex roles, macro- and micro-economics, morality, religion, the nature of freedom, science, and so on can all be encompassed by the term “ideological.” However, ideological and political views are often linked, with people choosing their political orientations and party affiliations based on what will best effectuate their ideology. For example, the ideological belief in egalitarianism correlates with a liberal or progressive political orientation. Because most psychologists believe in equity and egalitarianism (Honeycutt & Jussim, 2022; Redding, 2023b), their political views, in turn, are usually liberal or progressive (Redding, 2023b).

## The Roots of Ideological and Political Conflicts

Factor analysis is a statistical procedure that reduces a large set of correlated variables to a smaller set of unobserved, underlying variables that best explains, or accounts for, common variance in the original data set (Gorsuch, 1983). The eminent economist and social philosopher Thomas Sowell conducted a “conceptual” (qualitative) factor analysis on the nature of ideologies across a number of historical periods, and concluded that their essence can be reduced to dichotomous core visions that are in direct conflict. He called these two visions the “unconstrained” versus the “constrained” visions (Sowell, 2007). Sowell characterizes the “*unconstrained vision*” as the view that human nature is fundamentally good, that humans are morally perfectible, and that decentralized institutions such as markets cannot be trusted. According to this vision, some people attain the status of “experts,” who

are so much more intellectually, educationally, and morally advanced than their peers that they can be trusted to make a wide range of decisions for others (particularly those who are perceived to be not so advanced). On the other hand, Sowell defines the “*constrained vision*” as the view that human nature is deeply flawed, mired in self-interest, relatively unchanging, and not perfectible. This vision also values the accumulated wisdom over time of large numbers of average people (as opposed to wisdom being centralized within a few elite experts), and honors time-tested ideas and institutions as opposed to utopian, untested projects (i.e., what the philosopher Sir Karl Popper called “piecemeal social engineering”); Popper, 2020).

Relatedly, Haidt’s moral foundations theory (which is supported by empirical evidence) explains the moral concerns underlying these two visions as being significantly related to conservatism and liberalism (e.g., Haidt, 2012; Haidt & Graham, 2007). Particularly with respect to social issues (which often touch on moral values), conservatives tend to be driven by concerns about respect for authority (and traditional institutions and values), sanctity/purity, and loyalty; whereas liberals are driven more by concerns about fairness/equity and caring (see also Lakoff, 2016). Personality research also shows that conservatives tend to be more conscientious (see Jost et al., 2003), which seems to parallel their emphasis on personal responsibility as opposed to equity (see Lakoff, 2016). Liberals, on the other hand, are more receptive to new experiences (Jost et al., 2003), which may parallel their willingness to entertain new ways of doing things rather than relying on traditional institutions and values.

The issues psychologists study, how they study them, and how they interpret and apply research findings, will often differ as a function of their vision or ideology (with most psychologists subscribing to the unconstrained vision of humanity, e.g., see discussion in Frisby, 2018; Redding, 2022). As examples, if human nature is believed to be perfectible, then psychology will include initiatives designed to rid popular culture of its besetting sins (e.g., racism, sexism, ableism, etc.). Psychologists embracing different visions can also differ on how they prioritize the qualities constituting human nature (e.g., which is more important – intelligence or altruism?); on the malleability of human behavior (can someone who has an anti-social personality disorder change?); on morality (is abortion a woman’s natural right or does it constitute murder of a human life?); on metaphysical issues (is the belief in God reasonable or just an unscientific irrationality?); and on science (should claims of systemic racism or microaggressions be tested by science, or is skepticism about these issues associated with racism itself?; e.g., see Lilienfeld, 2017; Williams, 2020). However, it is not necessary to assume that biased persons *necessarily* have to act in discriminatory ways that unfairly harm others – as biased decisions can favor some (e.g., in making hiring or tenure decisions; in reviewing articles or grant applications).

Anyone or any system can display ideological or political bias, which may be intentional but likely more often unintentional, including among psychologists who study bias! In fact, more intelligent and highly educated people tend to be more prone to confirmation bias “since they are particularly good at enlisting arguments and evidence to bolster their preferred views” (Honeycutt & Jussim, 2022). Indeed, people are often resistant to changing their political views or to having those views

challenged, because they are based on their underlying ideologies and moral values. Political views are often an essential part of people's identity. Studies show that people's political views have a sizeable genetic component and are linked to basic personality and cognitive style traits and early experiences (Redding & Cobb, 2023).

With the field dominated by the political left, there is simply much more opportunity for bias to come from this source. At this juncture, some readers may reasonably object: "This is hypocritical! How can you argue against the evils of bias when in fact this text identifies most bias in psychology as coming from the political left? Wouldn't it be more ethically responsible and less biased for 50% of the chapters to discuss examples of political bias from the left, and 50% to discuss examples of political bias from the right? Wouldn't this constitute a more substantive display of unbiased scholarship?"

The easy answer to this charge is "no." If it is indeed true that bias among psychologists is overwhelmingly associated with vision of the political left, but if editors of a text addressing this problem portray bias as emanating equally from the political left and right (for purposes of appearing even-handed), then the editors would actually be guilty of bias themselves. A 50% bias from the left/50% bias from the right portrayal would be a *distortion of the true state of affairs* – which, as stated previously, constitutes the essential definition of bias. If, for example, a book claims that there is an equal representation of males and females in the nursing profession but in reality there is not (e.g., see Zippia, 2020), then this would exemplify biased reporting – independent of social attitudes related to the desirability of having more male representation in nursing (Barrett-Landau & Henle, 2014). Indeed, few psychologists would dispute that the field has considerable and pervasive liberal or progressive sensibilities (e.g., see Duarte et al., 2015, and the many commentaries that follow it), though they might say that this is simply because liberal views are the scientifically correct or moral views. But as many chapters in this book show, the prevailing liberal sociopolitical orthodoxies in the field simply reflect the views and biases of those who are in the field – i.e., mostly liberals or progressives. To be sure, if most psychologists were conservative, the field would tilt to the right!

## **Liberal or Progressive Political Bias in Psychology**

Numerous surveys show that about 90–95% of psychologists are liberal, progressive, or socialist/Marxist. In academia the imbalance is even greater, with professors and graduate students on the left hugely outnumbering those on the right by about 15 to 1 (Redding, 2023b)). Professors' political views influence their choice of research topics and perspectives, and it is human nature to frame research agendas and interpret findings in ways that confirm one's political beliefs and/or disconfirm opposing beliefs (Honeycutt & Jussim, 2022; Redding, 2012). Likewise, psychologists' political beliefs influence what they teach, how they teach it, and the perspectives they include and exclude in their teaching. It also influences their clinical practice and advocacy efforts. We focus here, and in much of the book, on

psychology professors (and their research) because it is they who, by far, have the greatest influence on the science and profession of psychology. They do most of the basic and applied research in the field, teach future psychologists (who then go on to become researchers or practitioners), and are the ones most active in the legal and policy advocacy efforts of organizations like the APA and in their development of professional practice guidelines, ethical codes, and accreditation standards. In addition to influencing their research, teaching, and applied work, psychologists' liberal biases also affect how they treat others within the profession and how they evaluate their work. Consider that Inbar and Lammers (2012) conducted a survey of the *Society for Personality and Social Psychology* and found that 19% of psychologists reported that they would have a bias against a conservative-leaning paper; 24% against a conservative-leaning grant application; 14% against inviting a conservative to a symposium; and 38% against choosing a conservative as a future colleague. Subsequent studies have yielded similar findings (Redding, 2023b).

Data such as these (and there is far more; see Redding, 2023b) imply, and as many of the chapters in this book demonstrate, that there may be very little conservative bias in psychology but significant liberal and/or progressive bias. This has the following implications:

1. Conservative (or at least non-liberal/progressive) undergraduate psychology students may feel alienated by the political biases of their faculty.
2. It may be more difficult for conservative (or at least non-liberal/progressive) graduate applicants to be accepted into academia.
3. It may be more difficult for conservative (or at least non-liberal/progressive) psychologists to be hired in academia.
4. It may be more difficult for conservatives (or at least non-liberals/progressives) to succeed in academia – e.g., research the questions they are interested in, obtain grant funding to support that research, and publish it in good journals.
5. Conservative (or at least non-liberal/progressive) psychologists may receive less social support than their liberal colleagues.
6. Conservative (or at least non-liberal/progressive) psychologists may have an increased likelihood of negative judgments about their character, morality, and intelligence than their more liberal colleagues.
7. Conservative (or at least non-liberal/progressive) psychologists may be more likely to feel that they cannot exercise their free speech rights or academic freedom (O'Donohue & Fisher, 2022).
8. Conservative (or at least non-liberal/progressive) psychologists may be more prone to sanctions from administrators who see their conservative views as unwanted and problematic.

The concern here is not simply that few psychologists of conservative, libertarian, or centrist persuasions offer their diverse points of view. Rather, the problem is that these alternative points of view are difficult to express, whether in teaching, research, advocacy, or clinical practice, due to the innumerable peer and professional pressures on psychologists not to do so (Honeycutt & Jussim, 2012; Redding, 2023a, 2023b). These alternative views can be discouraged, censored, or marginalized.

Doing so is often justified with claims that these views are offensive, prejudicial, morally repugnant, unscientific, or just generally “beyond the pale.” Too few stand up for free speech rights when, for example, conservative speakers are canceled or even attacked (O’Donohue & Fisher, 2022).

A recent example provides a salient illustration. Jordan Peterson is a well-known and distinguished professor of psychology at the University of Toronto who has taken much heat from left/progressive commentators for his contrarian views on a range of issues. Peterson recently resigned from his tenured position (Miller, 2022), and among the reasons he gave for his resignation was the following (Peterson, 2022, emphasis added):

My graduate students face a negligible chance of being offered university research positions, despite stellar scientific dossiers. This is partly because of Diversity, Inclusivity and Equity mandates (my preferred acronym: DIE). *My students are also partly unacceptable precisely because they are my students. I am academic persona non grata, because of my unacceptable philosophical positions.* And this isn’t just some inconvenience. These facts rendered my job morally untenable. How can I accept prospective researchers and train them in good conscience knowing their employment prospects to be minimal?

Our point here is not to endorse Peterson’s views on these issues. But his resignation does provide an example of the pressures and discrimination that non-liberal professors – who challenge the prevailing ideological and political orthodoxies – often feel. Indeed, Jussim (2012) observes that left-leaning psychologists are “privileged” within psychology. Following more traditional claims of privilege with respect to race, Jussim observes that left-leaning psychologists experience the following privileges (p. 506–507):

1. I can avoid spending time with colleagues who mistrust me because of my politics.
2. If I apply for a job, I can be confident that my political views are more likely to be an asset than liability.
3. I can be confident that the political beliefs I hold and the political candidates I support will not be routinely mocked by my colleagues.
4. I can be pretty confident that if I present results at colloquia and conferences that validate my political views, I will not be mocked or insulted by my colleagues.
5. I can be pretty sure that my students who share my political views and go on to academic jobs will focus on being competent teachers and scientists and will not have to worry about hiding their politics from senior faculty.
6. I can paint caricature-like pictures based on the most extreme and irrational beliefs of those who differ from me ideologically without feeling any penalty for doing so.
7. I can criticize colleagues’ research that differs from mine on issues such as race, sex, or politics without fear of being accused of being authoritarian, racist, or sexist.
8. I can systematically misinterpret, misrepresent, or ignore research in such a manner as to sustain my political views and be confident that such misinterpretations, misrepresentations, or oversights are unlikely to be recognized by my colleagues.
9. If I work in politically charged areas, such as race, gender, class, and politics – and if my papers, grants, or symposia are rejected – I need not ask each time if political bias led to the rejection.
10. I will feel welcomed and “normal” in the usual walks of my academic life.
11. I will not have to worry whether citations to and impact of my scholarship will be artificially diluted because most of my colleagues do not like its political implications.

12. I do not have to worry that reviewers and editors will require a higher standard to publish or fund my research than they need to publish or fund research with implications for the opposite ideology.
13. To publish my research demonstrating moral failures or cognitive biases among those with different ideological beliefs than mine, I will not need to consider camouflaging my results or sugar-coating the conclusions to avoid offending the political sensitivities of reviewers.
14. I can be confident that vanishingly few of my colleagues will be publishing “scientific” articles claiming that people holding political beliefs like mine are particularly deficient in intelligence and morality.

**Scholarship on Ideological and Political Bias in Psychology** This book is the latest contribution in the evolution of a scholarly program to explore the nature and operation of ideological and political biases in the science and profession of psychology, along with a reform movement that challenges the field to overcome these biases. One of the first writers on the topic was Phillip Tetlock, who pointed out the problem of liberal bias in social and political psychology and the ways in which the field characterized liberals (“flatteringly”) and conservatives (“unflatteringly”) (Tetlock, 1994; Tetlock & Mitchell, 1993). Richard Redding’s (2001) *American Psychologist* article, *Sociopolitical diversity in psychology: The case for pluralism*, was the first piece to comprehensively outline the ways in which the science and profession of psychology reflected an unhealthy insularity because it lacked socio-political diversity. He challenged the discipline to reform itself to be welcoming and inclusive of socio-politically diverse people and ideas, arguing that it was in the discipline’s own interest to do so, as well as in the interests of the consumers of psychological services and research. Next came Inbar and Lammers (2012) study documenting pervasive, substantial, and overt discrimination against conservatives and conservative ideas in psychology vis-a-vis faculty hiring, grant reviewing, and peer reviewing. Subsequent studies (Honeycutt & Freberg, 2017; Kauffmann, 2021) have largely replicated and extended those findings. Duarte et al.’s (2015) *Brain and Behavioral Sciences* article, *Political Diversity Will Improve Social Psychological Science*, reviewed the ways in which researcher bias has skewed research in social psychology and explained how diversifying the field socio-politically would improve psychological science. A number of commentaries about the article were also published in the journal issue. Crawford and Jussim’s (2018) edited volume, *Politics in Social Psychology*, discussed biases in research and against conservative or non-liberal psychologists in social psychology, one of the most politicized fields in psychology.

With these important developments having set the stage, there is now a growing body of scholarship on ideological bias in psychology. There also is a critical mass of researchers and practitioners concerned about the growing ideological and political bias in the field. This includes some of the most distinguished scholars in psychology, many of whom have contributed chapters to this comprehensive volume. Readers will note that authors represent a wide variety of parent disciplines, and their perspectives on bias are wide-ranging as well.

## Text Overview

The book is organized into five parts. *Part I, Bias and the Politics of Psychology*, provides the foundation for understanding the ideological and political views most prevalent in psychology. Frisby's opening two chapters set the stage by defining the concept of bias and explaining the variety of political ideologies operating in American society, and how political debates are represented in psychology. Research shows that liberals and conservatives have roughly the same degree of bias toward the other's political views (e.g., Ditto et al., 2018). But in psychology and among psychologists, most of the bias (at least nowadays) will come from the liberal or progressive end of the spectrum. This is simply because, as Redding shows in his review of the substantial data on the political views of psychologists, the profession skews overwhelmingly to the left ideologically. He goes on to discuss how this imbalance came to be and why and how it acts to discourage non-liberals from entering the profession. Honeycutt and Jussim then describe exactly how those biases operate and function, providing a theoretical and empirical review of the subject, drawing on insights from social psychology while also using that discipline to provide some examples.

In *Part II, Specific Applications of Bias in Psychology*, the chapters zoom in to provide a closer examination of specific processes – affecting all aspects of American psychology – that introduce bias that clouds and obscures the search for truth. These include limitations on free speech, bias against particularly religious researchers, how the study of prejudice is conceptualized, and how the construct of multicultural psychology can either intentionally or unintentionally become a magnet for politicization. Biased processes in psychology occur within particular contexts, which is a broad topic addressed in *Part III, Biased Processes in Professional Psychology, Education, and Publishing*. This part showcases chapters by authors, some of whom have spent their career as APA insiders, who eventually became frustrated at the level of bias observed within the organization. Other authors turn their attention to political bias as observed in undergraduate psychology teaching, and whether this affects students' political views. Behind-the-scenes decision-making as to what articles get published or receive fair reviews post publication is the topic of three chapters within this part.

Bias in psychology is widespread, meaning that it is not limited only to particular subdisciplines (although bias is more prevalent in some subfields than others, often because the very nature of what the subfield studies either does or does not lend itself to political bias). *Part IV, Scope of Political Bias* explores bias in many of the subdisciplines of psychology (developmental, counseling/clinical, educational/school, cognitive, social), with chapters on the most contentious and bias-plagued topics in psychology. As has been the case in society generally, issues relating to race, gender, sexuality, and sociopolitical attitudes tend to be the most contentious or taboo topics in psychology (Walsh, 2017), along with research on intelligence. Also highly contentious are research or practices that challenge the egalitarian and politically liberal worldviews shared by most (particularly academic) psychologists

today. Clark et al. (2023) surveyed 581 academic psychologists in the top 100 psychology programs in the United States about what they considered to be the most “taboo” topics for study and conclusions to draw from research in psychology. They found that “[o]verwhelmingly, the most taboo conclusions involved genetic, evolutionary, or biological explanations for group differences in socially important outcomes (e.g., intelligence, education and career outcomes, SES, criminal behavior), and particularly in domains in which women underperform relative to men, or where Black people underperform relative to White people.” (pg x).

We begin with the applied fields of behavioral health and counseling/clinical psychology. One of the many goals of behavioral health is to address the psychological, behavioral, and cultural factors contributing to health and illness, as well as health disparities. Schimmels et al. discuss the often politically charged nature of these issues. Using the clinical subfield of counseling psychology as the best example, Redding and Satel show how progressive political agendas have come to dominate the field, with many therapists now oriented toward conceptualizing and treating client problems from a progressive perspective, as a consequence of the social justice focus of many graduate programs today. The field of (applied) developmental psychology is represented by the chapter on the effects of parental punishment on children. Larzelere et al. review research on the topic of whether or not punishment techniques used by parents are effective. They discuss how an APA task force concluding that corporeal punishment was harmful and ineffective misrepresented punishment research, ostensibly because the desirability of the conclusion outweighed a nonbiased evaluation of the available evidence.

Next, Mackiel, Link, and Geher describe the hostile reception that the relatively new subdiscipline of evolutionary psychology has received in the field. Many psychologists prefer to think that “evolution stops at the neck,” since evolutionary psychology often challenges psychologists’ egalitarian worldview.

Social psychology is a subfield that has focused on many highly contentious social issues (e.g., racial prejudice, gender bias, discrimination). Some social psychologists and other psychologists often use that research in policy and legal advocacy (e.g., on affirmative action, racial and gender discrimination, death penalty). Social and political psychologists have conducted much research over the years on authoritarianism and the conservative personality, with this research generally painting an unflattering psychological picture of conservatives. Costello focuses on authoritarianism, explaining how the conceptualization, operationalization, and measurement of this construct have been strongly influenced by political bias. Not surprisingly, therefore, psychologists found authoritarianism only on the right. Yet recent research shows that there is just as much authoritarianism on the left.

Cognitive psychology is the subject of the next set of chapters. It begins with Miller, London, and Loftus’ chapter on the uses and misuses of memory science in high-profile cases of sexual misconduct, using the Supreme Court nomination hearings of Brett Kavanaugh and Clarence Thomas as examples. Loftus is the leading authority on false and recovered memories and eyewitness memory, and is among the most influential psychologists in the history of psychology. They show how

assessments of the validity of the sexual misconduct allegations were driven as much by liberal or conservative political agendas as they were by the facts.

Studies of intelligence are concerned with the following questions: what it is, how it is measured, whether current measures are biased against certain groups, whether there are group differences in how intelligence is distributed in the general population, whether there have been changes of mean intelligence levels across time, and if so what may cause this, and if scholars should even study such questions. These questions touch on the most controversial and complex set of issues that psychology has confronted. Those on each side of these issues accuse the other side of bias. This volume, therefore, includes several chapters on intelligence.

In particular, Yakusko's chapter on the role that eugenics has played in intelligence research provides an eye-opening history. She provides a history of the eugenic and racist sentiments held by many of the early researchers in intelligence and differential psychology. While it is unclear the extent to which their views/biases affected the trustworthiness of their research findings, it is useful to bear this history in mind when considering their work, which served as the foundation for contemporary work in this area. Yakusko suggests that eugenicist and racist biases may also influence contemporary intelligence researchers and their research.

Indeed, recent events have brought Yakusko's warnings into sharp relief. On May 23, 2022, there was a mass shooting by an 18-year-old white supremacist at a grocery store in Buffalo, New York, that killed ten people. The shooter wrote a "manifesto" that he posted online, in which he cited work by several prominent researchers on the heritability of intelligence and group differences in intelligence. Woodley discusses the empirical knowledge base on the heritability of intelligence, the ways in which he and his fellow scholars believe that such research is mischaracterized and unfairly attacked - not just in the media but by many psychologists pursuing an "egalitarian activist" ideological agenda. We invite readers to compare Yakusko's perspective with that of Woodley, and decide for themselves whether this genre of research is racist and eugenicist, or whether it is scientifically valid and useful. Or, can it be both?

Researchers working from within the "traditional" intelligence paradigm (e.g., who accept the "g" theory of intelligence, rely on standardized IQ tests as unbiased measurements of intelligence, and consider IQ to be highly heritable) often complain that their critics unfairly and vituperatively attack and seek to censor their work. They often complain that such efforts are motivated by liberal/progressive political and egalitarian ideologies. For the last 30 years or so it has been the traditional intelligence researchers who have faced the greatest political headwinds, both from within and outside the discipline, as discussed in the chapters by Haier and Rinderman. Rinderman's chapter however, makes the useful point that the political and social pressures against research on group differences and the heritability of intelligence actually has had the effect of improving the quality of research in this field, along with positive selection effects on the quality of researchers attracted to it. To be sure, whatever the discipline, it often is the ideological iconoclast who makes the most creative and groundbreaking contributions in a field.

Next come the topics gender and sexuality, which also have been highly politicized issues in psychology and, of course, nowadays with the general public as well. Del Giudice provides a comprehensive overview of how the construct of gender has been politicized by feminist theory and research, which has been the main ideological influence on gender research and teaching. The feminist project has tried to show that the genders are psychologically equivalent, with any measurable differences due largely or only to socialization or prejudice. Next, Bailey introduces readers to his background, leading up to his current status as a prolific researcher on sexuality and gender issues. In the context of his work as an administrator of an email discussion group for sex researchers who debate empirical sex/gender research and the controversial ideas related to this research, he has faced palpable ideological bias from both the left and the right. This chapter explores how ideological bias affects how debates with sex/gender research are framed, as well as how such research can be mischaracterized according to which ideological positions are currently popular in society.

Rind shows how morality, science, and politics have frequently been conflated, resulting in biased science – often to appease critics from the right. He uses the historical examples of masturbation and homosexuality and the more recent example of child sexual abuse, an explosive issue that engenders strong emotions in many. During the late 1990s, psychological research showing that child sex abuse often did not produce substantial long-term psychological harm in its victims (or at least not as much as other kinds of abuse or neglect) created a firestorm in the media and on Capitol Hill. Many accused the researchers and organizations like the APA of being apologists for pedophilia and child sex abusers. The final chapter in this part illustrates the destructive influence of external bias on psychology, where a country's political climate exerted constraints on what could or could not be published in a communist or totalitarian country.

The advantages of a less ideologically and politically biased psychological science are numerous. *Part V, Solutions to the Problem of Bias*, concludes the book with chapters offering solutions to the problem of bias in the science and profession of psychology. Addressing bias in research, Clark and Tetlock propose a system whereby researchers representing opposing viewpoints or research paradigms conduct joint research in a spirit of “adversarial collaboration” that allows for the systematic testing of their competing views. They use the example of research on the Implicit Association Test (IAT) to show how adversarial collaboration would have been a very useful way to debate, critique, and evaluate the validity and reliability of the IAT, which has become a very widely used test of implicit bias. Redding concludes the book by describing various initiatives for diversifying who enters graduate school and the profession of psychology, particularly in academia. He argues that this is the only way to achieve true reform that will address the problem of ideological and political bias. In addition, he provides strategies and model programs for overcoming bias and promoting sociopolitical and viewpoint diversity in teaching, publishing, and clinical practice.

What is the past, present, and future of ideological and political bias in psychology? Although the field as a whole has always had a liberal bent to it, the early

history of psychology also saw right-wing bias and outright prejudice in various areas of psychology. However, as time went on, the field became decidedly liberal. Because that liberal bias has accelerated greatly in about the last 30 years, we now see a rather substantial liberal and progressive bias (against conservative, libertarian, or centrist ideas and those who hold them) throughout the science and profession of psychology. Hopefully, the future will see a psychological science and practice that is far less politicized, particularly if the kinds of systemic reforms suggested by Clark and Tetlock, Redding, and others (e.g., Duarte et al., 2012) are embraced and enacted. *Our students, clients, the public, and psychological science deserve nothing less.*

## In Memorium

Finally, the surviving editors would be remiss if we did not take a moment to honor our late esteemed colleague, Dr. Scott Lilienfeld, Samuel Candler Dobbs Professor of Psychology at Emory University. Prof. Lilienfeld was a key contributor to the conceptualization of this text during its early planning stages. Even though Scott passed away from pancreatic cancer before he had an opportunity to contribute chapters to this volume, his giant footprint permeates many contributions in this text.

To readers who may be unfamiliar with Prof. Lilienfeld's work, he was a prolific scholar (publishing over 350 journal articles in addition to writing and editing books) in the study of personality disorders – particularly those related to psychopathic behavior. However, it was his work in exposing the many manifestations of pseudoscience in psychology that has inspired dozens of students and colleagues, and will surely stand the test of time for generations to come (see Banks, 2020; Casey, 2020).

To those who knew him personally, Scott was never motivated by any particular sociopolitical ideologies, and was largely ambivalent about national politics. His passion, however, was his focused desire to uplift psychology as a respectable science by debunking false beliefs and long-standing myths that pass for established knowledge (when in fact they are not). His book, co-authored with psychiatrist Sally Satel, on popular pseudoscientific myths about neuroscience (e.g., see Satel & Lilienfeld, 2013), is a masterwork of clear thinking and writing, application of evidence to arguments, and breadth of coverage that is persuasive to neuroscientists and non-neuroscientists alike. When microaggression theory was all the rage in psychology, most skeptics were *terrified* to cast doubts on this construct “out loud.” It was Scott who practically stood alone to calmly, patiently – and with a surgeon's precision – dissect its claims (he found it lacking as a valid and reliable psychological construct; Lilienfeld, 2017).

Predictably, taking on these (and other) kinds of challenges invites all sorts of ad hominem attacks and questioning of his “motives.” Scott, being Scott, answered such poison darts with grace, introspection, and a calm analysis of critics'

arguments. In addition to being a giant of psychology, the greatest compliment that could be given is that he was a *gentleman* – as a man and as a scholar.

We as surviving editors are proud to honor Scott’s memory with this text. We hope it plays some role in extending his work for the betterment and integrity of psychology.

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**Part I**  
**Bias and the Politics of Psychology**

# Chapter 2

## What Is Meant by ‘Bias’ in Psychological Science?



Craig L. Frisby

### The Essential Nature of the Scientific Enterprise

In a nutshell, science can be seen as useful to the extent that it assists humankind in more accurately understanding the world (Ritchie, 2020). Science is an endeavor that adheres to standardized values and procedures. As such, it is vitally important that scientists show other scientists how they arrived at their conclusions. Science is also a social construct, in the sense that it involves not only products produced by solitary individuals, but involves persons who need to interact closely with one another. Stuart (2020) writes:

*Scientists work together in teams, travel the world to give lectures and conference speeches, debate each other in seminars, form scientific societies to share research and . . . publish their results in peer-reviewed journals . . . [S]cience in action [is] an ongoing march of collective scrutiny, questioning, revision, refinement and consensus . . . the subjective process of science is what provides it with its unmatched degree of objectivity (p. 14)*

There is also a moral dimension implicit in the scientific enterprise, in the sense that science must be conducted *honestly*. In 1942, sociologist Robert Merton outlined four principles that should guide honest science, which came to be known as the ‘Mertonian Norms’ (Merton, 1942). These norms, when considered collectively, capture a mindset, attitude, and/or *ethos* that should guide the activities and behaviors of all who would consider themselves to be scientists. These are:

1. *Universalism*: The validity of scientific investigative processes, and the results of these processes, are wholly independent of the personal characteristics of the scientist (i.e., their race, sex, age, sexual orientation, income, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, religion, nationality, where they obtained their degree, or their

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personality characteristics). Said differently, scientific knowledge is scientific knowledge as long as the procedures and methods for discovering such knowledge are sound. The personal characteristics of the scientist have no bearing on how the scientist's factual claims are assessed and evaluated (Ritchie, 2020).

2. *Disinterestedness*: The motivation for conducting good science is simply to contribute to the common benefit, shared by all, of scientific knowledge. The disinterested scientist does not do science in order to advance his/her own fame, wealth, and reputation; or the reputation of their employers or country of origin; or to promote a sociopolitical ideology or sell products.
3. *Communalilty*: Scientists do not hoard the results of their research for only themselves, but they freely share the results of their work with other scientists. This allows other scientists to know exactly how the research was conducted, so that they can replicate the results using different samples or methods.
4. *Organized Skepticism*: To put the matter in lay language, this norm follows the principle that nothing that is published is sacred – meaning that no conclusions from published work should ever be unconditionally accepted at face value. No matter how well-conducted a study is, consumers should develop the habit of mind to suspend judgment until additional studies and/or replications are conducted. Its initial conclusions may indeed stand the test of time, but that does not mean that other researchers cannot continue to evaluate and/or challenge its methods, assumptions, or conclusions until that time comes.

## The Universal Problem of Bias

The concept of 'bias', except in very rare occasions, has an overwhelmingly negative connotation when applied to a wide variety of academic disciplines and the applied professions that extend from these disciplines. Within the discipline of media (e.g., television, newspaper, social media) journalism, for example, bias can occur in the manner in which events and stories are covered, selected, and reported (Atkins, 2016; Attkisson, 2014; Groseclose, 2012). Journalistic bias has a wide variety of manifestations, which include, but are certainly not limited to, 'coverage/visibility bias', 'gatekeeping bias', 'selectivity bias', 'selection bias', 'presentation bias', 'tonality bias', and 'political bias' (these terms are defined in Baum & Zhukov, 2018; Boomgaarden & Wagner, 2015; Booten, 2020; Brandenburg, 2006; Gilens & Hertzman, 2000; Groeling, 2013; Hofstetter & Buss, 1978).

Bias exists in applied disciplines far removed from journalism. In the science of audiometry (the measurement of hearing), for example, a person's hearing can be evaluated two ways. *Air-conduction tests* evaluate a person's ability to hear sounds traveling through the air in ear canals, and *bone-conduction tests* evaluate a person's ability to hear sounds from vibrating the cochlea embedded in the skull. If there is a difference between a person's air-conduction and bone-conduction test results (which audiologists call the 'air-bone gap'), this is an indicator of hearing problems in the outer or middle ears (Bauman, 2022). 'Bias' within the field of audiometry is

illustrated when manual testing of air-bone gaps in a large group of subjects yields non-normal distributions compared to the normal distributions yielded by automated testing (Margolis et al., 2016).

### *The Essential Nature and Products of Psychological Science*

From these examples, we derive a fundamental characteristic of bias as involving a distortion from truth, or from the 'way things really are'. To understand how bias affects psychological science, we must first understand what psychological science is.

When confronted with the task of providing a succinct statement describing the essential task of psychology, scholars have responded in a variety of ways. According to Zimbardo (1988), psychology seeks to answer the fundamental question of the nature of human nature. According to Tavris and Wade (2001), psychology can be defined as the discipline concerned with behavior and mental processes and how they are affected by an organism's physical state, mental state, and external environment (p. 5). Lilienfeld and Waldman (2017) briefly summarized some of the products that have emerged from rigorous and high-quality psychological science that have benefitted society:

*. . . psychological science has been quite successful across myriad domains . . . it has spawned numerous discoveries of both theoretical and practical importance . . . psychological science has helped us to better understand the basic mechanisms of learning, the nature of memory, the structure of emotion, the nature of individual differences in cognitive abilities, and the correlates and causes of many mental disorders . . . Psychological science has also borne fruit in such real-world applications as aptitude testing, political polling, behavioral medicine, advertising, eyewitness testimony, the design of airplane cockpits, automobile safety, techniques for teaching language to children with intellectual disability, the reduction of prejudice in classrooms, and evidence-based psychotherapies that have alleviated the suffering of tens of thousands of individuals with mood, anxiety, eating, sleep, and substance disorders (pp. x–xi).*

### *The Deterioration of Scientific Standards*

Some observers opine that Mertonian norms have all but collapsed in contemporary science (Honeycutt and Jussim, Chap. 5, this volume; Kellogg, 2006; Ritchie, 2020), with some even arguing that science follows 'counter-norms' that stand in opposition to Mertonian norms (i.e., solitariness, particularism, interestedness, and organized dogmatism; Mitroff, 1974; Mulkay, 1976). Ritchie (2020) has stinging words concerning the deterioration of honest science:

*Science, the discipline in which we should find the harshest scepticism, the most pin-sharp rationality and the hardest-headed empiricism, has become home to a dizzying array of incompetence, delusion, lies and self-deception. In the process, the central purpose of science – to find our way ever closer to the truth – is being undermined (p. 7).*

## What Is Bias in Psychological Science?

### *What Bias Is Not*

It is first necessary to discuss – and lay to rest – inaccurate and arbitrary concepts of bias that are occasionally found in the psychological literature. Here, ideas and actions are called ‘biased’, but the usage of this term bears no conceptual or logical relationship to how this term is traditionally understood and used.

An illustrative example can be found in the latest edition of the APA publication style manual, which includes a chapter that purports to provide guidelines for using ‘bias-free’ language within the context of writing research papers (American Psychological Association, 2020). APA defines ‘bias’ as “the implied or irrelevant evaluation of the group or groups” that are being discussed (p. 131).

Examples given of allegedly ‘bias-free’ language are: ‘indigenous peoples’, ‘Latinx’, ‘LGBTQIA+’, ‘people with intellectual disabilities’, or ‘gender nonconforming’. Examples given of inappropriate terms to avoid are: ‘seniors’, ‘elderly’, ‘wheelchair bound’, ‘special needs’, language which depicts cisgender as normative, ‘mankind’, contractions which imply an exclusively binary nature of gender, or ‘Caucasian’.

While it is true that language can shift, change, and evolve slowly over many decades – and the use of outdated terms can appear jarring and offensive to general audiences in contemporary culture – the accusation of ‘bias’ used here is vague, capricious, gratuitous, and utterly arbitrary. APA claims that the use of certain labels for groups “perpetuates demeaning attitudes” (p. 131). Instead of writers being given a choice of terms to use, however, APA arbitrarily dictates that the use of one term connotes ‘bias’, while the use of a different term connotes a ‘lack of bias’.

The reality, however, is that certain terms can be used without being accompanied by animosity, ill-will, or intent to demean groups or individuals. The use of certain terms is simply considered here to be ‘out of fashion’ when compared to the dictates of current activist identity politics (based on gender, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, or age). Here, bias does not mean that a label is inaccurate or misleading (according to a traditional understanding of the term). Instead, designating a term as ‘biased’ simply means that certain words are not favored by a sociopolitical ideology that, for whatever reasons, holds inordinate influence within the American Psychological Association.

### *Biases Studied by Psychological Science*

Psychologists have studied bias – broadly conceived – since the beginning of psychology’s recognition as a science. The different types of biases studied by psychologists can be categorized in a number of different ways. For example, some bias studies are conducted in laboratory settings, where solicited subjects respond to

contrived tasks designed by the investigators. Other studies discuss common biases committed by research and applied psychologists and other scientists through the analysis of written or published products. Some biases studied by psychologists are unintentional, as these often exist out of the reach of conscious awareness of subjects. Other types of biases are intentionally committed by subjects (i.e., are within their conscious awareness), usually in the service of subjective beliefs, convictions, or needs. Some biases are discovered quantitatively only after statistical methods have been applied to the analysis of data. Other types of biases are discovered qualitatively whenever a pre-determined standard (i.e., 'what should be') is compared to subject responses (i.e., 'what is'). The types of biases discussed in this chapter can fall into one or more of these categories simultaneously. A sampling of different types of biases studied by psychologists – in no particular order of importance – are described briefly below.

**Test Bias** Applications of mental measurement to practical societal goals (e.g., military selection, special education identification, diagnosis of mental health problems) naturally raise questions concerning the accuracy and fairness of psychologists' assessment practices. In the measurement of psychological traits and abilities, bias is defined conceptually as:

*... construct underrepresentation or construct-irrelevant components of test scores that differentially affect the performance of different groups of test takers and consequently affect the reliability/precision and validity of interpretations and uses of test scores (AERA, APA., & NCME, 2014, p. 216)*

There are different subcategories of test bias that can occur (e.g., predictive bias, construct bias, factorial bias; see Jensen, 1980), which require different statistical methods for detecting test bias. These empirical methods can show statistically that a biased test performs differently when used with test-takers belonging to different subgroups (i.e., according to race, language, ethnicity, gender, or disability status; Jensen, 1980; Monnot et al., 2009; Reynolds & Carson, 2005; Reynolds & Suzuki, 2013).

**Implicit Bias** Another form of bias studied by social and experimental psychologists that has received much attention in the popular press – as well as in applied business and employment settings – is the notion of *implicit bias*. This construct was first coined (indirectly) by Greenwald and Banaji (1995) in their use of computerized reaction time methods to study *implicit social cognition*. Implicit social cognition is the name given to the view that social cognitions (i.e., attitudes, self-esteem, and stereotypes) often operate in an unconscious fashion, where persons' past experiences influence their judgment in ways about which persons are not consciously aware (p. 4). Within the context of this research, implicit bias refers to the unconscious tendency for persons to judge members of their own (racial, gender, age, ethnic) group more favorably than comparable persons who are not members of their group (p. 11). In many social cognition experiments, this bias is operationalized as slower or faster reaction times (measured in milliseconds) for making binary judgments of paired stimuli using computer technology.

Since its introduction into the academic world, instruments purporting to measure implicit bias, as well as training programs designed to overcome implicit bias, have been adopted for use in business hiring, medicine, law enforcement, and education (Benson & Fiarman, 2019; Borodkin, 2018; Kidd et al., 2022; Orem, 2018). At the same time, however, the concept of implicit bias has attracted considerable debate (as to its construct validity, accuracy of measurement, real-world applications, and legality) from both its detractors and its supporters (e.g., see Banji & Greenwald, 2016; Singal, 2017).

**Confirmation Bias** Confirmation bias is a term first coined by the late British psychologist Peter Wason (1924–2003) – and refers to the human tendency to search for, interpret, favor, and recall information in a manner that confirms or supports one’s prior beliefs or values, as well as discount that which does not (Nickerson, 1998). This phenomenon has been traced as far back as Pythagoras’ studies of harmonic relationships in the sixth century B.C. (Proust, 2011) and in the writings of William Shakespeare and Francis Bacon (Risinger et al., 2002). Here, bias is generally defined as the human tendency to generate cognitions that do not align with reality – due to the subjective need to generate internal stories that align with what persons want to believe, or simply as a self-protective mechanism. These cognitions can be either conscious or unconscious (Beeghly & Madva, 2020; Gazzaniga, 2011; Lilienfeld & Basterfield, 2020).

**Motivated Reasoning** Motivated reasoning is a phenomenon studied by both cognitive and social psychologists, which describes the human tendency to find arguments in favor of conclusions that persons want to believe to be stronger compared to arguments for conclusions persons do not want to believe (Kunda, 1990; Nir, 2011). Geher (2018) provides a vivid example of motivated reasoning in psychology. Here, during a public research talk, a renowned social psychologist mistakenly stated that girls outperformed boys on a high school calculus test when no questions were asked about test-takers’ gender at the beginning of the test (a conclusion which appeared to confirm stereotype threat theory). Highly credible institutions and organizations in psychology eagerly cited the psychologist’s conclusions, which in turn led to numerous high-profile speaking invitations and media advertisements of his work. In reality, however, the conclusions were discovered to be false – which was eventually admitted by the psychologist.

**My-side Bias** Over the past two and a half decades, psychologist Keith Stanovich (2021) has led a systematic research program that investigates a phenomenon that he has coined ‘*my-side bias*’, which he defines as:

*... the bias that occurs when we evaluate evidence, generate evidence, and test hypotheses in a manner favorable toward our prior opinions and attitudes – where the attitudes in question are convictions (that is, distal beliefs and worldviews to which we show emotional commitment and ego pre-occupation) (p. 9)*

In both laboratory and real-world experimental settings, Stanovich and his team have demonstrated the presence and effects of my-side bias when subjects are

required to evaluate the logical validity of informal arguments, the fairness of legal decisions, the evidence provided in scientific studies, and how persons evaluate risk vs. reward in high stakes decision-making (Stanovich, 2021).

According to Stanovich, a person’s personal ideology and politics are rich sources of my-side bias (e.g., see Ditto et al., 2019). However, my-side bias is fundamentally a *human problem* that transcends all kinds of demographic groups, human characteristics, and belief systems. He writes:

*My-side bias is displayed by people holding all sorts of belief systems, values, and convictions. It is not limited to those with a particular worldview. Any belief that is held with conviction – any distal belief . . . can be the driving force behind myside thinking. In short, as an information processing tendency, myside cognition is ubiquitous (p. 22).*

Definitions for the numerous subtypes and specific applications of cognitive, judgement/decision-making, and reasoning errors found in the psychology literature are numerous and well beyond the scope of this brief chapter (for relevant citations, see Kahneman et al., 1999; Pohl, 2004; Stanovich, 2021; Wikipedia, 2022; Woods, 2013).

**Clinical Treatment Bias Against Groups** Many articles simply define ‘bias’ as statistical inequalities (sometimes called disparities) between groups (i.e., categorized by gender, race, SES, or clinical diagnosis) in differential access to mental health or medical services; differences in how problems are understood and perceived by their mental health providers; differential amount of training that caregivers possess in serving particular groups; or how problems may be differentially diagnosed for particular groups even when presenting problems are similar across groups (e.g., Barr, 2019; Earp et al., 2019; Franz et al., 2021; Garb, 1997; Hirsh et al., 2019; Mizock & Brubaker, 2019; Simon et al., 2020; Spooon et al., 2021; Williams et al., 2019).

Nevertheless, treatment bias/disparity research has attracted much debate and controversy. Some critics have argued that simple statistical disparities across groups on an outcome variable are *not* necessarily evidence of bias that unfairly disadvantages certain groups relative to other groups. These critics would argue that many relevant factors are correlated with group characteristics. When researchers employ statistical designs that properly control for the influence of correlated variables, the magnitude of group outcome effects may shrink considerably or disappear altogether (Font et al., 2012; Klick & Satel, 2006; Sowell, 2019).

**Research Bias** There has been a stream of publications by scientists – both within and outside of psychology – that critique the credibility of much of what has been published in psychology as a function of advocacy for higher technical, methodological, and/or statistical research standards.

From sources outside of psychology, Berezow (2012), a microbiologist by training, and Hartsfield (2015), a physicist by training – both argued that psychology, more often than not – fails to meet five basic requirements (simultaneously) in order for a discipline to be considered scientifically rigorous: (1) clearly defined

terminology, (2) quantifiability, (3) highly controlled experimental conditions, (4) reproducibility, and (5) predictability and testability.

From within psychology, the text *Psychological Science Under Scrutiny* (Lilienfeld & Waldman, 2017) includes chapters by authors that discuss various forms of biases in conducting and designing studies, reporting results, analyzing data, representing study findings, and the extent to which replication studies are conducted and their findings are encouraged for publication. On this last point, Ritchie writes (2020):

*For a scientific finding to be worth taking seriously, it can't be something that occurred because of random chance, or a glitch in the equipment, or because the scientist was cheating or dissembling. It has to have really happened . . . that's the essence of science, and something that sets it apart from other ways of knowing about the world: if it won't replicate, then it's hard to describe what you've done as scientific at all (p. 5)*

Smedslund (2016) argues that psychological research suffers from almost insurmountable problems of failing to control for numerous factors present in everyday life. He argues that differences and correlations in much psychological research are much too small to be useful in psychological practice in applied settings, and that hypotheses are poorly framed. These observations are used to support the argument as to why psychology cannot be called an empirical science.

Social and health science researchers have also formally studied biases inadvertently committed by researchers. For example, Sackett (1979) cataloged the variety of biases (up to 35) that serve to distort the design, execution, analysis, and interpretation of medical disorders research. Sackett defined bias as ‘any process at any stage of inference which tends to produce results or conclusions that differ systematically from the truth’ (p. 60). This early work led to the creation of an ongoing collaboration of researchers that meet regularly to map all of the biases that effect health research evidence – which they have called the ‘catalog of bias’ (see [About – Catalog of Bias](#)).

Professor Stuart Ritchie (2020) has written a masterful book (*Science Fictions: How Fraud, Bias, Negligence, and Hype Undermine the Search for Truth*) that surveys the wide variety of biased and fraudulent practices by scientists across a wide variety of scientific disciplines. These practices ultimately serve to undermine the public’s confidence in the truthfulness and accuracy of the products of scientific investigations. Some of these practices are deliberate, while others reflect common ‘business-as-usual’ practices that do not overtly appear (on the surface) to be biased (but in fact are). These practices include the failure of scientists to value study replication, which helps to establish the reliability of findings; numerous cases of academic fraud that escaped detection and subsequently embarrassed the scientific community; underhanded statistical practices committed by researchers that artificially elevate the perceived importance/significance of otherwise modest findings; and how findings are wildly hyped (beyond their actual importance) by insular scientific communities and the popular media to fit trendy social movements. A sampling of these biases are listed and defined in Table 2.1.

**Table 2.1** A Brief Sampling of Biases in the Design, Execution, Interpretation, or Publication of Research

Type of bias	Definition	Effects	Remedies
Sampling error	The means of samples taken to estimate the mean of a parent population are, in most cases, not an exact representation of the population mean – and can vary widely	Widely discrepant sample means are mistakenly considered to be accurate estimates of population means	More frequent use of meta-analysis to narrow the range within which population values can be estimated
p-hacking	Because the $p \leq 0.05$ criterion is (arbitrarily) important in determining statistical significance, scientists use practices that ever so slightly nudge their $p$ -values at or below this threshold in order to get research studies published	Scientists who initially get disappointing results will re-run their experiments multiple times until chance provides results at or below $p \leq 0.05$ – which may include dropping data points from analyses, analyzing results only on specific subgroups, shopping around for different statistical analytic procedures that would yield the $p$ values they desire (MacIntyre, 2019)	Since p-hacking occurs in secret before articles are submitted for publication (John et al., 2012), only the severity of the consequences after p-hacking is revealed can influence the lessening of its occurrence
Correlation is not causation	Variation in one variable is assumed to cause variation in a second variable (within observational data collected without any randomized experimental manipulation; Lee, 2021)	Study results are misinterpreted, resulting in unwarranted conclusions that mislead consumers into believing in illusory causation	Adopting principles of ‘Open Science’, where every aspect of the scientific process is made freely available (i.e., data, analysis procedures, reviewer comments; Ritchie, 2020)
Confirmation bias	The tendency to interpret evidence in a manner that fits pre-existing beliefs and desires (Nickerson, 1998)	Audiences are forced to interpret scientific studies through ideological blinders, thus distorting perceptions of reality	Increase opportunities for ‘adversarial’ collaboration, reviewing, and publishing (Costello et al., 2022); Increased exposure to professional debates between scientists who hold differing scientific worldviews

(continued)

**Table 2.1** (continued)

Type of bias	Definition	Effects	Remedies
Replication avoidance	Scientific publishing outlets (e.g., for books, journals, monographs) refuse to publish replication studies	The scientific community (consumers and researchers) accepts reported results of research studies at face value, resulting in the acceptance of results that may be false	Revising publication policies to encourage submission of replication studies (Ritchie, 2020); Promoting the importance of replication in scientific training programs
Non-scientific incentives	The social context of professional scientific communities encourages and incentivizes researchers to obsess over peer recognition, prestige, fame, funding, and reputation at the expense of honesty, detachment, rigor, and caution	Researchers ‘cut corners’; misrepresent or exaggerate the importance of findings that fit popular narratives; avoids coming to grips with findings that are socially unpopular	Reduce incentives for cutting corners by universities incorporating ‘good scientific citizenship’ criteria in promotion/tenure decisions; encouraging funders to fund good/honest scientists rather than specific projects; journals adopting standards of openness and replicability (Ritchie, 2020, chapter 8)
Fraud	Aggressive acceptance and promotion of research results from studies later found to be totally fabricated	Fraudulent studies are easier to publish; applied practices are adopted that could have deleterious effects on the public – which would be ineffective, at best, or fatal, at worst; integrity of entire scientific disciplines is diminished in the eyes of the general public	Familiarity with <a href="https://retractionwatch.com">retractionwatch.com</a> , a blog which reports on current retractions of fraudulent papers; aggressive exposure of and harsher sanctions levied for perpetrators of fraud

(continued)

**Table 2.1** (continued)

Type of bias	Definition	Effects	Remedies
Positive Result Publication Bias (Rosenthal, 1979)	Researchers are predisposed to submit – and journals are predisposed to publish – write-ups of studies that support hypotheses rather than write-ups of studies that do not support hypotheses	Audiences receive a distorted picture of the state of scientific findings; Researchers discover that many overly positive psychological results are not replicable (Renkewitz & Keiner, 2019); Researchers are tempted to distort their scientific procedures in order to arrive at positive results;	Creating statistical tools for detecting publication bias (Renkewitz & Keiner, 2019); Journals putting greater emphasis on the quality of the research methods rather than the outcome as a condition for manuscript acceptance; Creating specialty journals that are willing to publish non-significant results (Ritchie, 2020); requiring human clinical trials to be publicly registered as a condition for publication in top journals (e.g., see De Angelis et al., 2004)
Unwarranted advice	Zealous media will oversell results from a single, nonreplicated study by recommending ways for readers to change their behavior	Hyped press releases seriously oversimplify recommendations, in effect going far beyond what the actual data results would support. This may lead to the spread of similar exaggerations in other forms of media	Publishing studies which review the history of media hype; and expose weak/fraudulent relationship between behavioral recommendations and outcomes
Outcome reporting bias	A study may be published in full, however there is an omission or misrepresentation of some outcomes but not others, depending on the nature and direction of the results (Chan et al., 2004; Sterne, Egger, & Moher, 2008)	Erodes journalistic transparency and scientific integrity, possibly leading to situations where researchers justify this practice on the basis of what others in the field have done. This can lead to unwanted lawsuits in ‘life or death’ high stakes research (Vedula, Goldman, Rona, Greene, & Dickersin, 2012)	Adopting principles of ‘Open Science’, where every aspect of the scientific process is made freely available (i.e., data, analysis procedures, reviewer comments; Ritchie, 2020)

Adapted from Ritchie (2020)

**Publication Bias** Publication bias is a specific subset within the more broad category of research bias (see Table 2.1), but is given more elaborate attention here due to the subtlety in which it can often operate. Rothstein et al. (2006) defined the term ‘publication bias’ as occurring when the probability of a study being published is influenced by the significance values of the results – such that studies showing non-significant results are not submitted for journal publication (see discussion of the ‘file drawer’ problem in Ritchie, 2020). Kühberger et al. (2014) argue that publication bias can occur at any stage of the publication process where a decision has to be made – which includes (1) the researcher’s decision to write up a manuscript; (2) in the decision to submit a manuscript to a journal; (3) in the decision of journal editors to send a paper out for review; (4) in the reviewer’s recommendation for acceptance or rejection; and (5) in the editor’s final decision to accept or reject the paper for publication.

Kühberger et al. (2014) suggested that article publication bias occurs when there is a non-independent relationship between an article’s reported effect sizes and the sample size used in the study. The discussion of publication bias in Ritchie (2020, chapter 4) provides an excellent tutorial as to how this non-independent relationship can occur.

As explained by Ritchie (2020), studies with small samples are less reliable at calculating the true value of a population effect size than studies that employ larger samples. For studies that are homogeneous in the content area under investigation, those using smaller sample sizes will yield a wide range of effect sizes around the true population effect size. In contrast, studies using larger samples are more reliable, and thus will yield a narrower range of effect sizes around the true population effect size value.

In a meta-analysis that plots studies’ sample sizes on the Y axis and each studies’ corresponding effect sizes on the X axis, the resulting plot will look like an upside-down ice-cream cone (see Ritchie, 2020, Fig. 2A, p. 92). When no publication bias is in effect, the correlation between sample and effect sizes will be close to zero. When publication bias is in effect, however, researchers will be prone to not submit for publication studies with small sample sizes and small effect sizes. When this happens, a large chunk of the ‘upside-down ice cream cone’ will be missing – resulting in a plot that more closely resembles a more linearly approximating negative correlation between sample and effect sizes (see Ritchie, 2020, Fig. 2B, p. 92). That is, there will be an over-representation of smaller samples with higher effect sizes and larger samples with more modest (i.e., smaller) effect sizes.

Kühberger et al. (2014) randomly sampled 1000 articles from a wide array of areas in psychological research, and calculated the correlation between each article’s reported effect size and study sample size, as well as examined the distribution of reported p values across all articles. They found a significant negative correlation (−0.45) between the effect size and sample size, as well as a distribution of p values with disproportionately higher numbers of values that just barely surpassed acceptable significance boundaries. Since effect sizes and sample sizes should be

non-significantly correlated in theory, the authors interpreted these results as a strong piece of evidence of pervasive publication bias in psychology.

Carter, Schönbrodt, Gervais, and Hilgard (2019) compared the ability of several meta-analytic methods commonly used in psychological studies on simulated data to detect publication bias and bias from ‘questionable research practices’ (i.e., when researchers use a somewhat questionable analytic approach – chosen from a variety of appropriate approaches – because it yields results that are favorable to the researcher; Bakker et al., 2012; Ritchie, 2020). Their results showed no single meta-analytic method that was more consistently effective at detecting bias.

Some authors argue for the existence of publication bias as a result of non-statistical reasons. Coburn and Vevea (2015) argue that the source of funding for a study, whether the project occurred in a single versus multicenter, or the extent to which the study conformed to prevailing theories for the study, affected the probability of publication of studies.

Kirkegaard (2020) coined the term ‘*reverse publication bias*’ (sometimes called ‘*negative publication bias*’). This form of publication bias occurs in contexts where there is a significant positive relationship between variables. For ideological reasons, however, publishers want to *suppress* such findings by being biased in favor of publishing studies that show either smaller or nonsignificant relationships. Kirkegaard illustrates this effect in the context of discussing studies of the relationship between IQ and GPA, sex differences in spatial ability, and race differences in personality characteristics.

**Popularity Bias** Another type of bias that has received much attention from psychologists can be called *popularity bias* – although often not labeled as such. In the book *House of Cards: Psychology and Psychotherapy Built on Myth*, Dawes (1994) argues that applied psychology has abandoned its commitment to base its applied practice on well-validated research findings, choosing instead to base many practices on non-existent science. They provide empirical evidence that ‘soft’ concepts such as ‘trained clinical intuition’ – as well as more concrete and quantifiable indicators such as ‘degrees and years of experience’ – fail to accurately predict better outcomes for clients.

Lilienfeld et al. (2010) have argued that there exists an alarmingly large pool of myths (i.e., misinformation) generated by popular (‘pop’) psychology that serve to mislead the general public. In the preface to this text, Lilienfeld et al. list four properties that popular scientific myths share (Hammer, 1996; Stover & Saunders, 2000). Popular scientific myths: (1) are strongly held beliefs about the world that are stable; (2) are nevertheless contradicted by well-established evidence; (3) influence how many persons come to understand the world; and (4) must be *corrected* in order to achieve accurate knowledge.

Such myths include popular bromides and platitudes (e.g., ‘opposites attract’, ‘most people use only 10% of their brain power’, ‘there’s safety in numbers’), to beliefs that originate from scholarly sources but are nevertheless illusory (e.g., ‘students learn best when teaching is matched with their learning styles’; ‘men and

women communicate differently’; or ‘high heritability of traits means that they are unchangeable’).

Lilienfeld et al. (2010) discuss two broad factors responsible for the popularity of psychological myths despite their lack of research support. One factor points to the pervasive promulgation of such myths as they are incessantly communicated in the daily social environment of television, movies, print media, popular bookstores, and the internet. Second, most popular myths tend to integrate easily with persons’ ‘common sense’, ‘gut hunches’, ‘intuitions’, and first impressions (p. 5).

### ***Distilling the Essence of (Detrimental) Biases in Psychological Science***

These examples of bias studied by psychologists can be integrated and distilled into eight principles that should guide psychologist’s attitudes and practices toward the problem of bias – broadly conceived – in psychological science. These are:

- Bias undermines, as well as erects roadblocks to, the pursuit of truth.
- Pressures for bias in a study’s procedural methods (and concluding results or interpretations) have both *internal* (e.g., pressures to conform to researchers’ pre-existing prejudices, ambitions, or convictions) and *external* (e.g., pressures to conform to what is popularly believed by others or what soothes the public’s popular tastes) sources.
- The presence of bias in scientific procedures often results in a *misrepresentation of truth*, or in worst-case scenarios, the outright *promulgation of falsehoods*.
- The presence of blatant forms of bias represents *hypocrisy*, as psychologists put themselves in a position where they are guilty of falling prey to the *very same biases that their own research claims to condemn*. This often manifests itself in double-standards in the peer review process – where favored procedures or conclusions are afforded more lax evaluation standards, and less favored ones are afforded more harsh evaluation standards.
- The presence of bias in scientific procedures promotes a *poor model* for students in training and young researchers beginning their careers.
- Widespread practices of bias generate distrust of psychology among the general public, as confidence in the neutral and disinterested objectivity of research organizations is weakened.
- The vulnerability of psychological research to biases requires sponsoring entities (e.g., professional psychology organizations) to succumb to reflexive self-protective mechanisms; instead of openly recognizing, acknowledging, and combatting bias.
- The ubiquity of biases (as a result of natural human shortcomings) requires communities of scholars to critically and objectively evaluate each others’ work – as a means for providing appropriate checks and balances against the (often subtle) infiltration of bias.

## ***What Conditions Appear to Create, Support, and Perpetuate the Existence of Bias in Psychological Science?***

### **Human Errors/Foibles**

Science is carried out by human beings. And, humans – being imperfect – commit errors that stem from a wide variety of sources. As examples, bias can originate from the (perceptual, skill, and/or knowledge-based) shortcomings of human beings, as well as from moral and/or ethical failings that are applied (either intentionally or unintentionally) to scientific choices and decisions throughout one's career. On this point, Ritchie (2020) writes:

*... [S]ince science is ... a human thing, we know that ... scientists will be prone to human characteristics, such as irrationality, biases, lapses in attention, in-group favoritism and outright cheating to get what they want ... Biases are an unavoidable part of human nature and it's naïve to think they could ever be eradicated from anything that we do (pp. 7, 121)*

Bias occurs whenever there exists human inattention, human ambition, self-centered human dispositions, and human prejudices. As a result, Ritchie further (2020) opines:

*The drive to publish attention-grabbing, unequivocal, statistically significant results is one of the most universal sources of bias in science (p. 112)*

### **Deep Personal Convictions**

Personal convictions are different from mere beliefs, in that convictions are beliefs that are much more deeply held at the emotional level. Deeply held beliefs are accompanied by emotional commitment and ego preoccupation, in addition to having undergone more cognitive elaboration (Howe & Krosnick, 2017; Stanovich, 2021). Many attitudes are rooted in morality, and this pairing results in deeply held mandates that often evoke anger when others are perceived as violating them. Deeply held mandates become 'protected/sacred values', which in turn assists individuals in shaping their personal worldviews. Personal worldviews, in turn, are highly resistant to change.

Close affiliation with others who share similar convictions – particularly when these become political in nature – tend to morph into 'modern tribes' (Clark & Winegard, 2020; Haidt, 2012; Iyengar et al., 2019). Political bias among academics then becomes toxic when ensconced within university settings that – at least in theory – should be committed to Mertonian norms. Stanovich (2021) writes:

*[T]he universities have totally abdicated their responsibility to be neutral, unbiased arbiters of evidence on controversial issues. Instead, they have turned themselves into intellectual monocultures that police expression through political correctness in precisely the areas where we need open discussion the most: crime, immigration, poverty, abortion, affirmative action, drug addiction, race relations, and distributional fairness (p. 126)*

## Following the Crowd

On a simply personal level, researchers' personal need to follow and be accepted by the 'academic crowd' can encourage bias. Simple behavioral principles of positive reinforcement and punishment apply here. By following the academic crowd – whether the issue involves a particular research method, selecting a topic to study, the manner in which research hypotheses are formulated, or the lens through which results are interpreted – certain advantages are accrued. According to Sternberg (2003a, b):

*[I]n psychology as in other sciences and other fields, those who follow the crowd generally find the rewards – at least the more immediate ones – to come much more easily and rapidly than do those who defy the crowd (p. xi)*

Particularly when bias involves loyalty to a particular political ideology, academics with sympathies on the 'correct' side of the political spectrum find that they have an easier time: (1) attracting social and/or academic approval from like-minded peers, (2) finding jobs, (3) securing tenure or promotion within their academic departments, (4) getting articles published or grants funded, and (5) having their published studies 'canonized' by the field (Crawford & Jussim, 2018; Inbar & Lammers, 2012; Meisenberg, 2019).

Alternatively, disincentives for holding the wrong political views (that may seep into one's research) include: (1) having one's articles rejected for publication, (2) difficulty getting books published, (3) enduring a hostile work/professional environment, (4) denial of tenure or promotion, (5) reprisals from students, (6) graduate students having difficulty getting recommendation letters, and (7) scientific oblivion (Crawford & Jussim, 2018; Inbar & Lammers, 2012; Jussim, 2019).

## The 'Publish or Perish' Academic Environment

Such drives are cultivated from a 'publish or perish' environment in research settings within top-tier colleges, universities, and think tanks (Rawat & Meena, 2014; Sanghvi, 2021). According to Nabaho and Turyasingura (2019), the publish-or-perish dictum can also lead researchers to seek publication of their work in outlets that have lower publication standards (and thus are of lower quality). Such journals often lack a rigorous peer review system (see also Ritchie, 2020).

The steady pressure on doctoral students to publish articles from their dissertations establishes a need that can lead to the mushrooming of 'predatory' book and journal article publishers who can extract fees from authors for their publication services (e.g., see [Beall's List – of Potential Predatory Journals and Publishers \(bealllist.net\)](http://bealllist.net)).

In some circumstances, academics can sometimes get paid for writing favorable research that polishes the image of a funding source. Or, at the very least, funding sources for research require scholars to at least publicly recognize the source in published materials (Lessig, 2018). In other instances, agencies and organizations are less likely to grant access to researchers collecting data within their entity if they

suspect that the published research will criticize or reflect negatively on their organization (Lessig, 2018). As a result, certain important research questions are simply not asked because finding the answers may be too difficult or prohibitive.

### ***Are There Any Situations in Which Bias Is Good?***

The short answer to this question is 'yes'. However, in order to appreciate the reason why this is so, one needs to appreciate the truism that definitions of bias often shift as a function of the context in which this concept is applied.

To illustrate, a state-of-the-art literature review (that must survey comprehensively a wide variety of conceptual approaches to a given psychological construct) is usually required to be exhaustive in the breadth of its coverage. If one or more important research approaches to the construct under consideration are omitted from the review, then the coverage can be said to be 'biased'. Here, bias is defined as lopsided coverage of a few areas relative to the virtual neglect of other areas that have contributed to a scientific understanding of a construct. Audiences would expect an 'unbiased' literature review to provide a more balanced coverage that encompasses all schools of thought.

In contrast, consider a simplistic scenario in which a math instructor must teach young students that  $2 + 2 = 4$ , even though there may be published work which claims that  $2 + 2 = 5$ . In this scenario, the fair representation of a variety of viewpoints would obviously need to be discouraged in the service of good pedagogy – since the element of 'truth vs. error' has been introduced. Consumers would not charge the math instructor with 'bias' using the definition in the previous example. In fact, one can rightfully argue that consumers would *demand* that the math instructor be 'biased' – that is, biased toward teaching what centuries of math pedagogy has established to be true.

Extending this analogy further, consumers expect medical professionals and pharmaceutical companies to be 'biased' in favor of treatments for ailments that have a long and established track record of clinical effectiveness – as opposed to newer treatments that do not. The consequences here can often mean life or death, so bias in favor of empirically supported treatments is seen as good/best practices.

Extending this analogy to psychology, credentialing and licensing bodies within psychology naturally have a 'bias' toward granting licenses to persons who meet qualifications deemed essential for best practice as opposed to those who do not. In selecting editorial board members, scientific journals will be 'biased' in favor of scholars with established publishing/research reputations as opposed to those who do not. By design, journals are 'biased' against accepting articles whose content does not match the explicitly stated mission of the journal. In all of these examples, 'bias' does not connote something that is bad.

In the context of political bias (discussed in greater detail in Frisby, Chap. 3, this volume), the definitions for 'bias-as-lack-of-coverage-parity' and 'bias-towards-truth' are often hopelessly confused. Here, a scholar may accuse another scholar of 'political bias' on the grounds that the accused' writings appear to consistently favor one side of

the sociopolitical spectrum. What seems to be ignored in such accusations, however, is *the more important question of which interpretation of psychological phenomena has the better research support (using commonly accepted standards of scientific criticism)*. Thus, debates over ‘political bias’ should – in practice – be reframed as which among a variety of viewpoints has the more defensible research support. If a particular political viewpoint within psychological research has consistently better evidence, then the research cannot be said to be ‘biased’ on the grounds that it simply fails to represent an opposing political viewpoint.

## Summary and Next Steps

Readers will note that bias – broadly defined – is a universal human phenomenon that can easily influence psychological science. There is ample evidence that psychologists are aware of this problem, but not as much evidence of self-correction in many psychological subdisciplines. Lilienfeld and Waldman (2007) articulate why the identification and correction of bias should be afforded a central role in psychological science. They write:

*. . . [T]he recent scrutiny accorded to psychological science by psychological scientists themselves exemplifies science working precisely as it should – subjecting claims to intense criticism in a concerted effort to winnow out errors in one’s web of beliefs (p. xvii)*

This text is undergirded by this basic value. Although many different manifestations of bias in psychological science have been discussed here, the problem of *political bias* has been mentioned only briefly. This particular form of bias deserves greater elaboration, as scientific biases of this type are often not consciously recognized by individual researchers and the subdisciplines in which they operate (e.g., see Crawford & Jussim, 2018).

The next chapter (see Frisby, Chap. 3, this volume) examines in more detail the central question of what is meant whenever the term ‘political bias’ is used. In subsequent chapters, the various contributors to this text examine a variety of areas in which political bias can occur. Closing chapters discuss promising avenues for preventing political bias from taking root, as well as strategies for lessening its effects.

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# Chapter 3

## What Is Meant by ‘Politics of Psychology’?



Craig L. Frisby

Psychological research has uncovered and identified the deleterious effects of a wide variety of biasing mechanisms in everyday life, professional clinical practice, and psychological research in academic settings. These biases can influence the validity of psychological test interpretation, the accuracy of human reasoning processes, the fairness and accuracy with which clients from a variety of backgrounds are diagnosed and treated, and how research is conducted (see Frisby, Chap. 2, this volume).

*Political bias*, particularly the kind that can influence all aspects of professional, applied and research psychology – is the exclusive focus of this chapter. Three reasons may explain what makes the study of political bias in psychology so challenging:

1. The many types of biases discussed in the previous chapter (see Frisby, Chap. 2, this volume) can enter into the expression (either intentionally or unintentionally) of political bias.
2. This type of bias can be extremely polarizing, in the sense that its very existence is seen as obvious and ubiquitous by some psychologists, versus being strenuously *denied* by other psychologists.
3. Among psychologists who acknowledge the existence of political bias, they may differ considerably as to how they evaluate the perceived effects of this bias. Some see political bias as a grave threat to the integrity of psychological science (Duarte et al., 2015; Haidt, 2011), while others believe its effects are minimal to non-existent (Gilbert, 2011; Jost, 2011). Some may even defend certain types of biases as deserving of the highest priority among the various values held by professional psychologists (American Psychological Association, 2022a).

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## Colloquial Usage of the Term ‘Politics’

The word ‘politics’ has many shades of meaning in everyday language. Before discussing empirical studies of political bias in psychology, it is necessary to first grapple with the colloquial meaning of this word. One way in which the word ‘politics’ can be understood is when it refers to activities within an organization that are associated with group decision-making; strategies invoked for improving one’s status/position, or attaining goals/objectives within an organization.

When used colloquially, the word ‘politics’ can carry both positive and negative connotations. When used in a positive fashion, ‘finding a political solution to a difficult problem’ generally means that a solution is chosen that is effective at reducing or avoiding criticisms, complaints, or reprisals from individuals or groups (had a politically insensitive solution been made). Here, a person or leader who is described as ‘politically savvy’ connotes a person who is skilled at building consensus or cooperation (as well as minimizing conflict, dissatisfaction, and dissent) among subordinate groups who may have different (and conflicting) goals, loyalties, and interests.

When used in a negative fashion, however, a decision or solution that is described as being ‘political’ connotes a failure to act in an honest, fair, or straightforward manner toward the parties most affected by the decision. This usage implies that decisions were made with an ulterior motive in mind – which may involve the decision-maker’s personal interests or the need to appease unseen parties not directly involved in the decision.

Sometimes the machinations of actual politicians may negatively affect psychological research. For example, a prominent social psychologist writes on the negative personal, public, social, and professional consequences she faced after receiving grant funding for a topic that just so happened to be a target for a senator’s crusade against what he perceived to be wasteful government spending on frivolous topics (Berscheid, 2003). In this example, it can be said that the public’s negative evaluation or impression of her research, or possible difficulties that she may have faced in securing further funding for such research, was influenced by ‘politics’.

## The Psychology of Politics Versus the Politics of Psychology

### *The Psychology of Politics*

Political psychology is an interdisciplinary field dedicated to understanding the psychological processes involved in the behavior of politicians, political parties, and other groups involved in the political process (Cottam et al., 2016; Huddy et al., 2013).

Much of the psychology of politics has its origins in the psychology of personal identity formation, how political group memberships are formed, and what feeds

political intergroup conflict. The well-known “Robber’s Cave Experiment” (Hopper, 2019; Sherif, 1956; Sherif et al., 1988) – which was conducted in the 1950s – has spawned decades of research showing how a strong affinity for group identities affects one’s perceptions of outsiders, perceptions of themselves, as well as perceptions of reality itself (Capozza & Brown, 2000; Eagly et al., 2004; Huddy et al., 2013; Scheepers & Ellemers, 2019; Tajfel, 1981).

Topics of interest to political psychologists begin with the most basic of questions, for example: Why do persons hold the political attitudes and views that they do? What is it about political groups/parties that attracts human allegiance/loyalty? How homogeneous or heterogeneous are persons who identify with the same political ideology/party? Are there certain characteristics that are shared in common among persons who identify with the same political party – but significantly different from characteristics shared by persons who identify with a different political party? Are these characteristics demographic, psychological, or social? Can characteristics that seemingly have no relationship to politics nevertheless predict differences in political/party affiliation? Can any characteristic predict with reasonable accuracy what kinds of persons will be attracted to a certain political party? If so, what are the important differences between characteristics that discriminate between political ideologies vs. those that do not? How do persons belonging to different political parties view the same construct (i.e., morality)? Do politicians tend to display certain personality traits? What is the psychology of voting behavior? Is political intolerance more strongly associated with political conservatism or liberalism? (Capozza & Brown, 2000; Eagly et al., 2004; Huddy et al., 2013; Scheepers & Ellemers, 2019; Tajfel, 1981).

## Basic Definitions

**Defining ‘Ideology’** Jost and Andrews (2012) define *ideology* as a network or system of interrelated beliefs, values, and opinions held by an individual or a group (p. 540). They add that this system or network is typically (but not always) *political* in nature. That is to say, “an ideology contains assumptions about how the social and political world *is* and how it *ought to be*” (p. 540) – or alternatively, what the proper order of society [should be] and how this proper order can be achieved (Erikson & Tedin, 2003, p. 64). Jost and Andrews add that an ideology can either be ‘value-neutral’ or fraught with assumptions that are open to intense criticism – particularly (but not always) from critics who hold an opposing ideology. Used in this sense, ideologies can therefore become “systematically distorted, so as to conceal or misrepresent certain social interests or realities” (p. 540). Perhaps the single definition that combines many of these elements is offered by Freedon (1996), who defined ideology as “clusters of ideas, beliefs, opinions, values and attitudes usually held by identifiable groups, that provide directives, even plans, of action for public policy-making [as] an endeavor to uphold, justify, change or criticize the social and political arrangements of a state or other political community” (Bell, 2013, p. 538; as quoted from Freedon, 1996).

**Defining ‘Political Ideology’** In the final analysis, one of the oldest definitions for political ideologies uses the clearest language. Here, political ideologies are defined as “a doctrine that welded people together into a social group (perhaps as large as a nation) or into one among other contending political forces; it might be identified with an ‘ism’ that could become, in the hands of leaders at the helm of parties or nations, a ‘manipulative art’ and a ‘technique of control’ (Brick, 2013, p. 90; quoting Robert M. MacIver in Gross, 1948).

**What Is a Political Party?** Schattschneider (1942) defined a political party simply as an organized effort to gain political power. The fundamental purpose of political parties is to construct and sustain coalitions that can win elections (Noel, 2013). The winning of elections is highly prized because it is the gateway for power and influence in public policy-making (Bawn et al., 2012).

***Heterogeneity Within Two-Party Systems*** The governments in most countries are dominated by two major political parties (e.g., United States, Canada, United Kingdom, South Korea, Taiwan, Jamaica, to name a few) – although third parties can play an important but secondary role in national politics. At any point in time, one of the two parties enjoys a majority in the country’s legislature, while the other party is viewed as the minority party. At various times throughout the life history of the country, the majority/minority status of the parties fluctuate.

Readers would do well to avoid assumptions of a direct one-to-one chain of causal relationships between the content of political ideologies, person’s sympathetic attitudes and beliefs related to political ideologies, and concrete behaviors that are associated with political party registration and/or voting behavior. The following material discusses some of these complexities.

Two-party systems tend to share in common the central theme of one party being more ‘liberal’ in its platform, while the other party is more ‘conservative’ in its platform (although the definitions for these terms may vary significantly across countries or generations within countries). One familiar organizing scheme is to depict political opinions as situated along a unidimensional bipolar continuum – the most well known of which is the continuum of ‘Left versus Right’. A summary of some of the major issues that differentiate political thinking between the American Left and Right is depicted in Table 3.1.

**Caveats in Interpreting Table 3.1** In order to avoid misinterpretation, there are seven key caveats that must be understood when interpreting the information provided in Table 3.1. These caveats add subtlety and nuance to understanding the psychology of political thinking.

1. **The terms ‘left’ and ‘right’ are used in a neutral sense for descriptive purposes only.** At the time of this writing, differences in political opinions are socially contentious and divisive. In some contexts, these labels can be interpreted as epithets, particularly when they are meant to insult or demean others in front of politically like-minded peers (e.g., ‘Bill is a leftist loon’; ‘Joe is a far-right

**Table 3.1** Basic Differences Between American Left/Right Political Convictions

Issue	Political ‘Left’	Political ‘Right’
Major Party	Democrats	Republicans
Some Overlap With Which Minor Parties?	Independent; Libertarian; Green; American Solidarity Parties	Independent; Libertarian; Constitution; American Solidarity Parties
Ideological Movements Within Major Parties	Centrism, Classical Liberalism, Civil Libertarianism, Progressivism, Social Liberalism, Democratic Socialism	Centrism, Fiscal Conservatism, Libertarianism, Neoconservatism, Paleoconservatism, Right-Wing Populism, Social Conservatism, Religious Conservatism
Role of Government	Generally favors expansion of the role of government in human affairs. Belief that most issues (e.g., poverty) can be solved by government intervention, and that government regulations are needed to protect consumers	Generally favors the reduction of the role of government in human affairs. Belief that many issues (e.g., poverty) cannot be solved by government intervention, and that too many government regulations hinder free market capitalism and job growth
Tax Policies	Tax cuts only for middle to low-income families; higher taxes for wealthy persons and corporations; generally favors raising taxes to fund government programs	Tax cuts for all income levels, including corporations; Generally favors same tax rate for individuals regardless of income
Labor/Unions	Supports rights of workers to organize and join a union; Supports minimum wage increases	Supports Right-To-Work laws in support of worker choice; Oppose minimum wage increases
Trade	Favors trade restrictions	Supports free trade
Health Care	Favors high government regulation and oversight; Support for universal healthcare	Favors lower government regulation; Belief that private companies can provide healthcare services more efficiently than government-run programs
Gay Marriage	Generally supports same-sex marriage, gay adoptions, civil unions, and domestic partnerships	Generally opposes same-sex marriage; but divided on gay adoptions, civil unions, and domestic partnerships
Social Programs	Belief that government should run – and more money should be funneled into – welfare, unemployment benefits, food stamps, and Medicaid programs	Acknowledges the need for social programs, but favors less funding, tighter control, and strengthening of private organizations that support people in need

(continued)

**Table 3.1** (continued)

Issue	Political ‘Left’	Political ‘Right’
Foreign Policy	Favors sending aid to other countries, but disagree with the opposing party on its nature, target, and scope (according to particular situations). When military intervention is required, favors targeted strikes and a more limited use of manpower; Diplomacy and cooperation is preferred for avoiding wars	Favors sending aid to other countries, but disagree with the opposing party on its nature, target, and scope (according to particular situations). When military intervention is required, favors use of full military, particularly in toppling totalitarian regimes; A strong military (“peace through strength”) is preferred for avoiding wars
Energy/ Environmental Issues	Favors restrictions on oil drilling and/or fossil fuel extraction in order to protect environment. Favors tax dollar support for alternative energy solutions; Takes concerns over global warming seriously	Favors expanded drilling to produce more energy at lower cost to consumers. Favor allowing the free market to decide which forms of energy are practical; Is generally skeptical of global warming concerns
Education	Strong advocates for public education; favors Common Core and giving students more money in the form of government loans and grants	Strong advocates for school choice; generally opposes Common Core; favors promotion of the private sector in giving loans; Favors stronger state and local control of education
Crime/Capital Punishment	Favor lighter penalties and/or rehabilitation for nonviolent crimes; generally opposes capital punishment	Favor more strict penalties for commission of crimes; generally favors capital punishment
Individual Liberties	Favors legislation that restricts some freedoms, particularly those perceived to hurt or harm others	Opposes legislation that restricts some freedoms, emphasizing instead personal responsibility
Race Relations	Favors affirmative action, racial preferences, and/or group entitlements	Opposes affirmative action, rejects racial preferences, quotas, set asides; Supports race-neutral college admissions and emphasis on individual merit
Immigration	Favors more loose border restrictions; amnesty and pathway to citizenship for illegals	Favors more strict enforcement of national borders; deportations of illegal immigrants
Abortion	Favors legalized abortion as an outgrowth of women’s reproductive rights	Favor criminalization of abortion as murder of the unborn
Gun Control	Favor more strict regulation of gun control and weapon confiscation	Favor more loose gun control regulation; Supports gun-ownership rights as an outgrowth of strong support for the 2nd amendment of the constitution

(continued)

**Table 3.1** (continued)

Issue	Political ‘Left’	Political ‘Right’
Religion	Favors little or no church intervention in government (primarily for protecting the government); Predisposed to respect and protect rights of secularists	Favors little or no government intervention in religion (primarily for protecting churches); Predisposed to respect and protect Judeo-Christian principles

Adapted from Bohney (2012), Diffen.Com (2021), Schneider (2020)

fascist’). Within the context of this chapter, however, the terms ‘left’ and ‘right’ are useful only insofar as they reflect descriptive endpoints which subsume the widest range of political ideologies that differ considerably in their core beliefs, political methods, and values.

2. **There exist important differences between subgroups that align under the same broad label.** To illustrate, fissures are so pronounced within the left side of the political spectrum, that many writers make a concerted effort to distinguish ‘liberals’ from the mildly pejorative term ‘leftists’ (Paluch, 2021; Prager, 2017). In their view, some who self-identify as ‘liberal’ (in the old-fashioned sense) are often described instead as ‘classical liberals’ (in the sense that their values reflect an older definition of a liberal). In contrast, those favoring more aggressive change in economic policies and practices would be described today as ‘progressives’ (Wagner, 2020; Weindling, 2019).
3. **Political opinions are multidimensional.** Many persons may object to having the totality of their political opinions characterized by a broad label of ‘left’ or ‘right’. Many will say that their political opinion may be closer to one pole for issue A, but are closer to the opposing pole on issue B (e.g., an individual may self-identify as fiscally conservative but socially liberal). That is why a political opinion survey conducted on the same pool of subjects may yield different percentage distributions depending on the specific issue that is the focus of the survey question. A survey question (for a large and representative group of registered voters) that tallies favorable vs. unfavorable opinions on amnesty for illegal immigrants may yield a 50/50 percentage split. In contrast, a different survey question answered by the same group about favorable vs. unfavorable opinions on tax cuts for the rich may yield a 35/65 percentage split.
4. **Political labels may change in meaning and/or belief content over time.** Since American history constantly changes over time in response to unforeseen events, the meaning of political labels can change considerably across decades. Hot-button issues that come to be associated with one political party can, over time, come to be more closely associated with an opposing political party. This shifting of meaning is often due to select contentious issues that can literally paralyze an entire society. One such issue concerns America’s long and troubled history of race politics (Dierenfield, 2008). To illustrate, at one moment in American history, a person referred to as ‘liberal’ believed in free markets, civil liberties under the rule of law, limited government, and economic freedom

(Conway, 2008). During the contentious civil rights conflicts of the 1950s and 1960s in America, a liberal would be at the forefront of the fight for equal rights and nondiscrimination for Blacks. A liberal would favor colorblind policies that would permit Blacks to have fair access to opportunities and be judged without reference to skin color in college admissions, employment, lending, and housing.

In the South during the heyday of the civil rights movement, however, Southern Democrats were the party that supported segregation and Jim Crow laws (Bartlett, 2009; Gould, 2014). As the Democratic party began to embrace civil rights for blacks (initiated by pressure from the federal government), conservative Southern Democrats defected to the Republican Party, which subsequently poisoned many persons' perceptions of the Republican party. Rightly or wrongly, many perceived the Democratic party as 'the party that favors rights for minorities' and the Republican party as 'the party that disfavors minority rights' (e.g., see Kendi, 2022).

Over time however, it would be conservatives who would champion colorblind policies, and it would be contemporary liberals who would come to favor race-conscious policies (e.g., affirmative action, quotas, reparations, racial preferences). This has led some writers to argue that the 'classical liberalism' of times past is most evident in the modern conservative movement (Kurth, 2016; Micklethwait & Wooldridge, 2004; Schlueter & Wenzel, 2016).

Ironically, the progressive label has undergone a more dramatic transformation than the label 'liberal', particularly on matters of race. The root word in progressivism is 'progress' – particularly in support of social reform in the early twentieth century. The word has been generally defined as "the advancement of the human condition – the quality of life, social and economic mobility and overall character of humanity as a whole – through government fulfilling obligations to its citizens" (Hockema, 2016). This is thought to be accomplished through advancements in science, technology, economic development, and social organization (Audiopedia, 2016).

Progressives of the first decades of the twentieth century openly wrote of the mental and general inferiority of certain racial and ethnic groups, as well as advocated eugenics and immigration restriction as a means of fostering 'progress' for American society (Leonard, 2016; Sowell, 2013). In contrast, a contemporary progressive embraces concepts such as social justice, anti-discrimination, racial equality, and minority group rights – while shunning biological ideas in social science and economic inequalities (Johnson, 2020; Lewis-Kraus, 2021; Purkayastha, 2021; Shkliarevsky, 2020).

5. **The same political label may have slightly different meanings (and may result in different voting behaviors) across different settings.** The meaning of political labels may shift slightly, as well as result in different voting behaviors, depending on differences in the settings in which such labels are used. Settings can differ both within countries (e.g., difference across states domestically), as well as across countries (e.g., international differences). To illustrate, Feinberg et al. (2017) showed that even though Americans may share the same broad political identity (i.e., identifying as either Democrats or Republicans),

individuals in 'blue' states (regardless of political identification) were more likely to support left-leaning policies and vote for Democratic candidates than individuals (regardless of political identification) residing in 'red' states.

Similarly, the labels 'liberalism' vs. 'conservatism' have slightly different meanings in America when compared to Europe, particularly as these labels apply to economic issues. In Europe, the term 'economic liberalism' is associated with strong support for free market economies, private property rights and ownership, free trade and open competition, low taxes, balanced budgets, and opposition to socialism and economic decisions made by collective institutions. Within America, in contrast, such ideas would be more consistent with the ideology of 'economic conservatism' (Adams, 2001; Carl, 2014; Gamble, 2013; Oatley, 2019).

- 6. Political ideology or party membership is an imperfect predictor of voting behavior.** There are times when rancor, conflict, and division occurs among the electorate – not because of party loyalty to different political positions – but rather due to idiosyncratic personality characteristics of high-profile political candidates that can either attract voters from opposing parties or repel voters from within the same party. To illustrate, Barack Obama burst upon the national political scene (as a senator from Illinois) due to a speech delivered at the 2004 Democratic National Convention. Although many other previous African American politicians had tried (unsuccessfully) to run for the American presidency, Senator Obama was the first to be nominated for the presidency by a major political party.

Senator Obama had many important qualities going for him. As a politician, he struck many voters as young, charming, energetic, handsome, articulate, even-tempered, thoughtful, scholarly, and judicious in his language when dealing with political adversaries (Jittan & Immelman, 2008). His personal story, growing up as a biracial child of a Caucasian mother and a black African father, struck many Americans as the kind of personal story that symbolized racial healing in America. Add to this the symbolism of electing America's first black president – an event that many believed to be unthinkable (Alwaysessence, 2003; Steele, 2008), and others who believed that to do so would decisively heal America's racial problems (Marinucci, 2007). Many Republican voters (both black and white) were torn between party loyalty and the palpable attraction of these positives to break with their party and vote for Senator Obama for president.

In contrast, billionaire entrepreneur Donald Trump struck many voters as brash, insensitive, unpolished, narcissistic, and crude in his language – and totally unfit in his qualifications to occupy the highest political office in America (Ferner, 2016). Yet at the same time, many Americans saw Mr. Trump as a strong and no-nonsense straight-talker, a practical problem solver, and a fresh political outsider who was not likely to be seduced by Washington politics (Coulter, 2016). While Mr. Trump's candidacy attracted the votes of blue collar Democratic voters – many within his (Republican) party were so repulsed by his candidacy that they broke with their party in refusing to vote for him for president (Wikipedia, 2020).

The point here is that political ideologies do not perfectly align with party loyalty – particularly in cases when a candidate’s personal qualities impel voters to break with party traditions.

7. **There are subtle distinctions between political parties versus sociopolitical ideologies.** Although persons may tend to associate a particular position on sociopolitical issues with a particular political party, the reality is that sociopolitical ideologies and actual political parties function independently in important ways.

Ideologies and political parties share certain similarities. Fundamentally, both sociopolitical ideologies and formal political parties “tell you who is on your side and who is not” (Noel, 2013, p. 7), as well as what positions one should either support or oppose. But the differences between formal political parties versus sociopolitical ideologies can be subtle and nuanced. While political parties were defined previously as organized efforts to gain political power (Schattschneider, 1942), an ideology is defined as a shared set of policy preferences (Noel, 2013), or a system of constrained beliefs (Converse, 1964; Gerring, 1998; Knight, 2006).

Political parties develop platforms that are designed to woo voters, but the role of an ideology is to ‘sell’ the platform to voters. This is accomplished by delineating the underlying principles that tie party platform issues together – which in turn helps the platform to be easier to understand and digest. Formal political parties tend to narrowly prescribe for its members who one’s ‘enemies’ and ‘allies’ should be. While sociopolitical ideologies can also be just as rigid, ideological coalitions can be more flexible and fluid depending on which particular policy issues are shared with others. This can make for ‘strange bedfellows’, as potential allies that are in ideological agreement with the party on some issues may become enemies if they do not share ideological agreement on other issues deemed to be most important to the party.

### **Political Differences Are the Source of Interindividual and Intergroup Conflict**

Human beings are psychologically hardwired to form, belong, and express loyalty to social groupings (Mason, 2018). Unfortunately, this can involve the creation of real or imagined psychological boundaries between ones’ own group and members of perceived outgroups – where there is a natural favoritism toward ingroup members and a demonization of outgroup members and their beliefs. At the time of this writing, the American electorate has become deeply divided along partisan fault lines related to religion, race, social class, sexual orientation, and gender (Abramowitz, 2011; Mason, 2018). This divide has generated poisonous rancor directed at persons or groups deemed to be on the wrong side of the political divide. This partisanship leads to a deep sense of distrust, resentment, and anger directed toward ‘the other’. Here, members of opposing sides develop exaggerated and inflexible stereotypes about members of the opposing side (Graham et al., 2012).

Those on the Democratic party/liberal/progressive side of the political aisle characterize those on the Republican/conservative/traditional side of the political aisle as racists, gun fanatics, Bible-thumpers, moralistic, mean, uncaring, greedy, backward-thinking, intolerant, xenophobic, unsophisticated, and uncompassionate (Bryce, 2014; Coulter, 2002; Duarte, 2017; Kessler, 2011; Pew Research Center, 2016).

Those on the Republican party/conservative/traditional side of the political aisle characterize those on the Democratic party/liberal/progressive side of the political aisle as dumb, reverse-racists, hedonistic, nihilistic, patronizing to minorities, bleeding hearts, prioritizing feeling over thinking, immoral, godless, out of touch with reality, self-righteous, immature, hypocritical, unhinged; and intolerant (Coulter, 2002; Hawkins, 2011; Pew Research Center, 2016).

### ***The Politics of Psychology***

While academic scholarship dealing with the ‘*psychology of politics*’ addresses the psychological processes and principles that permeate political divisions and conflicts (broadly conceived), the phrase ‘*politics of psychology*’ (sometimes called ‘politicized psychology’; Tetlock, 1994) uncovers how these processes and principles play out within all facets of professional, training, applied and research psychology.

Psychologists are human beings like everyone else, and are not immune from harboring heartfelt sociopolitical beliefs, forming collegial subgroups that coalesce around these beliefs, as well as letting these beliefs influence their professional work (see Redding, 2023). In fact, many of the chapters within this text cite research that is overwhelming in converging on the conclusion that political bias in psychology is real and pervasive (e.g., see Redding, Chap. 4, this volume).

Just as many members of political parties hate the opposing party more than they love cooperating for the common good (Masket, 2016), partisan researchers in psychology are often more loyal to ideological convictions rather than being respectful of rigorous, high-quality research findings that may contradict their beliefs.

Partisan psychologists are also prone to join partisan organizations within psychology that are comprised of a majority of like-minded psychologists. From the groupthink and tribalism literature (Booker, 2020; Esser, 1998; Newby, 2020), we know that sustained exposure to like-minded views has a tendency to result in group decisions and scholarly products that are more extreme than would be the case if the group was comprised of a wider variety of viewpoints.

‘Politics of Psychology’ is a broad umbrella phrase that identifies and discusses these issues. Many of the subtypes of biases discussed in the previous chapter (see Frisby, 2023a, Chap. 2, this volume) often serve as the handmaidens to political processes that play out within psychology. Given this reality, this chapter defines political bias in psychology as follows:

*Political bias* in psychology occurs when certain implicit or explicit assumptions, having their roots in a sociopolitical ideology, have influenced one or more of the various arenas within which psychologists are trained, socialized, educated, and selected for employment positions in applied or research settings. In the academic arena, political bias can often influence who gets hired for positions; which scholar receives tenure and promotion with ease or difficulty; which scholars' works are consistently included in course syllabi and read in professional preparation training programs; which articles are accepted or rejected for publication; and which grants are funded. In the research arena, political bias influences the invention of psychological constructs; the cultivation of research questions to study such constructs; the design of instruments used to measure constructs; the construction of samples and the collection of research data; the analysis of such data; and the interpretation of findings. In the clinical practice arena, political bias can influence the content of professional practice guidelines promoted by professional organizations. In the arena involving state/national professional organizations for psychologists, political bias influences the initiatives on which organization money is spent; the content of professional guidelines crafted by professional organizations; the content and direction of political lobbying efforts on behalf of the organization; as well as the public stances that professional psychology organizations take (or do not take) with respect to social issues.

The sources that generate pressure in the direction of political bias can be *external* to psychology, or they can be *internal* pressures that originate from within psychology. An example of external pressures is illustrated by findings from psychological research being conformed to the whims of political regimes within which psychologists work (e.g., see Knoell and Jou, Chap. 31, this volume; Dafermos, 2014; Vine, 2009), or when advocacy groups from outside of psychology – but within academia – attempt to exert pressure on psychological researchers to 'walk back' or renounce their findings (see Rind, Chap. 30, this volume; Slaughter, 2020). Forces that can exert pressures for bias can be internal to psychology, in the sense that psychologists' socialization with professional peers, psychology journals, and professional psychology organizations can cultivate pressures to 'follow the crowd' and to not pay close attention to scientific skepticism (Jussim, 2020; Lilienfeld, 2012).

## **A Brief History of Psychology's Efforts to Identify and Counteract Political Bias**

Musa al-Gharbi (2020) chronicled key touchstones in the history of 'viewpoint diversity activism' between 1923 and 2011 in the social (including psychological) sciences. Narrowing the focus to psychology, however, various psychology researchers have raised concerns about the effects of political bias on the integrity of scientific research. Over 35 years ago, Stuart (1984) analyzed 23 introductory psychology

textbooks for politicized bias in discussions of mental illness, and found that the textbooks they examined were not biased in favor of what they characterized as a ‘radical left-wing ideology’.

In contrast, Tetlock (1994) was one of the first psychologists in contemporary times to argue forcefully that a completely value-neutral political psychology is impossible. As illustrations of his thesis, he discusses Ralph White’s historical analyses on the causes of war and peace, and David Sears and Donald Kinder’s research on the construct of ‘symbolic racism’ – and argued that these researchers’ private political passions served to contaminate what should have been more objective and dispassionate scientific standards of evidence and proof.

If a completely value-neutral psychology is impossible, then perhaps more balance in political perspectives of psychologists may counteract this trend. Along these lines, Redding (2001) argued that the lack of political diversity across many subfields in psychology threatens the validity of conclusions from psychological research, and argued for more representation from conservative perspectives.

The Redding (2001) article is significant in a number of ways: First, political bias, in theory, can have its origins in a wide variety of political perspectives along the political continuum (e.g., Heywood, 2021). While the Tetlock (1994) article was ‘politically balanced’ in its two illustrations of how bias can operate, the Redding (2001) article was the first of its kind to unapologetically and aggressively argue that political bias in psychology is overwhelmingly lopsided toward left/progressive political sympathies.

Second, the Redding (2001) article built a case for expanding socio-politically diverse perspectives in psychology by fundamentally appealing to the field’s need for fidelity to psychology’s own stated values (i.e., the celebration of diversity and inclusivity) and ethical principles (e.g., see American Psychological Association, 2022a). By pointing out the disconnect between psychology’s aggressive push for diversity and inclusivity within its ranks (defined almost exclusively in racial/ethnic terms) – versus the near-complete absence of conservative psychologists (or at least psychological ideas that are contrary to liberal/progressive presuppositions) – it becomes difficult to avoid charges of hypocrisy. The more data that is brought to bear on this disconnect (see Redding, 2023), the more it becomes obvious and inescapable that psychology (i.e., professional organizations, academia, teaching, research, and practice) engages in a stunning hypocrisy about which it has no self-awareness.

Third, the Redding (2001) article introduced the need for readers to consider how the lack of diverse perspectives in psychological research may damage the credibility of psychologists in the eyes of policymakers and the general public – at least half of which are not politically liberal (Saad, 2022). Each new APA president must encourage and motivate his/her various constituencies that psychology is important, vital, and useful to politicians who have the power and influence to support legislation favorable to supporting psychological services. When politically homogeneous psychology organizations allow ideological groupthink (see Jussim, 2020) to shape thinking in more extreme directions (e.g., see Sunstein, 2009), they run the risk of

alienating the very persons who are needed to support, sustain, and advance the profession.

Fourth, the political orientation of clients of psychological services is a neglected field of study in clinical psychology (Redding, 2020). The Redding (2001) article underscores the need for clinicians to be aware of a significant portion of the human population that do not share liberal sociopolitical views, and live their lives in ways that are largely alien to progressives (e.g., in areas related to religious belief and observance, attitudes toward different forms of sexual expression, child rearing, leisure hobbies, and family values).

Mullen, Bauman, and Skitka (2003) wrote an article entitled '*Avoiding the Pitfalls of Politicized Psychology*', in which they reviewed research showing that individuals from both the 'right' and 'left' side of the political spectrum can have difficulty recognizing that there can be many sides to a given issue, as well as having difficulty in recognizing the necessary trade-offs involved in finding solutions to problems. In addition, they concluded that psychologists need to be aware of how their own values shape the types of research they conduct, as well as the inferences drawn from research. Finally, they argued that the same results can be construed very differently depending on the lens through which they are viewed.

In 2005, the book '*Destructive Trends in Mental Health: The Well Intentioned Path to Harm*' was published. The book had the added distinction of being edited by two distinguished psychologists, who between them: served as co-founder and first president of the Committee for the Advancement of Psychological Professions and Sciences; received APA's award for Distinguished Contributions to Applied Psychology as a Professional Practice; served as past president of APA Division 12 (the society of Clinical Psychology) and Division 29 (Psychotherapy); founded four campuses of the California School of Professional Psychology; and served as past president of APA. The book critically examines the validity and integrity of various popular movements within professional psychology and mental health services. They and chapter authors argued that certain topics and professional practices are protected from scrutiny and scientific criticism for no other reason than the fact that they avoid challenging taboo topics (e.g., intelligence testing and racial group differences; the definition of homophobia; the cultural sensitivity movement; attention deficit hyperactivity diagnoses; and abortion – among other topics).

As stated earlier, it is natural for human beings to hold a variety of political opinions on a variety of issues. Human beings also affiliate and identify with a wide variety of religious faiths, or hold no religious convictions at all. However, political views and religious convictions can be significantly correlated, as is the case with political conservatism and religious faith (Greeley & Hout, 2006). To address the role and treatment of religious perspectives in psychology, Nicholas Cummings, William O'Donohue, and Janet Cummings et al. (2009) edited '*Psychology's War on Religion*'. This book was written, in part, to call attention to psychology's (in general) and APA's (in particular) perceived prejudice against psychological perspectives which respect the views of persons/psychologists of religious faith. In short, the book's editors and authors opined that this 'war' ultimately reduces to

conflicts over differing definitions of ‘right vs. wrong’ – particularly in regard to hot-button issues such as abortion, homosexuality, and the death penalty.

Jonathan Haidt (2011) was one of the first well-known psychologists to support the compilation of quantitative data on political bias among psychologists. In addition, Haidt outlined problems that can result from such bias, and suggested concrete methods for combatting political bias. During a talk at the annual meeting of the Society for Personality and Social Psychology (SPSP; APA Division 8), Haidt asked political conservatives to raise their hands, which yielded only 3 hands raised in a sea of more than 1000 audience members. He then used this as a springboard for arguing that such political lopsidedness has serious negative consequences. Such consequences included the unwillingness to consider ‘taboo’ hypotheses, as well as overt and covert discrimination against politically conservative psychology students. Haidt subsequently went on to found Heterodox Academy, a non-profit advocacy group of academics in a wide variety of subdisciplines within the social sciences that champions open inquiry and viewpoint diversity in academia and college campuses ([Heterodox Academy - Search \(bing.com\)](#)).

It was not until 2012, and then a few years later in 2015, when the problem of political bias in psychology exploded so forcefully in academic psychology journals. Inbar and Lammers (2012) published a provocative article in *Perspectives on Psychological Science* entitled “*Political Diversity in Social and Personality Psychology*”. In the same volume, five brief commentaries from scholars from both within and outside of social psychology were also published.

In their target article, Inbar and Lammers (2012) surveyed 800 social and personality psychologists and extracted five interesting conclusions from their findings: First, only 6% of their sample described themselves as politically conservative overall. Second, there was more diversity of political opinion on economic issues and foreign policy (as opposed to social issues); Third, respondents significantly underestimated the proportion of conservatives among their colleagues. Fourth, those conservatives surveyed feared negative consequences of revealing their political beliefs to their colleagues. Fifth, many in the sample reported that they would discriminate against openly conservative colleagues – with more liberal respondents being more likely to discriminate against conservative colleagues.

Duarte et al. (2015) submitted a provocative article to *Brain and Behavioral Sciences* entitled “*Political diversity will improve social psychological science*”. In the same volume, 33 brief commentaries from scholars both within and outside of social psychology were published, followed by a response from authors of the target article (Crawford et al., 2015). In their target article, Duarte et al. (2015) made the following four points:

1. **Although academic psychology was politically diverse in the past, the last 50 years (from the time of their writing) has witnessed a significant loss of political diversity.**

The authors support this claim with data from surveys showing that self-identification among psychologists has steadily shifted leftward since the 1960s. While many fields such as business, computer science, engineering, and technical

fields show a relatively balanced distribution of those who self-identify as liberals and conservatives – psychology surveys reveal a gross imbalance of self-identified liberals compared to conservatives (as high as 10 to 1; see Duarte et al., 2015). For a more detailed discussion of psychologists’ political orientations, see Redding (2023).

While most of the 33 commentaries agreed with Duarte et al.’s (2015) view of a lopsided political orientation bias in social psychology, others took issue with certain points made in the target article. Some of the commentaries asserted that the authors were too quick to generalize the liberal leanings of social psychology to the rest of the world beyond America. For example, Bilewicz et al. (2015) argued that in other parts of the world (e.g., post-communist nations of Eastern Europe), economic conservatism is positively correlated with social liberalism. Binning and Sears (2015) argued that political diversity – while important – is not as important as the more pressing concern of ethnic, racial, and socioeconomic diversity within social psychology.

**2. The lack of political diversity can undermine the validity of social psychological science when liberal values are embedded into research questions and methods. As a result, researchers are prone to avoid or underappreciate politically unpalatable research topics, and such avoidance can produce conclusions that mischaracterize liberals and conservatives alike.**

Duarte et al. (2015) argued that good science depends on self-correction from within (p. 4). The consistent absence of critical self-reflection among scholars within academic fields leads to a ‘cohesive moral community’ that creates its own ‘shared reality’. Constant marination in this shared reality blinds its members to important hypotheses and research questions needing study.

Duarte et al. (2015) cite the work of sociologist Christian Smith (2003), who summarized left-leaning ideological narratives in sociology as follows (as quoted in Duarte et al., 2015, p. 4):

*Once upon a time, the vast majority of human persons suffered in societies and social institutions that were unjust, unhealthy, repressive, and oppressive. These traditional societies were reprehensible because of their deep-rooted inequality, exploitation, and irrational traditionalism. . . . But the noble human aspiration for autonomy, equality, and prosperity struggled mightily against the forces of misery and oppression, and eventually succeeded in establishing modern, liberal, democratic . . . welfare societies. While modern social conditions hold the potential to maximize the individual freedom and pleasure of all, there is much work to be done to dismantle the powerful vestiges of inequality, exploitation, and repression. This struggle for the good society in which individuals are equal and free to pursue their self-defined happiness is the one mission truly worth dedicating one’s life to achieving. (Smith, 2003, p. 82)*

Ainslie (2015) opines that a politically liberal worldview actively advances ‘humanistic’ values and opposes any research perceived as giving license to base human impulses (e.g., prejudice, greed, racism, sexual lust).

The authors support their assertion about the loss of validity in social psychology research by citing high-profile studies that have failed to replicate, a handful of

high-profile discoveries of scientific fraud, and studies that have been found to arrive at their results through questionable research practices. All of these problems have been compiled and amply validated in a variety of scientific fields by a book, published 5 years later, by Ritchie (2020).

Ditto et al. (2015) offer some interesting observations as to why social psychology may be particularly susceptible to political bias. They opine that social psychology’s central assumption – namely, that human behavior and outcomes are largely determined by social forces – “lies precisely on the intellectual fault line of [politically] left [vs.] [politically] right ideological conflict” (p. 23). In their view, this explains why there is a general reluctance in social psychology to accept research that posits any genetic contribution to intelligence and personality.

### **3. Increased political diversity would likely improve social psychological science by reducing the impact of confirmation bias, and by empowering dissenting minorities to improve the quality of the majority’s thinking.**

*Confirmation bias* can be defined as the tendency for researchers to search for evidence that will confirm their existing beliefs while also ignoring or downplaying disconfirming evidence (Nickerson, 1998). Duarte et al. argue that the tendency for confirmation bias becomes considerably stronger when the subject matter triggers strong moral emotions, group identity is threatened, or when groups operate within ‘echo chambers’ – as is often the case when persons polarize by political attitudes. Due to this polarization, persons are far better at identifying the flaws in other people’s arguments (i.e., those who hold an opposing belief system) and evidence than recognizing their own flaws. This process often occurs within the journal peer-review process, where “reviewers . . . work extra hard to find flaws with papers whose conclusions they dislike, and to be more permissive about methodological issues when they endorse the conclusions” (p. 8; e.g., see also Frisby, 2023b, c).

Duarte et al. (2015) argue that when there exist little or no non-liberal researchers to raise questions, challenge assumptions, or frame hypotheses in alternative ways, then research conclusions in politically charged studies may fail to converge on the truth. Chambers and Schlenker (2015) agree, adding that political homogeneity in science has the effect of minimizing skepticism and creating premature and unwarranted consensus (or at least the image of consensus when none exists). According to Duarte et al. (2015), calls for political diversity have both creative (i.e., the creation of new areas of research) as well as evaluative (i.e., pointing out overlooked flaws in existing research) aspects.

In the former category (creative research), Duarte et al. (2015) point to burgeoning research that validates the accuracy of certain stereotypes (in the face of an overwhelming characterization of stereotypes as inherently inaccurate), an area that was inaugurated by a self-avowed conservative (McCauley & Stitt, 1978). Here, the assumption of stereotype inaccuracy has been subjected to systematic empirical testing, which has led to the correction of one of social psychology’s most longstanding falsehoods (Duarte et al., 2015, p. 6; for a dissenting view, see Eagly, 2015). They also discuss the creation of the *ideological conflict hypothesis* in prejudice research, a hypothesis which posits that people across the political spectrum

are prejudiced against ideologically dissimilar others. Before this research, social psychology studies routinely linked prejudice against certain favored groups as being mostly characteristic of political conservatives. Duarte et al. (2015) attribute much of this new thinking to a self-identified libertarian (not a liberal; see Brandt et al., 2014).

They give other examples of how research constructs in environmental studies are defined poorly and vaguely. This then permits those who may disagree with the values of environmentalists to be depicted as being in ‘denial of self-evident truths’. Here, statements that are presented as descriptive facts are in reality *philosophical/ideological prescriptions* – which then allows disagreement with philosophical/ideological prescriptions to be mischaracterized as ‘denial of facts’. In short, “. . . [T]he problem is the presumption that one set of attitudes is right and those who disagree are in denial” (Duarte, 2015, p. 5).

Another example provided by Duarte et al. (2015) describes how a questionnaire survey designed ostensibly to assess the relationship between social dominance orientation and unethical decision-making included embedded liberal political values in their definitions of important terms in the survey. Thus, respondents could be characterized as ‘unethical’ if they did not endorse liberal values. The authors argue that such practices are much more likely to happen in politically homogeneous fields.

Brandt and Proulx (2015) provide labels for many of the improper (i.e., politically biased) practices discussed by Duarte et al. (2015). These are: (1) *Premature theoretical closure*, defined as the claim that a particular finding is ‘firmly established’, when in fact many of the necessary conditions that would be needed to support this claim have not been tested; (2) *Imprecise naming*, defined as the practice of the premature naming of constructs after testing only a limited range of conditions; and (3) *Begging the question*, defined as framing research questions, methodology, and/or assessment strategies in a manner that artificially limits the outcome to conclusions favored by the researcher; (4) *Déjà vu constructs*, defined as all-too-common situations where supposedly ‘new’ theories that appear in academic psychology are little more than old theories wrapped up in new packaging; (5) *Homophone constructs*, defined as situations where different constructs are given the same name, leading to a misunderstanding of constructs as essentially interchangeable; and (6) the *naturalistic fallacy*, defined as the tendency to mistake research support for a (politically tinged) study hypothesis as support for the perception that the hypothesis reflects “the way that things naturally are” in the real world.

### ***Differences of Opinion on Duarte et al.’s (2015) Political Diversity Argument***

With respect to improving social psychology via the inclusion of political diversity, Schumm (2016) argues that politically conservative scholars possess unique advantages that may facilitate more careful theoretical and empirical scientific work. This may be manifested in a more heightened sensitivity to flawed methodologies in some controversial areas (p. 149).

However, some of the commentators to Duarte et al.’s (2015) article disagreed with the proposal to recruit more conservatives into social psychology. For example, Baumeister (2015) was skeptical that this proposal would come to fruition in the near future. Rather, he argued that liberal thinkers should assume that conservative thinkers are politically biased, and strive to build counter-arguments against the positions they hold.

In considering Duarte et al.’s advocacy for political balance, however, Ditto et al. (2015) caution against the possibility of an uncritical acceptance of ‘equivalency bias’. They define equivalency bias as the gratuitous assumption that both liberals and conservatives are equally bestowed with the same psychological strengths and weaknesses. Although empirical data may conceivably prove this to be accurate, “defaulting to such an equivalency bias in place of a liberal one will leave our science no better off” (p. 23).

Everett (2015) questions Duarte et al.’s (2015) proposal for an intentional ‘affirmative action’ for conservatives in social psychology – by arguing that the necessary disclosure from conservatives of their political leanings may result in the kinds of discrimination outlined by Duarte et al. (2015). Funder (2015) argues that, although the general principle of increasing political diversity among social psychologists is indeed laudable, there is a challenge involved in attracting *reasonable* (as opposed to more radical) conservatives.

According to Gelman and Gross (2015), there is (1) no systematic attempts to examine the relationship between epistemic quality and the political composition of social-scientific communities, and (2) there is no evidence that political diversity produces more high-quality research within a scientific field (p. 26). Hibbing et al. (2015) argue that the social-psychology-needs-political-diversity argument fails to appreciate the dispositional and worldview differences between liberals and conservatives – which, in their view, are too deeply rooted as to cast serious doubt on political integration among social psychology researchers. Hilbig and Moshagen (2015) argue that, when considered within the context of research from international social psychologists, the causal link between lopsided political party representation and a leftward political bias in social psychology has not been established. Kessler et al. (2015) argue that even if political diversity were to exist in social psychology, it would most likely cause increasing conflicts among research groups (e.g., in how social problems are defined).

#### **4. The under-representation of non-liberals in social psychology is most likely due to a combination of self-selection, hostile climate, and discrimination**

The simple observation that a gross imbalance within psychology in self-identified political representation exists is rarely – if ever – disputed (e.g., see Redding, 2023). However, this is an entirely separate issue from the question of *why* such imbalances exist in the first place. One side argues that hostility toward, and palpable biases against conservative viewpoints are real.

To illustrate, Redding (2012) discusses the hostile reaction of academics in response to a study on the effects of gay (sometimes called ‘lesbigay’) parenting

(Regnerus, 2012). Unlike similar studies that showed either no differences or more positive outcomes for the children of lesbian parents, the Regnerus study found that children of lesbian parents showed worse outcomes compared to children of heterosexual parents. The response from academia was swift and severe. Over 200 scholars sent a letter to the journal editors objecting to the article's publication, with some scholars publishing severe critiques of the study and the journal review process that led to its publication. The study author's former department chair published an OpEd criticizing the study as 'pseudoscience', and the author's university subjected the author to an intensive investigation for possible scientific misconduct.

McArdle (2011) points out that statistical disproportionalities in psychologists' political affiliations do not always imply overt bias, and identifies a small number of opposing arguments that may be plausible, to wit:

- (a) Smart people are almost always liberal
- (b) Curiosity and interest in ideas is a liberal trait
- (c) Conservatives are too rigid and authoritarian to maintain the open mind required of a professor
- (d) Education erases false conservative ideas and turns people into liberals
- (e) Conservatives don't want to be professors because they're more interested in something else (e.g., money, the military)
- (f) Conservatives don't want to be professors because they're anti-intellectual
- (g) Conservatives hold false beliefs that make them ineligible to be professors

The empirical evaluation of these arguments was explored in detail by Duarte et al. (2015). When considered as a whole, however, these speculations can be collectively viewed as 'self-selection' or 'natural consequences' arguments, which some writers support (e.g., see Gilbert, 2011; Gross & Fosse, 2012; Jacquet, 2011).

In an article published in the *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, Eitan et al. (2018) claimed to provide the first systematic empirical tests for the role of politics in academic psychology research. The investigators examined a large sample of scientific articles from social psychology by having raters quantitatively evaluate the content of the abstracts with respect to its treatment of conservatives vs. liberals. In their article, they introduce the term '*evaluative differences*' and '*explanatory differences*'. Evaluative differences were illustrated in the finding that conservatives are described more negatively than liberals. Explanatory differences were illustrated in the finding that conservatism is more likely to be the focus of explanation than liberalism.

Extending the work of Duarte et al. (2015), Crawford and Jussim (2018) published a book that provides greater depth and detail in the manner in which political bias in social psychology influences theory generation, hypothesis testing, research methods and design, and in the interpretation of research. Finally, both graduate students and seasoned professors share personal experiences of having experienced political bias in graduate school, academic publishing, and in professional settings.

## Politicized Topics Within Psychology

The essence of the scientific enterprise is skepticism, disagreement, and debate – with the hope that out of these processes emerge directions for better science and more firm conclusions that can be trusted (e.g., see Dunn et al., 2012; Zur Institute, 2021). Lilienfeld edited a special section in the *Archives of Scientific Psychology* that reflects these processes (Lilienfeld, 2020). There are topics researched and written about in psychology that are not overtly politicized – meaning that their content and implications may have passionate defenders or critics – yet they do not tend to polarize psychologists holding liberal vs. conservative political sympathies (See Table 3.1). In contrast, other topics are so politically polarizing that they can rarely be discussed without generating acrimony from all sides of the political (i.e., liberal vs. conservative) spectrum.

Controversies over some politicized topics have burned brightly in the past, but may seem to have died out in contemporary times – with one side appearing to have ‘won the debate’. Readers should not interpret perceptions of ‘relative calm’ as meaning an absence of controversy. Politicized controversies differ with respect to which forums are provided for showcasing viewpoints. To illustrate, two or more sides of some politicized controversies are afforded unfettered exposure within ‘mainstream’ psychology. When dueling sides are fairly represented within mainstream psychology journals and conferences, then controversies are kept alive in the minds of contemporary psychology students, clinicians, researchers, and consumers.

With other controversies, however, only one side is represented within mainstream psychology – as opposing sides originate from audiences of non-psychologists/non-academics in the general public. Here, the impression may be given that mainstream psychologists are all of one accord in supporting one side, when in fact dissenting opinions from psychologists (having views that are similar to the general public’s views) find it difficult to gain a hearing due to overwhelming hostility from mainstream psychology journals or conferences. Anticipating critical headwinds in opposition to unpopular contrarian viewpoints (Jussim, 2020), some authors simply choose to self-censor and hide their views (Bar-Tai, 2017; Legge, 2021). In other situations, contrarian researchers may simply seek sympathetic publication outlets that are far removed from mainstream psychology. Some contrarian viewpoints may receive a fair hearing from psychology outlets, but these outlets represent branches of psychology that are not as well known, large, or populous as psychology branches with larger memberships (e.g., clinical, counseling, social, personality psychology). A brief sampling of some of the most highly politicized topics within psychology is given below, presented alphabetically and with no implied order of importance:

## ***Abortion (Psychological Effects Of)***

Abortion is the termination of the baby's life during any phase of pregnancy. One side believes that a pregnant woman has the right to terminate or keep a pregnancy, on the grounds that they should have complete control of medical decisions related to a woman's body. Many psychologists who study this issue are prone to argue that abortions do not entail long-term deleterious psychological effects. As one prominent example, the American Psychological Association released a task force report on mental health and abortion (American Psychological Association, Task Force on Mental Health and Abortion, 2008). In an adapted online summary of the report from the American Psychological Association (2022b), the following statements were made:

*Research has shown that having an abortion does not increase a woman's risk for depression, anxiety or post-traumatic stress disorder . . . the relative risk of mental health problems following a single elective first-trimester abortion is of no greater risk to mental health than carrying that pregnancy to term . . . This research review found no evidence that a single abortion harms a woman's mental health*

Pro-life psychologists (McNair, 2009) argued that the APA report's conclusions were predetermined – citing the overwhelming presence of 'pro-choice' female psychologists on the task force. One pro-choice psychologist argued that the APA report primarily relied on only one study for its conclusions (i.e., Gilchrist et al., 1995), and criticized the report for ignoring findings from his own research showing that having an abortion is linked with mental health risks over time (Ferguson et al., 2006, 2013). Other psychologists zero in on the moral implications of abortion, and opine that pro-abortion advocacy ignores the fundamental argument that abortion is the intentional murder of a human being (O'Donohue & Dyslin, 1996).

## ***Evolutionary Psychology (EP)***

Winegard et al. (2014) define evolutionary psychology (EP) as a theoretical perspective that applies evolutionary principles to the study of human behavior (p. 474; see also Net Ingenuity, 2022). EP has its origins in *sociobiology*, which is the study of the biological (especially ecological, evolutionary, and genetic) aspects of social organization and behavior in both animals and humans (Merriam-Webster, 2022). Since the publication of E.O. Wilson's (1975) *Sociobiology: The New Synthesis*, which represented an attempt by Wilson to integrate and consolidate the fields of animal and human behavioral studies, an immediate and palpable backlash both within and outside of academia occurred (e.g., see Allen et al., 1975; Frankel, 1979). This critical perspective argues that biologically based views of human nature represent little more than elegant justifications for unjust social systems and other unjust social practices (e.g., sexism, racism, classism; see Garlapati, 2021). Mackiel et al. (2023) describe the historical and contemporary political forces (having their

origins from both the political right and political left) that have attacked EP as a legitimate discipline of study within academic psychology.

Although left-leaning political views probably explain some manifestations of hostility toward EP, some have argued that political orientation is an imperfect predictor of a scholar’s willingness or unwillingness to apply evolutionary principles to human behavior (Perry & Mace, 2010; Tybur et al., 2007). Many supporters of EP opine that the *misunderstanding* of basic principles of EP is a more powerful predictor of hostility to EP than is political ideology (Perry & Mace, 2010). As one example, Winegard et al. (2014) documented eight types of errors that misrepresent EP in 15 widely used sex and gender textbooks for college undergraduates. These perceived misrepresentations included, but were not limited to, the claim that confirmatory evidence for EP is weak, and thus unfalsifiable; the claim that EP teaches that biology explains all human behavior; the claim that EP teaches that whatever naturally exists is morally good; the claim that evolutionary psychologists have a conservative, right-wing political agenda that influences their research; and the claim that principles from EP are dangerous if widely disseminated.

Buss and von Hippel (2018) identified four interlocking barriers that, in their view, explain resistance among psychologists to understand human behavior according to the principles of evolutionary psychology. These are:

1. A left-liberal political ideology shared by a majority of social psychologists
2. A ‘blank-slate’ view of human nature – common among persons who adhere to a liberal/left viewpoint – that human beings are born without any predilections to behave in a particular manner
3. The tendency among social psychologists to reject theories and findings that might be in disagreement with the ‘blank-slate’ view of human nature
4. The accumulation of evolved tendencies that prevent investigators from being dispassionate seekers of scientific truth (p. 148)

In a response, Fine (2020) argues that Buss and von Hippel provided no grounds for their allegation of bias and that some of their survey data speak against it.

### ***(The) Military***

Perhaps no other topic in this section has caused the deepest fracturing and polarization among psychologists, among APA divisions, and among the various advisory and policy committees within APA – than questions related to the ethics and responsibilities of psychologists as they consult with, or do research on behalf of – the United States military. On one side are deep professional convictions that the central role of American psychology is to demonstrate that it is ready to quickly mobilize practitioners and researchers to assist national efforts in response to crisis events such as the September 11, 2001 attacks on the World Trade Centers (e.g., with psychological support to grieving families and rescue workers). But while psychologists can be viewed as useful allies in this regard, there are deep fissures among

psychologists concerning the ethics of partnering with the military in its ‘war on terror’ – particularly when this war involves harsh interrogation of political prisoners, the use of drones, or the ethics/legality of counter-terrorism efforts. A full discussion of the fractures within the administrative structure and committees of APA over these issues is beyond the scope of this chapter. Hence, readers are encouraged to consult Eidelson (2019) for relevant details.

## ***Racial Issues***

**Validity of Race** Highly contentious arguments exist among scholars within and between a variety of social science disciplines over the validity of classifying individuals along biologically and genetically inspired racial groupings (Cavalli-Sforza et al., 1994). This debate is energized by fears that giving validity to racial classifications is the unavoidable precursor to *scientific racism*, defined in part as the belief that racial groups can be classified and organized according to a hierarchy of inferiority/superiority (Alland, 2002; Goodman et al., 2019).

On one side of this divide are those who acknowledge that racial categories have been used to group populations for centuries, and that worldwide migration over the years has resulted in differences in gene frequencies among subpopulations that have predictive validity for numerous physical, social, psychological, and behavioral outcomes (e.g., Fuerst, 2015; Hartigan, 2013).

On the other side of this divide are those who feel that the belief in racial classifications is little more than social constructions, and as such can be dangerous to society (Ferrante & Browne, 2022). These scholars often point to the tremendous degree of diversity within racial groupings, as well as the high degree of genetic similarities across racial groupings (American Anthropological Association, 1998). These scholars also believe that the belief in the reality of race inevitably leads down a slippery slope to racism (i.e., the belief in the superiority/inferiority of groups), differential treatment, and racial domination (e.g., Helms et al., 2005).

**Group Differences Research** The question of whether or not racial group differences should be studied by psychologists has been the topic of many social science debates (see Brown, 2006). On one side are psychologists and non-psychologists who hold that rigorous research on average group differences in psychological traits is a legitimate and needed component of individual differences scholarship (Levin, 2016; Rushton, 1995, 1998; Sarich & Meile, 2004; Meisenberg, 2019). These scholars hold that average group differences in psychological traits are real, measurable, and have direct implications for explaining exceptional achievements as well as vexing social problems within societies (Levin, 2016). To these scholars, inequality in outcomes between racial/ethnic groups is the norm worldwide, and not the exception.

An opposing view holds that research on average group differences in psychological traits is of no use, at best (Sternberg, 2005), or little more than a cover for racism at worst (Saini, 2019; Tummala-Narra, 2014). In their view, research on average group differences provides the cover that justifies discrimination against groups (Fischer et al., 1996). In this view, such research is dangerous on many levels, and can lead only to science-sponsored justifications for group discrimination and a weakening of efforts to promote equity in outcomes (Gould, 1996; Helms et al., 2005).

**Stereotype Accuracy** Since the early twentieth century, social psychology has stood at the forefront of the psychological study of prejudice – i.e., its nature, origins, dynamics, prevention, and intervention (Nelson, 2016; Sibley & Barlow, 2017). This research appears to have direct applications to troublesome national and international events (e.g., World War II, American civil rights movement. Attacks on the World Trade Center, to name a few).

The study of the content and prevalence of stereotypical thinking (that individuals may hold about groups) is seen as one of many components of prejudice. As such, social psychology has a long tradition of characterizing stereotypes as invalid, factually incorrect, illogical, rooted in prejudice, irrationally resistant to new information, exaggerated, and ethnocentric (Jussim, 2012a; Lee et al., 1995).

With the advent of studies in stereotype accuracy (i.e., the extent to which people’s beliefs about groups correspond to those groups’ actual characteristics; Jussim, 2012a), dissenters argue that the *accuracy* of stereotypes is one of the most well-established findings in all of psychology (Haidt, 2013; Jussim, 2012a). These dissenters argue that the influence of liberal/leftist sociopolitical ideology blinds psychologists to ‘facts that are right under their noses’. Holding fast to the dogma that stereotypes are inaccurate allows psychologists to cultivate a vision of themselves as good, decent egalitarians who are fighting the good fight for justice – siding with the oppressed against their (prejudiced) oppressors (Jussim, 2012b). Liberal grant and journal article reviewers, as well as liberal psychologists attending research talks – have expressed open hostility to (and denial of) these facts (Jussim, 2013a, 2013b).

**The Importance of Race in Applied Counseling** Controversies over race have extended to wide disagreements within applied psychology over the presumed importance of racial differences (between therapists and clients) – as this relates to how therapy is conducted. Psychologists who adopt a social justice perspective argue that therapist/client racial differences implicitly involve issues of power, privilege, and the potential for racism (e.g., Lee et al., 2018; Ratts & Pederson, 2014). Developing interventions for these proposed problems are operationalized as the learning of ‘cultural competence’ (Hays & Erford, 2017; Sue et al., 2019).

Opposing this view are psychologists who base their criticisms on a number of grounds (e.g., see Thomas & Wubbolding, 2009; Weinrach & Thomas, 2004). From a professional best practices/ethics perspective, critics argue that the introduction of racial politics into counseling is antithetical to the fundamental purpose of

cultivating a therapeutic environment that is free of therapist preconceptions (see Redding & Satel, 2023; Satel, 2021). They would argue that the primary task of therapists is to view clients as individuals, rather than as members of groups (Stuart, 2004). From an empirical perspective, other critics argue that ‘cultural competence’ is not a well-defined or vetted construct, and evidence for its ability to be measured accurately and taught to students is weak (Frisby & O’Donohue, 2018).

## *Sex, Sexuality, and Gender Issues*

**Sex Differences** As articulated by Funder (2015), “the idea that people are different at the starting line (and are not ‘blank slates’ at birth) is heartbreaking to the liberal worldview and encounters resistance even now” (p. 26). On one side are those who acknowledge the dominance of genetic differences between the sexes, as opposed to others who put more emphasis on the role of cultural socialization in sex differences (Edwards et al., 2014; Low, 2014).

**Feminism** The origins of *feminism*, as an overly broad label, can be traced historically back to what many have called ‘first-wave’ feminism (Georgetown Women’s Studies, 2012; Lear, 1968) – which occurred during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in the Western world. At that time, feminism focused on the reform of women’s social and legal inequalities (e.g., education, employment, marriage, and voting rights). ‘Second-wave’ feminism is associated with the women’s liberation movement that began in the 1960s (Lear, 1968; Molony & Nelson, 2017), which centered on critiquing what feminists perceived as patriarchal, male-dominated institutions and cultural practices throughout society (particularly related to reproductive rights), as well as activism on behalf of legal and social equality for women. ‘Third wave’ feminism began in the United States in the early 1990s, introduced sexual harassment politics and concepts of intersectionality, ‘sex positivity’, and ‘transfeminism’ (Evans, 2015; Walker, 2007). ‘Fourth-wave’ feminism became a movement for women to share their experiences, through use of internet social media, of sexual abuse, sexual harassment, sexual violence, the objectification of women, and sexism in the workplace. Fourth-wave feminists advocate for greater representation of marginalized women of color and trans women in politics and business (Abrahams, 2017; Munro, 2013).

Feminist psychologists began to level critiques specifically targeted at psychology beginning in the late 1960s (see reviews by Eagly & Riger, 2014; Riger, 2000). These critiques have been generally directed toward the content of psychological research, as well as the methods and epistemology of psychological science. Eagly and Riger (2014) write:

*... [F]eminists (emphasize) ... that science is complicit in the subordination of women in society and within science itself, that its culture and practices contribute to the neglect of topics of special interest to women, that women have a view of social reality that differs*

*from that of men, and that the symbols and metaphors of science are masculine when they could be feminine or androgynous . . . feminist critiques . . . (promote) alternative epistemologies that reject (science’s) fundamental assumptions (pp. 686–687).*

Riger (2000) succinctly articulates the objectives of feminist psychology:

*Social change is the motivating force behind feminism. Lighting the way to a world transformed is the goal of feminist psychology (p. 6).*

**Masculinity** Well-publicized documents sponsored by the American Psychological Association warn the public about the dangerous connection between male socialization and societal violence (American Psychological Association, Boys and Men Guidelines Group, 2018; APA Public Interest Directorate, 2018). One online article argues that Western culture is complicit in shaping an ‘ideal masculine construct’ early in the development of young males. This construct emphasizes toughness, stoicism, heterosexism, attitudes of self-sufficiency, and the suppression of sensitive emotions (Wall & Kristjanson, 2005). This has given rise to the term ‘toxic masculinity’ (Whitehead, 2019).

According to its supporters, toxic masculinity leads to the development of increased stress, felt threats to their internalized identities, and feelings of failure (Baugher & Gazmararian, 2015; Berke & Zeichner, 2016). These, in turn, are believed to have harmful effects on society, which include bullying in school, physical assaults, intimate partner violence, and many other varieties of violence and aggression toward others (Feder et al., 2010; Violence Policy Center, 2021). Supporters of the toxic masculinity construct suggest that mental health professionals ‘change the way men view and express gendered practices’, ‘educating parents on the negative consequences of physical punishment’, and ‘creating marketing campaigns designed to modify social and cultural norms’ (APA Public Interest Directorate, 2018).

In reaction against this framing of masculinity, as well as the specific prescriptions codified in the APA guidelines, several psychologists and psychiatrists voiced serious concerns and objections to APA’s viewpoint (one of whom was a member of APA’s Council of Representatives which approved the guidelines). These objections included, but were not limited to, charges that the guidelines lack a broad scientific base; they blatantly deny biological and evolutionary realities; the guidelines as worded violate APA’s code of professional ethics; the guidelines read more like a political manifesto than a nuanced scientific review; if taken seriously in practice, the guidelines would impair therapists objectivity and undermine therapist’s responsibility to treat clients as individuals rather than members of groups; and the guidelines would actually be harmful to society if its proposals were seriously carried out (Wright et al., 2019).

**Gender Identity/Fluidity** The term *gender identity* describes a person’s persistent inner sense of belonging to a male, female, or indeterminate category – irrespective of their actual biological gender (American Psychological Association, 2019). When this inner sense conflicts with biological gender, then persons can submit to

gender re-assignment medical procedures, or they may simply live (in attire, mannerisms, or relationships with others), without undergoing gender re-assignment medical procedures, as a person belonging to the gender with which they identify.

Many of the controversies within this broad topic crystallize around the appropriateness of using certain terms to describe certain gender identity conditions; how terms for various conditions should be defined; the degree to which terms can accurately discriminate between similar but different conditions; the degree to which conditions should be thought of as reflecting ‘true’ mental disorders or just reflective of nonconformity to social norms; and whether psychologists are adequately prepared and/or trained to serve clients with gender identity issues sensitively and ethically (Moleiro & Pinto, 2015).

Opinions polarize on many peripheral issues related to gender identity. For example, some psychologists fight vigorously against discrimination, stigma, social ostracism, and bullying of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender persons (Bostwick et al., 2014) – which would naturally place such persons at a higher risk for mental distress.

Published criticisms from psychologists about any of these trends have been difficult to find, however numerous criticisms from religiously based and conservative sources are plentiful (Anderson, 2018; Boorman, 2019; Brown, 2018; CBS News, 2019). These sources criticize the mainstreaming of gender fluidity in civil society and its associated negative mental health correlates for afflicted individuals (called ‘gender dysphoria in the DSM-V; American Psychiatric Association, 2013). Critics argue that the DSM change from ‘gender identity disorder’ to ‘gender dysphoria’ is more of a social/philosophical shift than a scientific one (Corney, 2016).

**Attitudes Toward Homosexuality** As an objective observation, homosexuality is becoming increasingly accepted in popular culture as well as in religious circles, both domestically and internationally (Bailey, 2013; Becker, 2006; Poushter & Kent, 2020). In the psychological community, this has resulted in homosexuality being removed from the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual as a mental disorder (see Drescher, 2009). Nevertheless, many persons believe that homosexual behavior remains unnatural, deviant, and immoral when judged against deeply held religious beliefs or observations from biological science (Dodds, 2018). This resistance extends to societal efforts to depict homosexuality as mainstream in popular entertainment, the infusion of sexual orientation awareness curricula in the education of children, the protection of Lesbigan adoption rights, marriage equality advocacy, and/or efforts to sanction organizations and businesses that refuse services on the basis of sexual orientation (Eggert, 2022; Girgis et al., 2010; Lee, 2008). A counselor’s religious beliefs related to homosexuality raise complex and difficult legal and professional issues when balancing anti-discrimination employment obligations with guidelines related to ethical psychological services (Cox, 2013; Hermann & Herlihy, 2006; Throckmorton, 2010).

Some psychologists argue that the psychology’s aggressive advocacy on behalf of mainstreaming homosexuality has led to uncritical acceptance of scientific

constructs that over-pathologize any persons who object to homosexual behavior for any reason (O’Donohue & Caselles, 2005).

Others believe that homosexual behavior – in and of itself – is not inherently a moral issue, as it is reflective of only one among many normal variations in human sexual expression (Drescher, 2009). Any negative moral evaluation of homosexual orientation or behavior is instead viewed as reflective of ignorance, religious prejudice, or clinical pathology (i.e., homophobia; see Fahs & Swank, 2021). Popular research topics from this ideological camp involve chronicling negative attitudes toward (e.g., see Prairie et al., 2019) – or the victimization, mistreatment, and misunderstanding of – Lesbian and Gay persons (Harper & Schneider, 2003). The negative psychological effects that can result from the internalization of stigma are also a popular area for research (e.g., see Kiekens et al., 2020; Szymanski & Carretta, 2020), as is research showing that states’ passage of laws perceived as ‘anti-gay’ are significantly linked to poor health outcomes in LGBT people (e.g., Hatzembuehler et al., 2010). Cultural competency for mental health professionals who serve Lesbian and Gay clients is viewed as a top priority in psychology training (American Psychological Association, 2022b).

**Reparative Therapy** With respect to sexual orientation issues, many psychologists feel that it is unethical, dangerous, harmful, and/or immoral for therapists to be involved with any therapy seeking to counsel homosexual clients to think and behave in a heterosexual manner (to a prolonged degree; Drescher, 2009; Forestiere, 2020). Advocacy for LGBT rights and mental health has been successful in working toward legislation that has banned healthcare professionals in at least 9 states from using reparative (sometimes call ‘conversion’) therapy on youth (Mallory et al., 2018).

In direct opposition to APA’s position, the National Association for Research and Therapy of Homosexuality (NARTH) has argued that certain APA statements in opposition to reparative therapy were inaccurate and not fully grounded in science (Phelan et al., 2009), but instead are reflective of sociopolitical advocacy. Other psychologists feel that if clients are not under coercion and actively seek reparative treatment voluntarily, then psychologists should respect client wishes and assist them in seeking appropriate treatment (Nicolosi, 2005).

### *The Purpose of This Text*

The purpose of this text is to explore the many facets of ideological and political bias in the settings in which psychology graduate students are trained; the beliefs held by psychologists; the research that they conduct; the activities of professional organizations representing psychology; and how biasing processes may manifest themselves in the journal article publishing process.

The first step for psychologists of all stripes is to acknowledge that the presence of political bias in psychology is real. If it can be reasonably assumed that political

bias of any kind is not good for psychological science, then letting political bias flourish unchecked leads to a host of negative consequences (see previous chapter by Frisby, Chap. 2, this volume) that undermine psychology's reputation as an honest science.

Final chapters within this text showcase a variety of proposals for what can be done to counteract further damage to psychology's reputation. It is hoped that this will lead to more published textbooks that can report on significant and positive outcomes for these efforts.

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## Chapter 4

# Psychologists' Politics



Richard E. Redding

It is well understood among psychologists that a liberal political ethos pervades the discipline (see Jussim, 2012; Prentice, 2012; Redding, 2001, 2020). Most psychologists are politically left-of-center (hereinafter “liberal”), while few are right-of-center (hereinafter “conservative”) or even centrist. As reviewed throughout this volume and as discussed by others (see Crawford & Jussim, 2018; Duarte et al., 2015; Frisby, 2018; Redding, 2001, 2012; Tetlock & Mitchell, 2015), the political views of psychologists can and frequently do color and skew their teaching and research, particularly on policy-relevant issues, and may impede their ability to serve diverse clients and communities. Because the lack of sociopolitical diversity among psychologists is detrimental to the science and profession of psychology, it is important to know the contours and reasons for the liberal tilt. This chapter reviews the extant research on the political attitudes of psychology students, professors, and practicing psychologists (as well as their clients), how their attitudes have changed over time, and compares the tilt in psychology to that found in related disciplines and the academy generally. I discuss possible reasons for the liberal tilt and directions for future research on psychologists' politics.

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## Political Attitudes of Psychology Professors, Students, Practitioners, and Consumers

### *Professors*

***Psychology Professors*** Because they conduct most of the research in the field and are the ones educating and training the future researchers and practitioners, professors have an enormous impact on the science and profession of psychology. It is often supposed that the psychology professoriate leans so far to the left that if it were a tree, it would virtually fall over. But how sizeable is the leftist tilt?

Inbar and Lammers (2012) conducted two surveys of members of the Society for Personality and Social Psychology (SPSP), an organization comprised mostly of academics, with the respondents in their survey closely matching the demographic characteristics of the entire SPSS membership. The respondents were asked to rate their political views on a 1 (very liberal) to 7 (very conservative scale). They did not separate out for the professors in their sample, but my analysis of their raw data (graciously shared by Professor Inbar) shows that the mean rating for overall political orientation among the professors in the study was a 2.4, or moderately liberal, with 23% rating themselves as very liberal but only 4% rating themselves as very conservative. In the second survey, which included 339 professors, the mean rating was a 2.1 on economic issues (13% very liberal; 5% very conservative), a 2.9 on foreign policy issues (14% very liberal; 2% very conservative), and a 2.0 on social issues (37% very liberal; 1% very conservative). In 2018, SPSP surveyed the political attitudes of its membership, and found that 89.6% identified as liberal whereas only 4.4% identified as conservative (Society for Personality and Social Psychology, 2019). Surveying members of the Society of Experimental Social Psychology, whose membership is also comprised mainly of academics, Buss and von Hippel (2018) found that 89% considered themselves to be left-of-center, 8% centrist, and only 2.5% right-of-center. On social issues (e.g., abortion, gay marriage, gun control) they rated themselves an average of an 8 on an 11-point scale, with an 11 denoting the most liberal value.

Large-scale studies of faculty ideology (2 conducted in the 1960s, 1 in the 1990s, 1 in 2006, and 1 in 2016) show the degree of imbalance among psychology faculty overall and how it has grown over the last 50 years. There was a 3 to 2 (Eitzen & Maranell, 1968) or 4 to 3 (McClintock et al., 1965) ratio of Democrat to Republican psychology professors in the 1960s. But by the 1990s, the imbalance had tripled to a ratio of at least 6 to 1 and more likely 9 to 1 (Rothman et al., 2005; Rothman & Lichter, 2009; Zipp & Fenwick, 2006). By 2006 the imbalance had reached a 10 to 1 ratio (Gross & Simmons, 2014). By 2016 it has reached a 17 to 1 ratio, at least at the more elite schools (Langbert, 2016). Langbert et al. (2016) found that among the psychology departments at the top 40 universities, almost half did not have a single Republican on the faculty. Most recently, Langbert and Stevens (2020) found a ratio

of 11.5 to 1 among psychology faculty at the four most highly ranked (by US News) public and private institutions in all 50 states.

***The Professoriate Generally*** The ideological imbalance among psychology professors, particularly on social issues (see Gross & Simmons, 2014), is mirrored in the professoriate as a whole. Studies have found that the percentage of conservative or Republican professors nationally is only about 5–14% (Gross & Simmons, 2014; Kauffmann, 2021; Langbert & Stevens, 2020; Rothman et al., 2005; Verdant Labs, 2015), with the more recent studies finding percentages closer to 5% (Kauffmann, 2021; Langbert & Stevens, 2020; Verdant Labs, 2015). Similar findings hold with respect to European and Canadian university faculties (Kauffmann, 2021). The ideological imbalance is greatest in the humanities, then closely followed by the social sciences, which have 8–12 liberal or Democratic professors for every conservative or Republican professor (Gross & Simmons, 2014; Langbert, 2018). Eighteen percent of professors consider themselves a “Marxist” and 25% a “radical” (Gross & Simmons, 2014). Among university administrators, the ideological balance (12:1 ratio of liberals to conservatives) is even greater (Abrams, 2018).

At liberal arts colleges, the percentage of conservative professors is even lower – just 4% (Gross & Simmons, 2014) and the liberal tilt is greatest at the schools (Langbert, 2018; Langbert et al., 2016) that produce the greatest number of future professors (Klein & Stern, 2009a, b; Langbert et al., 2016). Langbert’s (2018) recent study of the voter registrations of 8688 tenure-track faculty at the top-ranked liberal arts colleges found that Democrats outnumbered Republicans by about 13 to 1, with 39% of the colleges having *zero* Republicans on the entire faculty and 78% of academic departments having none or virtually none. Looking at a random sampling of 12,372 faculty across all departments at the two highest-ranked public and two highest-ranked private institutions (according to the US News rankings) in every state, Langbert and Stevens (2020) found a Democrat to Republican voter registration ratio of 8.5 to 1.

Significantly, the imbalance has grown substantially over the last few decades (Gross & Simmons, 2014), apparently picking up steam during the 1990s (see Fig. 4-1, in Rothman & Lichter, 2009), so that the most junior professors are the most liberal (see Gross & Simmons, 2014; Langbert et al., 2016; Zipp & Fenwick, 2006). For example, Langbert and Stevens (2020) found that while the ratio of Democrats to Republicans was roughly 8 to 1 among full professors, it rises to a 10.5 to 1 imbalance among assistant professors, a 24% increase. Like any organization, faculties will tend to favor and select those most like themselves (for a stark example vis-à-vis the legal academy, see Redding, 2003), particularly when it comes to ideology (Klein & Stern, 2009a, b). The growing increase and acceleration in the ideological imbalance among faculties is likely due to a snowball effect in this regard, with psychology departments becoming more ideological monochromatic (Klein & Stern, 2008) to the point where, as Rothman and Lichter (2009) put it, conservatives have all but vanished from academia.

But these studies may actually underreport the degree of ideological imbalance. Most are survey studies where professors self-report their political orientations. In

addition to possible selection effects in who decides to complete such surveys, respondents may underreport the degree to which they are liberal because there may be social demand characteristics that disincentivize them from doing so. Moreover, they may not view themselves as being as liberal as they really are in comparison to most Americans, since they are immersed in the liberal milieu of academia and may judge their political views with reference to those of their academic colleagues (Woessner & Kelly-Woessner, 2015).

Based on the Federal Election Commission data on campaign contributions made by Americans, Verdant Labs (2015) compared the percentage of people who contributed to Democratic versus Republican candidates across a wide range of occupations, and from this estimated the percentage of Republicans and Democrats in each occupational group. These data show that *the professorial occupation is among the top five most liberal occupations in the United States*, having virtually no Republicans, or at least none who contributed to Republican candidates. Langbert and Stevens (2020) found that the ratio of faculty donating to Democrat to Republican candidates was 95 to 1, which far exceeded the 8.5 to 1 ratio they found for voter registration. At the University of Pennsylvania, for example, during 2017–18 the ratio of faculty members who contributed to Republican versus Democrat political campaigns was 139:1 (Intercollegiate Studies Institute, 2019). Thus, it seems that the Democratic faculty are far more politically engaged, at least insofar as donations are concerned, than are the relatively few Republican faculty. In psychology, the ratio of contributions to Democrat vs Republican candidates was 184 to 1 (Langbert & Stevens, 2020).

## ***Students***

***Undergraduates*** A national survey (conducted between 2009 and 2013) of undergraduate students drawn from 156 colleges and universities found that the average self-reported political orientation on a 1 (very conservative) to 5 (very liberal) point scale of the 1,254 psychology majors in the survey was a 3.2, only slightly more liberal than college students generally, who have a mean of 3.1 (Woessner et al., 2023, Chap. 14, this volume). But liberal psychology students outnumber conservatives by 2:1, a more substantial imbalance than is found among science students (34% to 26%) or undergraduates generally (33% to 28%). The national Higher Education Research Institute surveys of the political orientation of college freshmen find that most self-identify as being “middle of the road” politically (44%), but there are more liberals (31%) than conservatives (20%) (O’Leary, 2020). Although psychology majors do not typically shift further to the left politically between their first and fourth years of college, among the very few psychology majors who do shift politically, twice as many move to the left as do to the right (Woessner et al., Chap. 14, this volume).

**Graduate Students** Inbar and Lammers (2012) conducted two surveys asking social and personality psychologists to rate their political views on a 1 (very liberal) to 7 (very conservative scale). They did not report the results specifically with respect to the graduate student respondents in their sample, but my analysis of their raw data shows that the mean rating for overall political orientation among the 72 graduate students in their first survey was a 2.2, or fairly liberal, with a substantial minority (19%) rating themselves as very liberal but 0% rating themselves as very conservative. In the second survey, which included 169 graduate students, the mean rating was a 3.1 on economic issues (11% very liberal; 0% very conservative), a 2.8 on foreign policy issues (15% very liberal; 0% very conservative), and a 2.0 on social issues (40% very liberal; 0% very conservative).

Thus, there are very few conservative graduate students in personality and social psychology and there is no reason to believe that it is different in other areas of psychology. Very few conservatives are entering graduate school in psychology. Yet, by contrast, nowadays over a third (38%) of graduate students in psychology are now from ethnic- or racial-minority groups and most (76%) are female (APA, 2018). Thus, while the next generation of psychologists will be *demographically diverse, it will be ideologically homogeneous.*

## **Practitioners**

**Psychologists** Verdant Labs (2015) compared the percentage of people who contributed to Democratic versus Republican candidates across a wide range of occupations, and from this estimated the percentage of Republicans and Democrats in each occupational group. These data show that *psychology is among the top ten most liberal occupations in the United States.* Among psychologists overall, there are 9 Democrats for every 1 Republican, but the findings differ slightly among particular psychological specialties. Among neuropsychologists and school psychologists, there were slightly fewer Democrats, with ratios of 8.5 Democrats for every 1.5 Republicans. But among psychotherapists, there were virtually no Republicans (2–5%). A random survey of members of the clinically oriented divisions (most of whom are practitioners) of the American Psychological Association (APA) conducted in 2002 found that 67% were Democrats and only 6% were Republicans; 77% were liberal and only 9% were conservative (Bilgrave & Deluty, 2002).

**Therapists, Psychiatrists, and Social Workers** A recent survey of 467 licensed mental health counselors in Florida found that 54% were identified as liberal, progressive, or socialist, whereas 24% were identified as conservative or libertarian (Norton & Tan, 2018). Another recent survey of 268 therapists found that 62% were Democrats and only 7% were Republicans (Solomonov & Barber, 2019). A survey of 131 master's- and doctoral-level practitioners in three states (Massachusetts, Texas, and Virginia) found that only a quarter (27%) described themselves as

conservative whereas 67% were liberal; on social issues, only 16% were conservative whereas 69% were liberal (Redding, 2020).

Similarly, studies show that 75–85% of psychiatrists and social workers are Democrats (Rosenwald, 2006; Sanger-Katz, 2016; Verdant Labs, 2015).

### *Consumers of Psychological Services*

Anecdotally, it seems that liberals seek out psychotherapy somewhat more frequently than conservatives (see Brody, 1994). If so, then perhaps conservatives perceive psychologists as liberal as well as the fact that psychotherapy adopts implicitly liberal perspectives for addressing psychological problems, and thus, that psychologists and psychotherapy will not auger well with their own values (Redding, 2020). Conservatives may also view seeking professional help as a sign of weakness, as stigmatizing, or as evincing a lack of “personal responsibility” on their part.

Yet, there is virtually no research on the political attitudes of those who consume psychological services. In an online survey of 604 people who had received psychotherapy, 48% reported voting for Clinton and 32% for Trump (Solomonov & Barber, 2019). Similar findings are seen in Redding’s (2020) online Mechanical Turk survey of 152 psychotherapy clients, in which 61% of the psychotherapists’ clients self-identified as politically liberal. However, selection effects may have been operating in these small studies that did not use random sampling, and thus we do not know how generalizable their findings are with respect to the political orientations of the consumers of psychological services.

### *Summary and Directions for Future Research*

In the field of psychology, junior professors and graduate students are the most liberal, followed by senior professors and practitioners. But undergraduate psychology majors are no more liberal than college students generally.

There is a vanishingly small number of right-of-center professors and graduate students, with liberals outnumbering conservatives by about 15 to 1. Psychology department faculties will typically have just one or two conservatives on the faculty (often older professors nearing retirement) and many will have none at all. Many of their undergraduate students will be conservative, but very few if any of their graduate students. Thus, psychology mirrors academia generally, where “a *fairly* liberal student body is being taught by a *very* liberal professoriate – and socialized by an incredibly liberal group of administrators” (Abrams, 2018, p. A23).

Among practitioners, it appears that, depending on the particular subdiscipline of practice (e.g., clinical, counseling, marriage, and family therapist), between 5–15% are conservative whereas 85–95% are liberal. The consumers of psychological

services are the American public, however, but 72% of Americans are moderate or conservative and just 24% are liberal (Gallup, 2020).

Nowadays in the United States, higher educational levels are associated with greater liberalism (Gallup, 2020) and since being a psychology professional requires a graduate degree, psychologists tend to be liberal. Nonetheless, the profession of psychology includes many more liberals than most other professions; the ratio of Democrats to Republicans among those with a graduate degree in the United States is less than two to one (Langbert, 2018).

Future research should examine how psychologists' political attitudes differ as a function of their specialty (e.g., clinical, counseling, social, developmental, cognitive, neuroscience, industrial), particularly those specialties most involved with social and political issues (e.g., community, political, social). Data on the relationship between career choice and political attitudes suggest that conservatives tend to prefer practical/concrete, financial, and quantitative disciplines whereas liberals tend to prefer artistic, creative, and helping disciplines (see Bonica, 2013; Carney et al., 2008; Verdant Labs, 2015) and that, for example, neuropsychologists are somewhat less liberal than psychotherapists while psychiatrists are more liberal than neurologists and neurosurgeons (see Verdant Labs, 2015). Thus, it is possible that there is a somewhat greater percentage of conservatives in the natural or so-called "hard" sciences in psychology (e.g., neuroscience, cognitive) than the social or "soft" sciences (e.g., social, community) or helping professions (e.g., clinical, counseling) within the discipline, though it is likely that any such ideological differences across subdisciplines are modest. Research is also needed on how psychologists' political attitudes may differ depending upon the type of academic (e.g., psychology department, medical school, education school) or other organizational settings (e.g., industry, private practice, public clinics) in which they work. Importantly, research is needed on the political attitudes of consumers of psychological services and whether public perceptions of the politics of psychologists and other mental health professionals deter some from seeking psychological services.

## Why Are Most Psychologists Liberal?

Even though conservative and liberal students have virtually the same average SAT scores, undergraduate GPAs (Woessner & Kelly-Woessner, 2009), and IQ levels (see Carl, 2015), liberal college students are more interested in pursuing a Ph.D. degree and are more likely to do so (Fosse et al., 2014a, b; Woessner & Kelly-Woessner, 2009). Liberals may be drawn to the field of psychology and conservatives repelled from it for a number of reasons having to do with the nature of the discipline, financial and career interests, and bias and discrimination against conservatives in psychology.

***Nature of the Discipline*** Certain moral, ethical, and political paradigms tend to undergird the discipline of psychology, which are likely to be attractive to liberals

but unattractive to conservatives. First, the field reflects a moral and ethical system that emphasizes two values that liberals tend to prioritize, caring and fairness (i.e., equality), while also deemphasizing two values that conservatives tend to prioritize, authority (tradition and authority hierarchies) and sanctity/purity (religious sensitivities around purity and disgust). Consider as an example organized psychology's early advocacy for the rights of LGBT persons, including the right to marry and adopt children. Liberals' support for LGBT rights was predicated on their values of caring (especially for marginalized groups) and equality, whereas conservatives opposed such rights out of a deference to cultural traditions, religious values, and their heightened sense of disgust around homosexual sex acts (Redding, 2008). Second, psychological paradigms generally adopt scientific or humanistic approaches. Indeed, psychology has far fewer people of faith than most other professions (Delany et al., 2013; Willis & Lancaster, 2020). Until recently the field has been relatively hostile to religion, seeing it as an unscientific competitor to psychological theory and practice (Cummings et al., 2009; Willis & Lancaster, 2020).

Third, psychology tends to adopt the "unconstrained vision" of human nature that is "rooted in optimism for the unlimited possibilities of human potential that can be put to use for the ultimate perfectibility of human society, that is more appealing to liberals than is the conservative view – "the constrained vision . . . [that] views man as having consistent moral limitations that are 'basic facts of human existence' which have not, and will not, change" (Frisby, 2020, p. 170–171, citing Sowell, 1987). These two competing visions influence how psychologists view human nature (as having "unlimited possibilities" rather than "natural constraints and moral limitations"), the nature of knowledge (relying on expertise rather than common wisdom and accumulated human experience), and the nature of social processes (belief in the efficacy of social engineering, particularly to achieve equality of outcomes between groups rather than skepticism about the efficacy of such efforts, see Mahoney, 1998). Since, for example, the unconstrained vision encourages oppressed groups to view some of their problems as a consequence of discrimination, oppression, and victimization, psychologists target social change efforts toward these problems and design multicultural therapies and training programs (Frisby, 2020) to sensitize both clients and therapists to oppressive structures and behaviors such as white privilege and microaggressions. Psychology tends to define individual problems as due to environmental causes external to individuals rather than "victim blaming" (see Ryan, 1971), and its multicultural approach adopts the liberal approach of focusing on group differences and achieving an equality of outcomes between demographic groups rather than focusing on individual variability within groups and individual opportunity (Pelton, 2000; Satel & Redding, 2005). Finally, as Lakoff (2002) argues, family values provide the metaphorical basis for people's politics and policy preferences, with conservatives adopting a "strict father" family model that prioritizes respect for authority, self-discipline, and self-reliance and thus libertarian or conservative public policies. Liberals, by contrast, adopt a "nurturing parent" or maternal model, which prioritizes egalitarianism and empathy (see Haidt, 2012; Winegard et al., *in press*), and thus liberal public policies.

Psychologists' involvement in political advocacy, policy work, and social interventions has clearly favored the nurturing parent over the "strict father" approach (Redding, 1997). "[M]any social scientists see their life's work as based on their (liberal) values, and so promoting the liberal political agenda is their main purpose" (Baumeister, 2015, p. 15).

***Financial Incentives and Vocational Interests*** The relative lack of financial rewards from a career in psychology as compared to some other professions (e.g., medicine, law, engineering, business) may deter moderates and conservatives, who may be more attracted to financially lucrative careers as well as "practical" majors and professional school rather than graduate school (see Gross & Fosse, 2012; Woessner & Kelly-Woessner, 2009; Woessner, 2012). Indeed, twice as many liberal college students are interesting in pursuing a PhD degree as compared to conservative students, whereas the reverse is true when it comes to pursuing professional degrees (Woessner & Kelly-Woessner, 2009). As compared to their liberal counterparts, other college students place a greater premium on having a career that will provide a good salary and time to raise a family. (And, some may find academic careers unattractive because universities are often vast bureaucracies and/or state-run organizations, both of which conservatives tend to eschew.)

Moreover, "while neither liberal nor conservative students are particularly drawn to writing original works or making a contribution to science, liberal students tend to rate these priorities as more important" (Woessner, 2012, p. 25) and, of course, most doctoral programs in psychology require students to write and conduct scientific research. Psychology is a fairly creative and open-minded discipline, with psychological theories and research often challenging common wisdom and cultural traditions (see Redding, 1998). Thus, because liberals are ostensibly more creative, open-minded (at least with respect to a willingness to break with traditions and convention), and novelty-seeking as compared to conservatives (Carney et al., 2008; Jost et al., 2003), their personalities and cognitive style may be a better fit for a career in psychology.

***Bias, Hostile Climate, and Discrimination*** Bias and discrimination in psychology against conservatives and their ideas, deters conservatives from pursuing careers in psychology (Inbar & Lammers, 2012; Klein & Stern, 2009a, b; Redding, 2001, 2012; Woessner & Kelly-Woessner, 2009). Although the wildly unbalanced ideological ratios would alone suffice as prima facie evidence of discrimination in any legal case (Honeycutt & Freberg, 2016; Russello, 2014, see International Brotherhood of Teamsters v. United States, 1977), we also have studies that strongly suggest discrimination. Discrimination against conservatives begins in college or graduate school and usually continues throughout their academic career. Large-scale empirical studies have found that conservative undergraduate students lack academic role models, have fewer opportunities to do research with their professors, have more distant relationships with their professors and are less satisfied with their social science courses than their other courses (Woessner & Kelly-Woessner, 2009; Woessner, 2012), all of which likely makes them less inclined toward and less well

prepared for graduate study (Woessner & Kelly-Woessner, 2009). Moreover, like professors generally (Posselt, 2016; Yancey, 2017), psychology professors (Gartner, 1986) are biased in their admissions decisions against religious or conservative applicants to graduate school. As the celebrated academic psychologist Richard Nisbett observed, “a conservative eager to apply to graduate school would undoubtedly know that it would be unwise to reveal conservative beliefs in an application” (Nisbett, 2015, p. 34). Indeed, Iyengar and Westwood’s (2017) study shows that in admissions-related decisions, candidate’s politics matter more than their race – most participants in their study chose to award scholarships to the student who shared their political views.

The discrimination continues against those conservatives who pursue academic careers. Like professors generally (Gross & Simmons, 2013), psychology and social science professors (Inbar & Lammers, 2012; Yancey, 2017) disfavor conservatives but favor liberals in faculty hiring, and conservative academics must publish more to get the same jobs as their liberal peers (Rothman & Lichter, 2009). Moreover, a substantial minority of psychology professors say that they are less likely to invite conservative colleagues to participate in their symposia and are less likely to give a positive rating to grant applications or article submissions that take conservative perspectives (Inbar & Lammers, 2012). (Honeycutt and Freberg’s (2016) study of professors across many academic disciplines at California State universities, and Uwer et al.’s 2020 findings with an international sampling of philosophy professors, largely replicated Inbar and Lammer’s findings with respect to psychologists.) The more liberal the professor, the more likely they are to discriminate in these ways (Inbar & Lammers, 2012). Consider also the Society for Personality and Social Psychology’s, 2019 member survey, finding that their conservative members were significantly more likely than liberal members to have experienced an incident of exclusion or disrespect at their annual conference, and that conservatives were less likely to feel that their social identities are valued by the Society and that its events provide the freedom to express their opinions. (For a collection of case reports of bias experienced by faculty in promotion and tenure decisions, department climate, teaching, journal peer reviews and editorial decisions, grant reviews, and related contexts, see Frisby, 2018.)

Kauffmann’s most recent (2021) large-scale study of discrimination among faculty and graduate students largely mirrors but expands and validates the above findings, since he used a much larger sample and an experimental design that minimized social desirability biases in responding. He found that 40% of professors would discriminate against a Trump supporter in faculty hiring, and that 56% of left-leaning professors (the vast majority, of course) would favor hiring a Sanders supporter over a Trump supporter if both candidates had equal merit. Twelve percent would give a lower peer review rating to a paper that adopted a conservative perspective whereas they would give a 5% higher rating to a paper with a liberal perspective, and 20% would give a lower rating to a grant application that adopted a conservative perspective but a 9% higher rating to one with a liberal perspective. Forty percent of left-leaning academics would discriminate against right-leaning

faculty candidates for promotion. Again, the more liberal and/or younger (i.e., graduate students) the academic, the more likely they were to discriminate in these ways and favor the “cancellation” of controversial scholars.

As Kauffmann (2021, p. 156, emphasis added) concludes, there is “*a high degree of system-level bias against conservatives*.” These findings mean that conservative scholars who self-censor are not paranoid, but are acting rationally. A sufficiently large proportion of academics are willing to penalize work that is right-leaning to make it prudent for conservatives to hide their views. *This substantiates with data the repeated testimony that there is a climate of political discrimination inside the contemporary university.*” Indeed, this climate is so well recognized among psychologists that Crawford et al. (2015, p. 49) noted vis-à-vis the many published comments on their article, *Political diversity will improve social psychological science*, that “there is a clear consensus among our diverse set of commentators that hostile environment and outright discrimination exist, and constitute significant obstacles to the creation of a more politically balanced field.” (Of course, this hostile and discriminatory environment exists across large swaths of the academy generally, not just in psychology departments, see Honeycutt & Freberg, 2016; Kauffmann, 2021; Peters et al., 2020; Shields & Dunn, 2016).

These pervasive patterns of discrimination are likely the result of a liberal group-think that includes a belief in the inherent intellectual and moral superiority of the liberal ingroup and their ideas, negative stereotyping of the conservative outgroup and their ideas, and biased and confirmatory information processing that favors liberal ideas and disfavors conservative ones (Klein & Stern, 2009a, b). And, in-group biases are likely to be the strongest when a scarce commodity is at stake (see Rodeheffer et al., 2012), such as tenure-track faculty positions. Underlying the overt discrimination is an ambient climate in psychology departments that is off-putting if not hostile to conservatives (Inbar & Lammers, 2012). Both socially and professionally, liberal “privilege” in academic psychology is strong and pervasive (see Jussim, 2012, for a list of “privileges enjoyed by liberal psychologists”), with liberals frequently committing microaggressions against their few conservative colleagues as well as making overtly derogatory comments about their political views (Redding, 2020).

Thus, many conservative students and faculty perceive that there is a hostile environment toward them in their department (Honeycutt & Freberg, 2016), though their liberal colleagues often are oblivious to it (Inbar & Lammers, 2012). Conservative students quickly pick up on the ambient climate in psychology departments and the discipline of psychology, as communicated explicitly and implicitly by their professors and peers, which is hostile or not very receptive to them (Honeycutt & Freberg, 2016) or to non-liberal ideas – particularly when it comes to social or politically-relevant issues. Moreover, conservative students have few (if any) other conservative peers or professors with whom to socialize, collaborate on research, or rely on as a source of support and mentoring. And, suppose a budding young conservative scholar wants to attend graduate school and do research on questions that is in some way informed by conservative perspectives. Given the

dearth of conservative psychology professors, how likely is she to find a professor, at a school they can attend, who is willing and able to mentor them on such research?

As they progress through their psychology major in college or as they begin graduate school, students become increasingly aware that the discipline is unwelcoming to their sociopolitical views and, thus, to an important aspect of their identity. People's sociopolitical values are an important aspect of their identity and studies show that, particularly nowadays, people are more frequently discriminated against because of their politics than they are due to their race, gender, or sexual orientation (for a review of the extensive research on these issues, see Redding & Cobb, 2023). In this regard, not only do most academic psychologists have a very negative view of conservative ideas but also an equally negative view of conservatives themselves, probably due in no small part to their familiarity with the many years of social psychological research that pathologizes the conservative mindset and personality (see Lilienfeld, 2015). As one academic psychologist describes it, "the general narrative [in psychology] runs like this: Conservatives are generally less intelligent than their liberal counterpart (they have been since birth), and due to rigidity of cognitive styles and authoritarian predilection, gravitate to easy and more stable modes of being, and endorse simplistic, ritualistic, and traditional forms of discourse and public attitudes since they accord well with their limited capacity for complex thinking and intolerance of ambiguity. The conservative is of course racist, since tolerance of the outgroup is a level of cognitive sophistication not available to the conservative, unenlightened mind . . . [conservatives are] dogmatic, closed-minded, ambiguity-threatened, chronically self-abasing, disgust-filled, fear-mongering, (dirty-rotten) pessimists. Given such a warm reception, is it any wonder that there are so few conservatives (if any) flocking to the halls of academia" (Brow, 2017, p. 213).

Entering a particular vocation "is not just to take up a technical task, but to place oneself *inside a cultural frame that defines and even determines a very great part of one's life*" (Posselt, 2016, p. 74, quoting Clifford Geertz, emphasis added). Thus, conservatives may self-select out of the field of psychology because the field has a reputation for being (and *is*) very liberal, and people often select in or out of occupations depending upon whether their sociopolitical culture is consistent with their own values (see Gross & Fosse, 2012). People tend to be attracted to fields populated by people who share their attitudes and values (Schneider et al., 1995), and "if you don't see anyone like you entering [the psychology profession], you might conclude the profession is not open to you" (Honeycutt & Freberg, 2016). As the social psychologist Paul Bloom notes with respect to conservatives in psychology, "[n]obody wants to be part of a community where their identity is the target of ridicule and malice" (Inbar & Lammers, 2015, p. 29, quoting Bloom) or where they have to "pass" as not being a conservative in order to succeed and to avoid regular insults from colleagues (see Shields & Dunn, 2016). Consider the occupational choice to become a psychology professor, which combines two occupations (psychologist + professor) *both* having strong reputations for liberalism, making it fairly unlikely that conservatives would want to enter that occupational field. As Langbert et al. (2016, p. 427) put it, "[t]he professor's political outlook is a matter of sacred

values. It is something that usually cannot be separated from the love that permeates the scholarly enterprise.”

***Summary and Directions for Future Research*** The nature of the discipline (its norms, values, practices, and objects of study) may be more appealing to liberals than to others, and the relative lack of financial rewards to be reaped from a career in psychology may be a disincentive to enter the field. For these reasons, many may self-select out of psychology whereas liberals may self-select into the field. These self-selection effects, however, are strongly amplified by discriminatory practices in academia against conservative applicants to graduate school and in faculty hiring and the various avenues for career advancement, by an overall climate in the field that is not very welcoming toward conservatives and conservative ideas or even to centrists, and by a sociopolitical culture in psychology that is inconsistent with the sociopolitical self-identity of conservatives, libertarians, or centrists.

Future research should examine what, specifically, it is about psychology as a discipline that liberals find attractive and that conservatives and others apparently do not. Further research is also needed on bias and prejudice against conservatives and their ideas in academic psychology, and how such biases operate to deter them from entering the field or discriminate against them (in graduate school admissions, their graduate school careers, and post-graduate careers) when they do so. Moreover, research is needed on the question of how and why, over time, psychology adopted the views of human nature, morality, and social engineering that it did, which are more congenial with liberal than conservative, libertarian, or even centrist values, sensibilities, and politics. Was it that empirical research – relatively free of any political bias – validated the liberal worldviews, and so psychology adopted those worldviews? Or, was it the reverse – i.e., that liberal psychologists designed, conducted, and interpreted their research in ways that confirmed their pre-existing political views (see Duarte et al., 2015; Redding, 2001, 2012; Tetlock, 2012; Tetlock & Mitchell, 1993), there being a feedback loop and snowball effect, such that psychology became increasingly liberal over time? Or, could it be something even more foundational than that, such as certain implicit norms (see Prentice, 2012) or habitus in “how psychology is done” that, in turn, drove psychologists toward liberal worldviews for the discipline?

## Conclusion

Psychologists – especially professors and graduate students – tilt significantly to the left politically, particularly on social issues, and this tilt has grown substantially since 1990. We cannot diversify the profession if things continue on their current course, with fewer centrists and right-of-centrists entering graduate programs in psychology and even fewer than that into the professoriate. As discussed throughout this volume, the ideological monoculture in psychology skews teaching, research, and clinical practice in ways not beneficial for students, scientific progress,

consumers of psychological services, and public and policymaker perceptions of psychological research and practice. However, as I outline (see Redding, 2023, this volume), concrete steps can be taken to increase ideological diversity in the field. To do that, first and foremost, we must increase the ideological diversity of those entering the profession, so that it is welcoming not just to those on the left.

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# Chapter 5

## Political Bias in the Social Sciences: A Critical, Theoretical, and Empirical Review



Nathan Honeycutt and Lee Jussim

“Everyone is biased,” is a mostly vacuous truism. It may be literally true in some superficial sense, but this is entirely useless with respect to figuring which claims made by which person or scientist are valid or not. Clearly, some scientific claims are true, others are not. Sometimes, evidence is contradictory or muddled. Yet some scientific claims are obviously true, and some scientific claims may be true despite not being obvious. Thus, the truism “everyone is biased” does not necessarily mean that all conclusions reached by all people are biased, especially since some are better at overcoming their biases than others (Tetlock & Gardner, 2016). For truth-seeking enterprises, such as science, and truth-communicating enterprises, such as news and education, the stakes are unusually high. As Mark Twain probably never actually said (but is a good point nonetheless), “It ain’t what you don’t know that gets you into trouble; it’s what you know for sure that just ain’t so.” Biased science can lead to counterproductive interventions, useless social programs, decades of wasted time and resources, and unnecessary social conflict by virtue of misleading people to believe false and derogatory things about those they view as their ideological opponents.

This chapter is a critical, theoretical, and empirical review of political bias. It is “critical” in that it roundly criticizes the manner in which the social sciences have allowed political biases to undercut the validity and credibility of their scholarship. It is a theoretical review because the chapter presents two complementary and

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synergistic models of academic bias (one about its manifestations, the other about its processes). It is empirical because the chapter then uses those models to review the now vast evidentiary case for political bias, and because this chapter presents new data providing further evidence of such biases. This chapter also highlights when proposed manifestations of political bias are plausible but not yet demonstrated, thereby also identifying potential directions for future empirical research.

Scientist's personal political biases, however, are not necessarily a problem under three conditions: (1) when there are plenty of scientists holding a range of ideological positions, so that, even though some individuals may be biased, the skeptical vetting that comes from having claims evaluated by political opponents insures that, over time, only the best and most valid claims – those most clearly supported by strong, rigorous evidence appropriately interpreted – come to be widely accepted as true (we refer to this as “canonization”); (2) when the topic is apolitical; and (3) when the norms of, and practices of, scientists guarantee the winnowing of unjustified claims and the canonization of justified ones.

The first part of this chapter is organized around reviewing theory and evidence regarding those three conditions. Although the second condition is often met (there is a great deal of research on apolitical topics), we conclude that the evidence argues strongly against both the first and third conditions. Because political biases are a serious problem for social psychology and the social sciences, the second part of this chapter presents theoretical models describing many of the ways those biases manifest and reviews evidence regarding those manifestations.

## The Massive Left Skew of Academia

Academia skews heavily left and the social sciences skew massively left (Langbert & Stevens, 2021). The skew is so extreme that, to those unfamiliar with the data, claims about the skew may sound like propaganda intended to delegitimize academia. In fact, some research has demonstrated that Americans – even those on the political right – actually underestimate just how massive the skew is (Marietta & Barker, 2019). But if extreme left skew constitutes justification for delegitimizing academia, then academia has delegitimized itself. Redding (2023) hits many of the high points demonstrating the massive – and growing – left skew in the field of psychology. Specifically, one cited report indicates that upward of 90% of social psychologists identify as liberal, and other cited studies indicate ratios of Democrats to Republicans range between 11.5 and 17 to one, with almost half of the psychology departments at the top 40 US universities not having a single Republican (Redding, 2023). The data, obtained from multiple independent researchers using a wide range of methodologies, all lead to the same conclusion: non-left scientists in psychology are an endangered species. Following, we briefly describe data that demonstrates the same holds in the social sciences and humanities (and really in the academy at-large).

Langbert and Stevens (2021) examined party registration of over 12,000 faculty at “flagship” universities and colleges (i.e., ones highly ranked by US News and World Report). In the social sciences, the ratio of Democrats to Republicans ranged from a low of 3:1 in economics to a high of 42:1 in anthropology (in between was

sociology at 27:1). Similarly, Buss and von Hippel (2018) found that the social psychologists they surveyed voted for Obama over Romney by a ratio of 75:1. These findings, in sum, are consistent with those of many other studies of social science faculty politics (Gross & Simmons, 2014; Honeycutt & Freberg, 2017; Inbar & Lammers, 2012; Kaufmann, 2021; Langbert, 2018; Peters et al., 2020). It is worth noting, though, that however extreme the skews are for self-reported ideology and party registration, they are probably *underestimates* when benchmarked against partisan *behavior*. For example, Langbert and Stevens (2021) found that more registered Republican faculty donated to Democratic political candidates than to Republican political candidates (6.0% v. 1.3%). Thus, it's likely that voter registration underestimates an already massive political skew.

Thus, the first condition is met for raising concern about political biases in the social sciences. Merton's (1973) norm of organized skepticism – one of the norms that supposedly justifies a privileged place in how a society goes about determining truth – is likely inherently impaired for politicized topics when those on the left outnumber the right by the magnitudes reported in the research we just reviewed. What is the political diversity threshold to ensure adequate Mertonian organized skepticism for politicized topics? We have no empirical answer to this question. However, we would speculate that the tipping point is somewhere around 3:1. We are not drawing a hard line at 25%; it is a speculative guess. Maybe the line is 15% or 20% or 30% or 35%. Maybe it varies from field to field depending on other specific field-related dynamics. Maybe it varies depending on topic, with topics in which people are more emotionally invested or which attract more activists, having a higher minority threshold in which biases will still heavily corrupt the field. Regardless of where the tipping point actually occurs, however, when it occurs, the types of biases reviewed in this chapter may be at dramatically heightened risk to corrupt some substantial portion of the field's scholarship on politicized topics. Furthermore, the skew in many social science fields is so extreme that one can be confident that, wherever the line is drawn, it has already been crossed.

## Political Biases Are Irrelevant to Topics That Are Not Politicized

It should be obvious that biases only matter in domains about which one is biased. Just as gender biases should be irrelevant to estimates of ambient temperature, and in-group biases should be irrelevant to estimates of ceramic tensile strength, political biases would be irrelevant to topics that are not politicized. There is abundant evidence of increasing political polarization in the USA, increasing hatred of the other side, and strengthening of ideological “bubbles,” where people primarily consume information from their own side and even ascribe increased credibility to experts on one's own side on completely non-politicized topics (e.g., Drummond & Fischhoff, 2017; Finkel et al., 2020; Marks et al., 2019; Pew, 2014; Twenge et al., 2016).

Thus, many topics are politicized, and it seems likely that these have increased over the years. For example, between 1994 and 2014, Democrats and Republicans

increasingly diverged in their views on government waste and regulation, the personal responsibilities of the poor for being poor, whether immigrants are a boon or burden, and whether stricter environmental laws were needed, as well as on a slew of other issues. Party differences on these topics grew from about 20% in 1994 to about 40% in 2014 (Pew, 2014). Nonetheless, even in this context of increasing polarization and politicization, there are a great many topics that psychologists study that are (for now) completely devoid of political content. We are pretty sure one can study the neuroscience of smell, computational models of shape perception, or the effectiveness of cognitive behavioral therapy without triggering any sensitive political nerves. One might have an agenda when a psychologist studies issues such as these (a theoretical agenda, allegiance to a particular perspective or intervention, etc.), and those agendas might operate in a manner similar to political ones, but that is beyond the scope of this chapter. Even though biases may characterize almost any area of research, in many areas they will *not* be political biases.

Thus, even the potential for political biases to distort psychological science is limited to issues that are subjectively or implicitly politicized on the part of the researcher. But what about areas that *are* politicized? Do biases occur on politicized topics or do normal academic processes ensure political neutrality and scientific objectivity?

## **Arguments and Evidence That Normal Academic Processes Prevent Political Biases**

From time to time, scholars have published defenses against the charge of political bias (e.g., Jost, 2011; Reiner et al., 2020; van Bavel et al., 2020). They generally argue that the personality dispositions of scientists or normal scientific processes ensure against social scientific research becoming compromised by political biases. We review these arguments next.

### ***Personality and Individual Differences***

Some research has found that scientists score higher on personality measures of “openness to experience” (Lounsbury et al., 2012). And one paper reported that scientists require their beliefs to have more empirical consistency than do laypeople (Hogan & Maglienti, 2001). In order to ensure that political biases do not occur, these characteristics should render scientists sufficiently “open” to: (1) basing their beliefs on scientific evidence, or (2) revising their beliefs in response to disconfirming evidence.

## *Peer Review and the Norms of Science*

Furthermore, some argue that “... the norms of science attenuate the biases of individual scientists by institutionalizing vigorous debate and criticism (Merton, 1973)” (Reinero et al., 2020 p. 3). Indeed, Reinero et al. (2020) go further (also on p. 3) to argue that “...the peer review process is well designed to diminish groupthink because reviews are normally conducted in parallel by anonymous reviewers at arms length from the authors...” In fact, at least one social psychologist (Jost, 2011) has claimed that allegations of ideological bias are anti-scientific, in the sense that accusing scientists of political biases is merely an attempt to delegitimize rigorous science on purely partisan grounds.

## *Are Left-Leaning Studies Less Replicable?*

Reinero et al. (2020) proposed the following hypothesis: If political biases influence social science, then lower standards should be applied to left-leaning articles than to right-leaning articles. If this is the case, then left-leaning findings should prove less replicable than right-leaning findings. Reinero et al. (2020) conducted two sets of analyses, both finding no evidence that right-leaning articles were more replicable than left-leaning ones. In one, doctoral students coded whether 194 replication attempts involved topics with a political slant; in a second, Mechanical Turk workers coded the same studies. Regardless of who did the coding, whether the replications succeeded or failed was unrelated to whether the articles were left- or right-leaning.

## **Arguments and Evidence That Normal Academic Processes Fail to Prevent Political Biases**

### *Personality and Individual Differences*

The idea that scientists are more “open to experience” may be true, but whether this leads to objectivity, validity, or credibility in producing science is an empirical question that has never been addressed. Even if true, we doubt its effect on validity is large, primarily because there are many other influences on the validity of research that can overwhelm a personality trait. Human behavior, including that of scientists, is influenced by far more than personality, including political attitudes, tribal/group affiliations, incentives, education, and social norms (Jussim et al., 2019a).

Furthermore, one might also expect the highly educated and scientifically literate (such as academics) to generally be less polarized because, as this argument goes, such people would be more likely to base views on evidence. According to this

view, if one has the training and expertise to understand the truth, political bias should get no traction.

Such a view surely sounds compelling. Unfortunately, evidence shows the opposite. Education and scientific literacy *increase* polarization on controversial science topics (Drummond & Fischhoff, 2017). This probably occurs because the highly educated and scientifically literate are particularly good at enlisting arguments and evidence to bolster their preferred views. Inasmuch as academics tend to be highly educated and scientifically literate, this would tend to create greater rather than lesser tendencies toward political biases.

Indeed, contrary to the argument that academics' intelligence and commitment to evidence are sufficient to ensure against biases, we know for a fact that psychological research has been long plagued by many suboptimal methodological practices (see, e.g., Fraley & Vazire, 2014; Jussim et al., 2019a, b; Simmons et al., 2011). These have produced what was once known as the Replication Crisis (Open Science Framework, 2015). But, growing recognition of all sorts of dysfunctional and suboptimal practices goes well beyond replication and includes measurement, interpretations, publication, citation, and canonization practices, all of which can and do undercut the validity of psychological science (see, e.g., Fraley & Vazire, 2014; Jussim et al., 2019a, b; Flake & Fried, 2020; Yarkoni, 2020). Although these critiques do not directly address the issue of political biases per se, they constitute a strong refutation of claims that "the personalities of scientists immunize them from suboptimal scientific practices."

### *Failures of Peer Review*

The idea that peer review insures against invalid science is readily refuted by its many failures. Here are just a few:

- Psychology's Replication Crisis (see, e.g., Pashler & Wagenmakers, 2012).
- Registered reports produce fewer than half as many "statistically significant" findings as do conventional reports (Scheel et al., 2021).
- Papers published by researchers at prestigious institutions were nearly all rejected when they were subsequently resubmitted as new manuscripts by authors at low prestige institutions (Peters & Ceci, 1982).
- The Grievance Studies Sting, in which papers making wild claims were welcomed at peer reviewed journals, even when they made wild or vile claims, as long as those claims were framed as advancing social justice. These included, but are not limited to, advocating for men to (metaphorically) be leashed by dogs or White students to be chained to desks, and rewriting excerpts from *Mein Kampf* as a treatise on feminist solidarity (Lindsay et al., 2018).
- Over 90% of the literature touted the effectiveness of antidepressant medications, even though half the underlying studies failed to find they were effective (De Vries et al., 2018).

The pre-registered replication success rate in psychology is around 50% (Scheel et al., 2021), and no one really knows which half of the studies that have not been subjected to replication attempts will hold up (for a discussion on what pre-registration is, see Nosek et al., 2018). Thus, contrary to the sanguine view that peer review is well suited for eliminating bias (e.g., van Bavel et al., 2020), the inexorable conclusion from the evidence of rampant failures of peer review is that it does not insure against poor or biased science. Although reviewing the literature on the limitations and failings of peer review is beyond the scope of this chapter, that literature is vast (for reviews, see Crane & Martin, 2018; Csiszar, 2016; Heesen & Bright, 2021).

### *Norms of Science*

Some have argued that “norms of science” also function to limit political biases (e.g., Reinero et al., 2020; Van Bavel et al., 2020). There are, however, many problems with this idea. One is that the extent to which scientists embrace these norms, rather than *deploy them rhetorically to gain undeserved credibility*, remains unclear. Some surveys have found that scientists *say* they embrace these norms (e.g., Anderson et al., 2010). On the other hand, some scholars have argued that this embrace is little more than a charade used by scientists to claim more credibility than they deserve (Mulkay, 1976) and that Merton’s original norms have collapsed (Kellogg, 2006).

For example, consider Merton’s disinterestedness norm. This is the idea that scientists should keep their personal interests and values out of science as much as possible. This norm is threatened and likely rejected (regardless of what scientists state on surveys) whenever social scientists endorse infusing their scholarship with activist goals (Becker, 1967; Gross & Simmons, 2014; Horowitz et al., 2018; Unger, 2011). One sees this whenever scientists accuse some academic publication of causing “harm” to some sort of activist agenda without regard for demonstrating that the findings or arguments are actually invalid (Dreger, 2016; Retraction Watch, 2020).

Consider also Merton’s universalism norm: scientific truths should be evaluated for their validity based on impersonal standards such as quality of methodology and/or validity of the statistics rather than on the particular identities, statuses, or group memberships of the scientist making a truth claim. This norm is rejected writ large whenever academics privilege perspectives propounded by scientists from particular identity groups, take “lived experience” as any more credible than conventional self-reports (limitations of which are legion in social psychology), or demand others incorporate such perspectives independent of a substantive reason for doing so. The extent to which psychologists adhere to Mertonian norms of science in their behavior – rather than rhetoric – is an open empirical question. There is currently little evidentiary basis for concluding that they constitute a guarantor against bias.

## A Critical Evaluation of Reiner et al. (2020): A Bad Hypothesis Badly Tested

In their *Scientific American* blog on their paper showing no replicability differences between right- and left-leaning findings, Reiner and van Bavel (2020) trumpeted, "... our study suggests that political bias may not plague psychological science to the extent that it dominates many other domains of society." Neither we nor they have any evidence comparing the extent of such biases among social psychologists versus "other domains of society." Indeed, people in other "domains of society" do not usually engage in scientific replication, so the comparison is odd. Nonetheless, our critical analysis of their study, which follows, suggests that it provides little useful information whatsoever about the extent of political biases in social psychology. Indeed, it is plausibly interpretable as evidence of political bias that a study (1) with this many flaws and (2) which seems to vindicate the validity of research produced by (as we have demonstrated) overwhelmingly leftwing psychologists was published in a prestigious psychology journal.

**Bad hypothesis** The effort by Reiner et al. was misguided from the start. First, some full disclosure: One of us (Jussim) was invited by Crawford to collaborate on an earlier version of this project and turned down that opportunity for precisely the reasons identified here; that is, the study was *foreseeably* doomed to provide a terribly weak test of a badly derived hypothesis from its conception.

The hypothesis can be characterized as badly derived because of the following reasons: (1) there is an extensive literature on political biases in the social sciences (e.g., Crawford & Jussim, 2018; Duarte et al., 2015; Honeycutt & Freberg, 2017; Honeycutt & Jussim, 2020; Inbar & Lammers, 2012; Kaufmann, 2021; Martin, 2016; Redding, 2001, 2013; Tetlock, 1994; Zigerell, 2019); (2) that literature includes many hypotheses about manifestations of such biases (more on this later, but it includes biases in methods, interpretations, citation, and canonization); and (3) a simplistic claim that left-leaning studies are less replicable is nowhere to be found in that literature. Point 3 may help explain why Reiner et al. resorted to citing a political pundit (Brooks, 2015) rather than any of the scholarly literature when generating it. They also cited two Dutch essays that "propelled the Dutch government to...study whether political bias affects research outcomes" (Reiner et al., 2020, p. 1311). Interestingly and amusingly, the two Dutch essays (Brugh, 2017a, b) also did not mention replication.

**Bad hypothesis, badly tested** Reiner et al.'s findings were based on a sample of studies too small to detect any left/right differences in replication even if they exist. Their total pool was 194 studies. However, no one ever predicted political bias on apolitical studies, so all apolitical studies in their sample are irrelevant to the *political bias* hypothesis, except possibly as a neutral comparison. The critical ingredient for an appropriate test of their political bias hypothesis is a substantial sample of highly politicized articles. This proposition has two components, both critical. The first is "substantial sample." It is now well established that studies based on small

samples are notoriously unreliable (Fraley & Vazire, 2014). The second relates to how the concept of “strongly politicized” is operationalized. Even if the hypothesis that left-affirming studies are less replicable were true, such an effect would be weak-to-nonexistent for weakly political studies. The effect (if it exists at all) should most likely appear clearly for strongly politicized studies. Their research lacked both of these ingredients. This is, however, quite difficult for the superficial reader of their article to discern from their report because of both spin and obfuscation.

***Spin and obfuscation of weaknesses*** Their report includes some examples of what is plausibly considered “spin” that may serve to make the work appear stronger than it really was. It also included a distinct lack of clarity regarding some central aspects of the results critical for evaluating the strength of the evidence. “Obfuscation” refers to the act of making something unclear, and we make no claims about whether this was intentional.

Any reader of Reinero et al. (2020) can readily determine that each of the following statements are true about their report:

- The abstract refers to the 194 replications and the total number of human participants in these studies (over a million). It does not report the much smaller number of studies with political lean (24, at most), *which is the sample size most critical with respect to testing whether replicability of studies relates to political lean.*
- Nowhere in either the main report or supplementary materials is there a simple statement of the precise number of left or right-leaning studies.
- They framed their report as “two” studies, even though they tested the “differences in replicability” hypothesis on a single sample of 194 studies. They “justified” this because they performed the test for replicability differences twice, once with each of two different groups of participants coding for political lean. However, having different coders judge a single sample of studies is a robustness check; it is not two different studies. *It’s the same set of 194 studies in both of Reinero et al’s (2020) “studies.”*

De Vries et al. (2018) referred to “spin” as occurring when researchers emphasize supportive secondary results and downplay unsupportive primary results; it is plausible to also consider “spin” as researchers’ emphasizing features of their samples, design, or analyses that sound more impressive than what was actually relevant to test their hypotheses. Spin and obfuscation occur in additional ways throughout the paper as described next.

***The tiny sample of studies with political lean*** The number of studies with liberal/conservative political lean is also obfuscated. Reinero et al. (2020) never *state* how many studies were determined to have “political lean” by their two sets of coders (for some of their provided examples of articles with political lean, see below). Nonetheless, it is possible to *infer* those numbers from the results they did provide (although in the absence of a clear report, it is impossible to be certain that

such inferences are correct). In footnote 13, they state "... the distribution of political-slant ratings from Study 2 includes all abstracts in the database ( $N = 194$ ), whereas Study 1's distribution stems from the subset of articles deemed politically relevant on the basis of the doctoral coder's ratings ( $n = 101$ )." Because the *number* of studies with political lean is reported nowhere, it must be *imputed*. We did this by multiplying the *percentages they did report* by 101 and 194 for "Studies" 1 and 2, respectively.

In "Study 1," they reported 20% and 4% respectively, for left- and right-leaning studies (p. 1315). In "Study" 2, they reported 3% and 2%, respectively, for left- and right-leaning studies (out of a total of 194; p. 1315). This produces the following table (Table 5.1) of sample sizes for their "studies." If, as per their footnote 13, "Study 1" had 101 studies and "Study 2" had 194 studies, those percentages produce the following frequencies:

The numbers of studies with political lean are so trivially small that they are incapable of providing a strong and clear test of the "replicability differences" hypothesis. Consistent with the pattern of spin and obfuscation, the abstract did not mention the trivial number of left- and right-leaning studies.

**Political amateurs?** Political scientists, political journalists, and political party officials are experts on politics; graduate students and Mechanical Turk workers are generally not. Although Reinero et al. (2020) provided some training to the graduate student coders in their "first study," whether such political amateurs had the expertise to make these judgments with any validity was not tested and therefore remains unknown. In the absence of either using such experts or providing validity evidence for the coders they did use, confidence in the validity of the coding is limited.

**Weak criteria for "politically relevant" and "political lean"?** One can also see how badly this study failed to capture politicized research simply by looking at articles characterized as either liberal or conservative, which was provided in their supplementary materials. Here are the first titles listed for each category (available in their supplementary materials):

- Liberal: "Reading literary fiction improves theories of mind."

**Table 5.1** Number of left- and right-leaning studies in Reinero et al.'s (2020) "two studies"

	"Study 1" (based on 101 studies)	"Study 2" (based on 194 studies)
Number of left-leaning studies	20% = 20	3% = 6
Number of right-leaning studies	4% = 4	2% = 4

In the table, study number is in quotes, because they had two samples of raters code the studies, but it was the same set of studies tested for replicability differences in both of Reinero et al.'s (2020) "studies," which we consider a robustness check rather than two different studies. Reinero et al. reported the percentage but not the actual number of studies with political lean. This table translates their percentages to number of studies.

- Conservative: “Influence of popular erotica on judgments of strangers and mates.”

Although reading fiction does not strike us as a particularly hot issue on the left, many of the other studies listed in the supplementary materials coded as liberal-leaning seemed quite reasonable and included phenomena such as stereotype-threat and the psychological justifications for inequality. Studies highlighted in their supplementary materials as “conservative-leaning,” however, were less obviously appropriate. Many were about sex or romantic relationships. These topics pale in politicization compared to many modern culture war issues, such as the alleged prevalence of white supremacy, racial and gender inequality and discrimination, transgender issues, immigration, abortion, colonialism, and climate change. No one we know of who has ever addressed political biases (see references) has argued that they would manifest on tepid topics such as romantic relationships.

**Reinero et al. (2020): Conclusions** Reinero et al. (2020) failed to find evidence for a manifestation of political bias which had never been proposed in the extensive scholarship on political bias. Whether it should be taken at face value is deeply unclear. The study suffers from many limitations and flaws, and it constitutes an exceedingly weak basis of support for the simplistic hypothesis that there would be replicability differences between left-leaning and right-leaning studies (we test a considerably more sophisticated hypothesis about political bias and replicability later in this chapter).

We believe its main conclusion – no replicability differences between left- or right-leaning studies – is probably valid, but not because of the evidence Reinero et al. (2020) provided. Our view is that there is so much noise in the peer review process, and room for so many other biases (biases favoring statistical significance, dramatic findings, prestige and fame, hot topics, etc.), that the likelihood of political biases influencing replicability is very small. We believed it before they conducted their study, and we still believe it. This is why previous reviews of political bias dating back 30 years have not predicted that there would be such differences (e.g., Crawford & Jussim, 2018; Duarte et al., 2015; Honeycutt & Jussim, 2020; Redding, 2001, 2013; Tetlock, 1994).

## Models of Political Bias Manifestation

In this section, we present two complementary models of political biases in academia and review the extent to which evidence supports each model. The first, the Pipeline Model, is a model of the processes by which the social sciences in particular, and possibly academia more generally, are self-radicalizing. The second model, the Wheel Model, focuses specifically on identifying how political biases manifest in ways that undercut the validity and credibility of social science.

### Activist to Academia to Activism Pipeline Model of Radicalization

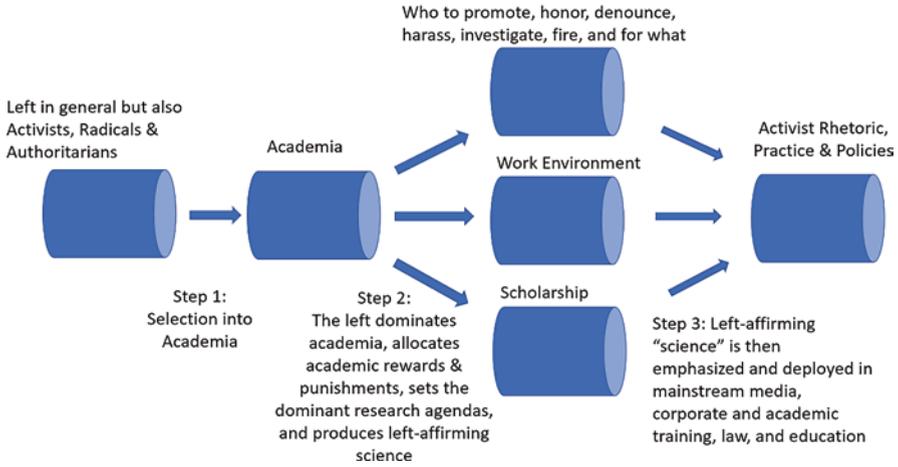


Fig. 5.1 The Pipeline Model of Academic Self-Radicalization

### The Pipeline Model

Figure 5.1 presents the Activist to Academia to Activism Pipeline Model of Academic Self-Radicalization. According to this model, radicals, activists, and extremists select into academia and then create a hostile work environment for those they see as their opponents. They then make it more difficult for opponents to be hired, promoted, publish and fund their work, denounce and ostracize their opponents, including alleged misbehavior in their jobs, and effectively capture “peer reviewed science.” Of course, they simply *implement this strategy without announcing it*, so it is only apparent from their behavior. There is no central authority engaging in conspiracies or command and control; this behavior is *socially distributed*; it emerges when the grassroots members of various fields share an ideological commitment to certain values and accept denunciation, demonization, and ostracism of those they view as their opponents as an appropriate, even necessary, way to conduct their professional behaviors within their fields.

In the final stage of the Pipeline Model, after purging rather than refuting those with different views, and after publishing study after study vindicating their political worldview (no matter how methodologically unsound, misinterpreted, or misrepresented), they can then rhetorically claim that their worldview is justified by the “peer reviewed science.” We next elaborate on each step and distinguish between *proposed or hypothesized* phenomena versus phenomena for which there is ample evidence.

### Step 1: A Political Purity Spiral

We have already established the presence of massive left *overrepresentation* in academia. It takes minimal numeracy to recognize that this will almost inevitably lead to massive overrepresentation of *far left activists and extremists*. Most surveys indicate that 4–15% of Americans are on the far left (Hawkins et al., 2018; Pew, 2014; Twenge et al., 2016). So, heuristically, one might guess that the far left is overrepresented in academia because, with so few academics right of center, one could approximately double the estimates of the far left found in representative surveys of the general American public to arrive at an initial plausible estimate of the proportion of the far left to be found in academia.

However, several factors probably exacerbate far left overrepresentation in academia beyond that initial estimate. First, once academia developed a reputation for being a bastion of leftwing views, it likely became more attractive to left extremists. Second, once a critical mass of extremists is reached in some university or department, they can easily hire comrades-in-arms and/or insure against hiring opponents. Although we are aware of no evidence documenting this process in full detail, research showing substantial minorities of academics *endorse* discriminating against their political opponents (e.g., Honeycutt & Freberg, 2017; Inbar & Lammers, 2012) is consistent with such a process. Both factors (academia’s reputation as a bastion of left activism and political discrimination) could lead to a political purity spiral of ever greater overrepresentation of extremists and activists, at least until either saturation is reached or some new process intervenes to disrupt the spiral.

If something like these processes occur, then, in the social sciences, there would be far more than double the number left extremists as are in the general population. HERI data (Stolzenberg et al., 2019) showing about 13% of faculty identify as far left is consistent with the “mere doubling of the far left representation in academia” hypothesis (though 13% is for faculty overall, we are unable to ascertain percentages specific to the social sciences from their report). However, consistent with this “purity spiral” hypothesis, rather than the 8–30% representation of far left extremists one would obtain by simply doubling national survey estimates, about 40% of the faculty in the social sciences and humanities self-describe as radicals, activists, or other types of extremists (such as Marxists) (Gross & Simmons, 2014; Kaufmann, 2021). This strongly supports Step 1 of the Pipeline Model for the social sciences and humanities.

### Step 2: Rewards, Punishment, Work Environment, Scholarship

Step 2 describes three related but separable phenomena: rewards and punishments (promotions, denunciations, etc.), work environment, and scholarship. We next review the evidence bearing on each in turn, as Steps 2a, 2b, and 2c.

**Step 2a: Who to reward and punish** Has the extreme left skew of the social sciences – complete with large cadres of radicals and extremists – influenced who the field promotes, honors, denounces, harasses, investigates, and/or fires? We have no

data on promotions or honors. Indeed, there are so few non-left faculty remaining in the social sciences that the probability of non-left faculty receiving major honors or awards is, by the scant base-rate alone, likely to be very low.

There is, however, evidence that bears on the general proposition that faculty rewards are channeled disproportionately to those on the left. Specifically, even after controlling for achievement (primarily publications), the more faculty held left attitudes toward social issues, the more likely they were to be found in positions at higher status institutions (Rothman & Lichter, 2009). Disproportionate rewards go to left faculty.

What about punishments? The Foundation for Individual Rights in Education (FIRE) recently (2021) published a Scholars Under Fire database (as of this writing, database last updated March 2022). A scholar is deemed to be “under fire” when there is “...a campus controversy involving efforts to investigate, penalize or otherwise *professionally* sanction a scholar for engaging in constitutionally protected forms of speech.” In 2021 alone (counts obtained on 3/23/22), FIRE tracked 80 such targeting incidents from the left (transgressions included things like criticizing Martin Luther King or exposing a University Senate resolution condemning criticisms of critical race theory) and 34 from the right (transgressions included criticizing Trump or Republicans and publicly protesting a professor’s use of a misogynistic slur).

However, the Pipeline Model shown in Fig. 5.1 refers to professors within academia; it is not a model of radicalization generally. Therefore, what is most relevant to Step 2a (who to punish) is not the overall number of attempts to sanction professors; most relevant are targeting incidents from within, not outside of, academia. Those numbers present a more stark contrast. When restricted to incidents initiated by scholars and graduate students, there were 42 from the left and 7 from the right. This pattern holds for every year included in FIRE’s database, which goes back to 2015. For example, in 2015, eight faculty were targeted for sanctions by their left colleagues or graduate students, and zero were targeted by academics from the right.

**Step 2b: Hostile work environment and leftwing authoritarianism** The numbers in FIRE’s database are quite small in the grand scheme of a country with many thousands of social science professors. However, we know for a fact that FIRE’s database *underestimates* the numbers of faculty who have targeted by leftwing mobs, because we know of events that do not rise to FIRE’s attention or meet their selection criteria, some of which can be found in Stevens et al. (2017) and others can be found in Shields and Dunn (2016). It is a near-certainty that far more incidents of shunning and ostracism, not to mention reputation-smearing whisper campaigns, interviews never received, promotions never granted, and jobs never offered, and the like have occurred than will ever be recorded. Consistent with the idea that FIRE’s database is just the tip of a very large iceberg, many faculty surveys find large percentages of non-left faculty reporting that they experience a hostile climate (Honeycutt & Freberg, 2017; Inbar & Lammers, 2012; Kaufmann, 2021). Furthermore, it probably does not take many such incidents for people to get the

message and self-censor. Put differently, non-left faculty generally know to keep quiet (Shields & Dunn, 2016) and these sorts of incidents help explain why.

Indeed, many academics openly declare blatant hostility to conservatives. Depending on what one uses as the measure, and depending on the precise cutoff, 20–80% of academics across several surveys *explicitly state* that they would discriminate against conservative viewpoints and individuals (Honeycutt & Freberg, 2017; Inbar & Lammers, 2012; Peters et al., 2020). This also likely underestimates actual discrimination against conservatives because self-report is biased by social desirability. One recent survey found that, in the social sciences and humanities, about a quarter of American professors and nearly half of all graduate students support not merely discriminating against, but *ousting* faculty members who express one or more of certain conventionally conservative viewpoints (Kaufmann, 2021).

Thus, when conservative professors express the belief that leaking their politics risks harming their careers (Shields & Dunn, 2016), they are likely correct. To cope with this fear of professional consequences, most stay “in the closet and under the radar” – i.e., they avoid revealing their politics either directly or even through their scholarship, which they studiously keep as apolitical as possible (Shields & Dunn, 2016). This of course *bias*es the existing literature toward topics favored by liberals who can be relatively uninhibited in studying political topics and against topics favored by conservatives (who fear being exposed and punished).

The recent blossoming of work on leftwing authoritarianism (“LWA”; Conway et al., 2018; Costello et al., 2021; Costello, 2023) might be useful for understanding the self-radicalizing nature of the social sciences. This work demonstrates that LWA has three key psychological characteristics: intolerance, censorship, and aggression, all directed at one’s political opponents. Leftwing authoritarian aggression can manifest as social vigilantism (attempts to impose one’s moral views on others; Costello et al., 2021), a phenomena that may help explain the rise of academic outrage mobs seeking to retract papers and ostracize professors for wrongthink (Stevens et al., 2020).

We propose the hypothesis that LWA is common in the academy on several grounds. First, even though high scores on LWA are relatively rare in the general population, the social sciences have massive left overrepresentation. It is likely, therefore, that there are far more people in academia high in LWA than in the general population. Furthermore, behavioral manifestations of LWA, such as aggression, censorship, and punishment, are readily apparent in the rise of retraction-by-academic-outrage-mob and a range of academic attempts to get people fired or punished for violating left sacred values (Stevens et al., 2020). To better understand the radicalization of academia, it would be useful for future faculty surveys to include a measure of leftwing authoritarianism.

***Step 2c, Scholarship: Academia is a conformity-rewarding social-reputational system*** Success in academia hinges on approval from others (Honeycutt & Jussim, 2022). Admission to graduate school? A glowing letter from a famous person in the field is priceless; a damning letter from such a person is the kiss of professional death. Letters from famous scientists are even more important for obtaining an aca-

democratic job, tenure, and promotions. The currency of success in psychology is peer-reviewed journal articles and grants, and peer review constitutes others' evaluations of one's work. If others prefer left-enhancing findings, then vast literatures on politicized topics may be biased in a leftward direction in the following ways: (1) more may be conducted; (2) it may be more likely to be funded by grant panels composed of academics; (3) it may be more likely to be published in more prestigious, higher impact journals; and (4) it may be more likely to be cited and canonized (i.e., widely accepted as true; and to note, "leftward studies are less likely to be replicated" is not one of our proposed manifestations).

Our general perspective here suggests that most research-active psychologists realize that they will face headwinds if they challenge leftist orthodoxies and that they can reap the benefits of tailwinds if they promote those orthodoxies. Testing this empirically would be a natural direction for future research on political bias. Nonetheless, it often only takes a minority of negative reviews to block a grant from being funded or paper submitted to a prestigious journal from being accepted. Therefore, we hypothesize that many academics may well decide, "truth is not worth the risk of damage to my career" and "there are plenty of things to study that do not involve tacking *against* political headwinds." This dynamic means that many probably abandon areas that risk alienating one's colleagues and seek out areas that one's colleagues are likely to approve and support. Although no research has directly tested for this process, surveys and interviews show that professors whose work contests cherished left-learning narratives (regardless of their personal politics) often learn to keep quiet out of fear of being ostracized by their colleagues (Shields & Dunn, 2016; Kaufmann, 2021). And this dynamic is particularly pronounced for conservative professors.

A field dominated by activists and authoritarians on the left is likely to have impaired and corrupted quality control mechanisms for research on politicized topics. Rather than a field in which researchers' opposing biases operate as effective checks on one another's unjustified politicized claims, we have fields filled with political cheerleaders ("peer reviewers") in which *there are few opposing political biases*. We have a political echo chamber, in which rewards, both social approval and tangible (publications, talk invitations, grants, and jobs), will likely go disproportionately to those whose scholarship on politicized topics affirms the left's shibboleths. However, we hold off on reviewing the evidence that bears on these hypotheses here, because the role of political biases in disrupting and distorting scholarship is the primary focus of the second model we present later in this chapter (the Wheel Model).

### **Step 3: Activist Rhetoric and Policies**

The final stage of the Pipeline Model involves the feeding of this left-distorted "scientific" literature into applications, practice, policies, and rhetoric. The logic for doing so is simple, straightforward, and deeply flawed. It is simple because it seems so eminently reasonable, even obvious, to base policies and practices on the

“scientific” literature. And in the natural sciences, this works. If a new vaccine reduces infections, and does not have many serious unintended negative side effects, proposing to make it widely available to the public makes tons of sense. Advocacy built on a foundation of “sound science” often can make sense.

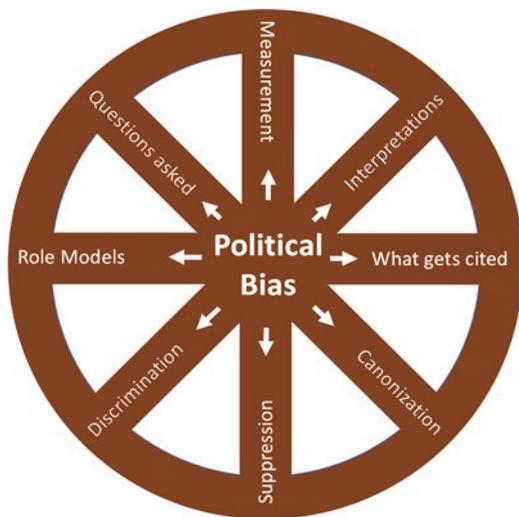
But the concept of “sound science” is doing a lot of work there. The entire point of our analysis of the social science on politicized topics is that, often, the science may *appear* far more sound than it really is. There may be scores, even hundreds of articles, seeming to support some claim (as is the case, e.g., with the notion of “implicit bias”). Those articles have experiments, sophisticated methods, and “statistically significant” results, so they are readily interpreted as justifying social interventions that take their conclusions as valid.

Unfortunately, the erosion of Mertonian Norms described herein means that, even when there are hundreds of studies reaching some conclusion, those conclusions may not be justified. Again, implicit bias is a perfect illustration of this problem (additionally, see later section on canonization for additional discussion of implicit bias). Implicit bias trainings, ostensibly built on the “science,” can now be found everywhere, and politicians up to and including recent presidential and vice presidential candidates have referred to it as if it is an established fact. Nonetheless, everything about implicit bias remains scientifically contested (e.g., Blanton & Jaccard, 2008, 2015a, b; Jussim et al., *in press*; Schimmack, 2021). One review recently referred to it as “delusive” (Corneille & Hutter, 2020), and there is currently almost no evidence that implicit bias trainings do much to reduce bias or discrimination (Forscher et al., 2019).

The problems associated with activists and social scientists bringing “science” into the real world in Stage 3, however, go well beyond the limitations to work with implicit bias (though it is an exquisite example). Left activist science has produced cottage industries of either similarly weakly vetted claims or widespread acceptance of a broad range of equalitarian perspectives (equalitarianism refers to perspectives denying the reality of group differences, except for those produced by discrimination), despite the presence of trenchant criticisms that are simply ignored rather than refuted. For unrefuted criticisms of stereotype inaccuracy, see Jussim et al. (2009, 2016). For unrefuted criticisms of the idea that gender differences are generally small, see Del Giudice et al. (2012). For failed replications of stereotype threats that have been largely ignored, see Finnegan and Corker (2016) and Flore et al. (2018).

This is the stuff of equalitarian mythmaking. But once the myths are made, activists designing interventions can and do point to the “peer reviewed science!” as justification for requiring armies of employees to waste their time in anti-racism, implicit bias, and diversity trainings that have never been demonstrated to accomplish much (al-Gharbi, 2020). They are probably colossal wastes of time and resources for everything except possibly indoctrination into a very particular and peculiar form of “social justice.” We write “peculiar” because the idea that useless trainings advance social justice (however one defines it) seems strange indeed and has never been empirically demonstrated.

**Fig. 5.2** The Wheel Model: preliminary theoretical model for manifestations of political bias



### *The Wheel Model*

Honeycutt and Jussim (2020) presented a preliminary theoretical model, the Wheel Model (Fig. 5.2), for specific ways in which political bias manifests in the scientific enterprise to undercut validity and credibility. Here we review the evidence that bears on several of the manifestations of political bias the Wheel Model proposes (which appear as the spokes in Fig. 5.2). Inasmuch as our prior paper (Honeycutt & Jussim, 2020) reviewed the evidence on discrimination and role models, we do not repeat that here. Instead, we focus in on articulating how political bias can manifest in and impact the questions researchers ask, measurement of topics studied, the interpretation and evaluation of research findings, what gets cited (or ignored), suppression of ideas and findings, and the canonization of research findings.

### **Questions Asked**

Political bias can impact the day-to-day conducting and operation of basic scientific research. Specifically, it can manifest in the questions academics/researchers ask (or desire to study/investigate; Jussim et al., 2018). Certain research questions have become anathema and their investigation discouraged or avoided, while others that are consistent with and conform to leftist ideas and positions are subjected to no such repression (Redding, 2001). It has even been suggested by some prominent scholars (e.g., Jost, 2011) that it's anti-scientific to consider the possibility that ideological bias is an issue.

Thus, simply asking the questions "is political bias an issue?" and "how, if at all, does political bias manifest in the academy?" may, in a deliciously ironic twist, lead

directly to the manifestations of political bias that are under investigation to begin with. We go even further here: We hypothesize that political biases are more likely to be found in the work of scientists who most aggressively deny them than among those who readily acknowledge the possibility of politics undercutting the validity of their work. Future work could test this hypothesis by identifying scholars who deny versus acknowledge the potential problem and then by comparing the extent to which the types of biases proposed by the Wheel Model appear in their work.

For example, for decades, there was premature scientific foreclosure on the conclusion that conservatives were asymmetrically more prejudiced and/or biased than liberals (e.g., Jost et al., 2003). Asymmetry findings were purported to be robust and were quite flattering to liberals. Thus, there was little need (or incentive) for the conclusions to be challenged, or for researchers to ask whether there were conditions under which symmetry for political prejudice and bias might emerge – let alone under what conditions liberals might actually be more prejudiced or biased. Yet when some of these questions finally were asked, researchers found that the various consensus were erroneous, as prejudice and bias were generally quite symmetrical (e.g., Brandt et al., 2014; Ditto et al., 2019).

Premature scientific foreclosure, and avoiding asking certain questions, also crippled the study of authoritarianism for nearly 70 years. A focus on rightwing authoritarianism quickly emerged from early investigations of authoritarianism (Adorno et al., 1950), a foothold which was solidified by RWA measures created by Altemeyer (e.g., Altemeyer, 1981). Essentially non-existent till 2018 was a systematic effort within social psychology to study leftwing authoritarianism (“LWA”). LWA was dismissed as a “myth” (Stone, 1980) and analogized to the “Loch Ness monster” (Altemeyer, 1996), in part because, as described by Altemeyer (1996, p. 229), “if there ever were any [authoritarians on the left], most of them have dried up and blown away and ‘nobody makes them anymore.’” Therefore, asking whether LWA existed, and seeking to find leftwing authoritarians, was considered a waste of time and resources. Altemeyer (1996) did attempt to investigate LWA, but he concluded that while rightwing authoritarians were plentiful, “if you want a living, breathing, scientifically certifiable authoritarian on the left, I have found not a single one” (p. 229–230). Regardless, the recent blossoming of work on LWA (see Conway et al., 2018; Costello et al., 2021) has shown that authoritarianism is about as common on the left as on the right, and manifests as dogmatism, support for censorship, and aggression against one’s ideological opponents.

## Measurement

Measurement provides further opportunity for political bias to manifest (Reyna, 2017; Lilienfeld, 2015). Political assumptions, if researchers aren’t careful, can be imported to the topics studied. It should be of no surprise that left-leaning academics may use “science” to ascribe psychological defects to political opponents, working from the assumption that left-leaning views are correct, ethical, fair, open-minded,

and scientific. And what better way to “scientifically” do so than to pre-load tests and measures with constructs or items that privilege “ideologically correct” views?

*The saga of Stanovich’s discovery and acknowledgment of his own political measurement bias.* Not all political bias in measurement is intentional. And, to the benefit of science and truth-seeking, self-correction sometimes does occur. In one such instance, two decades after introducing a well-respected and highly cited measure for actively open-minded thinking (“AOT”), the researchers discovered they had inadvertently introduced bias against religious, and to a lesser degree socially conservative, individuals in their scale (Stanovich & Toplak, 2019). At the heart of the discovery was the realization by some of the researchers that they had been interpreting “beliefs” to be secular, empirically verifiable understandings of the world, while religious participants were interpreting the same items to reflect spiritual understandings that aren’t easily altered by evidence. This was, by the admission of Stanovich, likely a by-product of the previous labs and research teams being overwhelmingly secular. Thus, when asked, for example, if “certain beliefs are just too important to abandon no matter how good a case can be made against them (reverse scored),” religious participants were unfairly penalized on the AOT dimension of belief revision.

Stanovich and colleagues came to recognize that political assumptions and inaccurate interpretations were skewing the AOT scale because “[their] own political/worldview conceptions leaked into these items in subtle ways” (p. 163). Upon discovery of how political bias had impacted both measurement and interpretation, the AOT was revised. This dramatically reduced ostensible left/right differences in AOT. As such, it constitutes a rare example of scientific correction operating as it should.

***Conservatism is often built into measures of moral failures*** Scientific correction isn’t always the norm when the impact of political bias on measurement is uncovered. There is an entire family of measures, currently called “racial resentment” scales, which include or are built upon older measures such as Modern Racism and Symbolic Racism (e.g., Henry & Sears, 2002; McConahay, 1986). Such measures are frequently used and interpreted as evidence of prejudice. At the same time, these measures have been criticized since their inception for confounding politics with prejudice (see Cramer, 2020, for a thorough and balanced review of this controversy). Of course, no one refers to these measures as “measures of moral depravity,” but if being a racist is deplorable, then attributing racism to people is to demonize them as depraved. Of course, if the conclusion is clearly based on sound science, then it stands no matter who it demonizes. The problem with racial resentment scales is that their status as measures of prejudice is scientifically controversial rather than definitively established.

Racial resentment scales often include questions worded like this: “many other minorities overcame prejudice and worked their way up. Blacks should do the same without any special favors” and “Over the last few years, blacks have gotten less than they deserve.” One problem with such scales is that the measures plausibly confound beliefs about what constitutes justified government safety nets with

racism. A person who hates Black people will oppose government spending on Black people. A person who hates government programs will also oppose government spending on almost anyone, including Black people. Such questions cannot distinguish between ideology and racism.

Conservatives routinely score higher on these measures than do liberals. Furthermore, “racial resentment” often strongly correlates with racial policy preferences, such as affirmative action and government spending on programs to assist Black people (Carmines et al., 2011). However, they correlated *so highly* (often in the  $r = 0.80$  range) that Carmines et al. (2011) concluded that “racial resentment” was, in essence, little more than a policy preference scale. Although racial policy preferences *may* be caused by racism, they may also be caused by many other beliefs and values. In short, racial resentment scales are not a clean measure of racism.

Similarly, a veritable cottage industry of studies was produced after the 2016 American Presidential election finding that racism (usually using some form of the racial resentment scales) predicted support for President Trump (e.g., Abramowitz & McCoy, 2019; Pettigrew, 2017). Into this mix stepped Carney and Enos (2017) who confirmed the relationship – people who scored higher on racial resentment were more likely to support Trump. However, they also found that Trump supporters scored higher in resentment against all sorts of groups, including White groups such as Albanians and Lithuanians. As they put it, “Because resentment against other groups is actually higher on average than anti-Black resentment, these results suggest that modern racism questions are poorly suited for capturing attitudes specific to Blacks” (p. 20).

**Other measures** We speculate that similar problems occur with many other scales that assess “isms” or “phobias” including sexism, authoritarianism, homophobia, transphobia, and other forms of prejudice. The psychometric problems of the implicit association test are legion (e.g., Blanton et al., 2015a, b), but the psychometric properties of other implicit measures are often even worse (van Dessel et al., 2020). Microaggression scales suffer from numerous unacknowledged problems, such as requiring mindreading (Cantu & Jussim, 2021; Lilienfeld, 2017). This may cause reasonable observers to ask how many other measures addressing politicized topics suffer similar limitations and weaknesses.

## Interpretations and Evaluations

There are few standards in the social sciences dictating how to properly interpret empirical findings. There are, perhaps, vague norms indicating that interpretations should be grounded in the data. But this is so broad and general that it leaves great latitude for political bias to taint the process.

**Bias in peer review** Abramowitz et al. (1975) had psychologists rate the appropriateness of either of two manuscripts for publication. Methods and analyses were identical for both papers. The result was experimentally varied such that it showed

either that leftist political activists were mentally healthier or that they were less healthy than a comparison group of nonactivists. When the paper concluded that leftist activists were healthier, the more liberal reviewers rated the manuscript as more publishable, and the statistical analyses as more adequate, than when the otherwise identical manuscript reported that the activists were less mentally healthy. The less liberal reviewers showed no such bias. Abramowitz et al. did not identify any conservative reviewers. This study is now almost 50 years old and replication is long overdue to evaluate whether the pattern holds true today and for different topics.

***Bias in evaluations and explanations*** Eitan et al. (2018) had 934 laypeople (Mechanical Turk workers) rate 306 conference abstracts (that pretesting previously established as addressing the characteristics of liberals and conservatives) on two dimensions: ‘evaluations’ and ‘explanations’. Evaluations refer to whether liberals or conservatives were evaluated more positively in the article. Explanations referred to whether liberals or conservatives were the primary focus of what needed to be explained. They argued this constituted a form of political bias because groups viewed as deviating from the norm are often the focus of explanations. Result provided clear evidence of political biases. Conservatives were both evaluated more negatively and were more frequently the focus of explanations. However, these biases were not related to subsequent likelihood of the research being published in a peer reviewed journal.

***Bias in acceptance of evolutionary psychology*** Buss and von Hippel (2018) examined the relationship between social psychologists’ ideology and belief in evolutionary psychology. Although they surveyed over 300 psychologists, this research is inherently hampered by the ideological homogeneity of the field. With almost everyone in psychology left of center (their survey found that 301 psychologists voted for Obama in 2012 and four voted for Romney), ideology suffers a severe restriction of range problem that will artificially limit its potential to correlate with other variables.

Nonetheless, the “leftness” of the ideology correlated about  $r = 0.20$  with each of three questions about sex differences: whether sex-differentiated hormones play a major role in attitudes and behavior; whether well-known sex differences might be primarily genetic; and whether it might be more difficult for men than women to remain sexually faithful. We write “leftness” because the near-total lack of conservatives meant that ideology ranged from center to far left.

In addition to the correlation with ideology, Buss and von Hippel (2018) found that many social psychologists doubt each of the following: evolution influenced human attitudes and preferences; there are universal standards of physical attractiveness; sex differences in psychology are primarily genetic; and men evolved to have more difficulty being sexually faithful than have women. Even larger numbers reported viewing it as “bad” to report one or more of these conclusions.

**Other evidence and limitations** It is often quite easy to uncover unjustified left-affirming interpretations in the literature, such as claims that stereotypes are inaccurate, 90% of Americans are unconscious racists, sex differences on many variables are trivially small, and eliminating stereotype threat eliminates race differences in standardized test scores (for articles chronicling and debunking each of these claims, see Blanton et al., 2015a, b; Del Guidice et al., 2012; Jussim et al., 2016; Sackett et al., 2004). However, showing that *one particular* study has been misinterpreted, or that *one particular claim is left-affirming but unjustified*, however strongly it shows bias, does not show a *pattern of biased interpretations across the discipline*. It is hypothetically possible that there are just as many unjustified right-affirming claims afflicting the discipline.

This is where the empirical studies of interpretations and evaluations are useful (Abramowitz et al., 1975; Buss & von Hippel, 2018; Eitan et al., 2018). Although all point in the same direction – of left biases dominating over right biases – all of the studies found modest, rather than large, effects. So can Team Left celebrate? Can they declare, “The hard scientific evidence is sparse and produces weak to modest effects! None of these studies have been replicated! One is decades old! Charges of political bias are wildly overstated!”

They can, and they probably will. But keep in mind that all of these studies produced *some as opposed to no* evidence of political bias, and that this is only one mechanism by which political biases can taint the field. The purity spiral that has led to the field being completely dominated by people on the left means that it is almost impossible to conduct a complete test of the extent to which interpretations and explanations are biased. Restriction of range is well known to attenuate correlations, so if the observed correlation between politics and interpretations is, e.g.,  $r = 0.20$ , this is likely to be far lower than it would be if the field was not almost exclusively people on the left.

This can be readily seen in an extreme hypothetical: Let’s say a field is made up entirely of Marxists who interpret all results as “We must smash the bourgeoisie.” This is 100% political bias. In this hypothetical, the correlation of researcher ideology and interpretation will be effectively zero. Although social psychology is, fortunately, not this extreme, the extreme attenuation of the range of political identities and values renders almost any observed estimate of political bias an underestimate.

## Citations

Citation biases occur when studies producing a particular finding are cited at higher rates than are comparably methodologically sound (or unsound) studies producing opposing findings. Citation biases can occur for many reasons including but not restricted to political biases (theoretical biases, fame biases, significant result biases, etc.). In some situations, papers reporting unreplicable findings are cited at exponentially greater rates than the research that has failed to replicate the desired

findings (Jussim et al., 2016). In a field in which political biases influence *that which is studied*, this has the effect of producing political citation biases. If more studies are produced with left-affirming findings (as found by Reinero et al., 2020), and if citation biases favor original studies, then, even when those studies are debunked as irreplicable, debunked left-affirming original studies will continue to be cited as if they are true. If false or dubious left-affirming work is routinely cited as true, the overall state of the literature will convey the impression that the science affirms left beliefs more than it actually does. As shown in Table 5.2, this can be seen in research on stereotype bias, stereotype threat, the effects of stereotypes on behavior, interpersonal expectations, and gender bias.

For example, Finnigan and Corker (2016) attempted to replicate Spencer et al.'s (1999) classic study on stereotype threat. In a pre-registered, highly powered study, Finnigan and Corker failed to obtain a significant main effect for stereotype threat, or any interaction effect found in the original work. Finnigan and Corker's work was recognized by the Association for Research in Personality as the best paper in 2016, which by some counts may be the first time a failed replication paper was recognized with an award by a major psychological organization. Yet since 2017 (the year after their paper was published), their paper has only been cited 52 times, while Spencer et al. (1999) has been cited 1712 times over the same time period. This is a staggering disparity, particularly in light of how the main findings of Spencer et al. (1999) have essentially been disconfirmed.

A similar pattern can be found in citations to articles showing or failing to show gender biases in peer review of articles and grants (Honeycutt & Jussim, 2020). We first identified every relevant paper we could find, then excluded papers that were

**Table 5.2** Papers finding opposite patterns or failing to replicate the original findings

Publication	Narrative	Key aspect of methods	Citations, total	Citations, since year after failed replication
Darley and Gross (1983)	Stereotypes lead to their own confirmation; stereotype bias in the presence but not absence of individuating information	People judge targets with vs. without relevant individuating information. Single experiment. $N = 59-68$ , depending on analysis	1951	Since 1996, 1600
Baron et al. (1995)	Failed replication of Darley and Gross (1983). Positive results in opposite direction: stereotype bias in the absence of individuating information; individuating information eliminated stereotype bias	Close replication (and extension) of Darley and Gross (1983). Two experiments. Total $N = 161$ .	107	Since 1996, 103

(continued)

**Table 5.2** (continued)

Publication	Narrative	Key aspect of methods	Citations, total	Citations, since year after failed replication
Spencer et al. (1999)	Stereotype threat for women and math; apprehension of being judged by the negative stereotype leads to poorer math performance	Three experiments. Total $N = 177$ .	4824	Since 2017, 1712
Finnigan and Corker (2016)	Failed replication of the stereotype threat effect in Chalabaev et al. (2012), modeled closely on Spencer et al. (1999). No significant main effect or interaction effect for threat or performance avoidance goals	Pre-registered. Close replication of Chalabaev et al. (2012), and extension from Spencer et al. (1999). Single experiment. Total $N = 590$	55	Since 2017, 52
Bargh et al. (1996)	Automatic effects of stereotypes on behavior	Two experiments. Total $N = 60$	5955	Since 2013, 3010
Doyen et al. (2012)	Failed replication of Bargh et al. (1996). No effects of stereotypes on behavior except when experimenters were not blind to condition	Two close replication and extension experiments. Total $N = 170$	763	Since 2013, 729
Snyder and Swann (1978)	People seek to confirm their interpersonal expectations	Four experiments. Total $N = 198$ . People chose among confirmatory or disconfirmatory leading questions (no option was provided for asking diagnostic questions)	1512	Since 1984, 1410
Trope and Bassok (1983)	People rarely seek to confirm their interpersonal expectations. Instead, they seek diagnostic information	Three experiments. Conceptual replication. Total $N = 342$ . People could seek information varying in the extent to which it was diagnostic vs. confirmatory	211	Since 1984, 206

Note: Citation counts collected: November 22, 2021

either too recent (because there was not enough time for citations to mount) or whose findings were muddled (rather than clearly showing biases favoring men versus women versus no bias; details can be found in Jussim, 2019). The results are reported in Table 5.3.

**Table 5.3** Citations to papers based on whether or not they found gender bias favoring men

	Found biases favoring men (four papers)	Found unbiased responding or biases favoring women (six papers)
Total citations	3982	890
Median sample size	182.5	2311.5
Citations per year	51.5	9.00

Note: Citation counts collected and calculated: June 22, 2019

Two patterns stand out. First, papers finding biases against women were cited at over five times the rate of papers showing no biases against women. Second, it shows that the sample sizes of the studies showing no biases against women were vastly higher than the sample sizes of the studies showing biases against women. Although sample size is not the only indicator of methodological quality, it is an extremely important one (Fraley & Vazire, 2014). Thus, despite having a major marker of lower scientific quality, the papers showing gender bias were cited far more frequently.

The problem in many situations isn't that failed replications or studies that contest left narratives don't get published. The problem is that these papers go largely ignored. We refer to this as the *fundamental publication error* (Jussim, 2017) – the mistaken belief that just because something has been published correcting past scientific errors, the scientific record has thus been corrected. If scientific work correcting past errors is not cited and is instead ignored, scientific correction has not taken place. Every time there are citation patterns like those described in Tables 5.2 and 5.3, 80–90% of the literature is saying “X is true” when, at best, it is unclear whether X is true, and “X is false” is plausibly the more valid conclusion. This is the stuff of political mythmaking masquerading as science.

## Suppression

The politics of social psychology can also influence what types of findings and ideas are suppressed. In scholarship and science, there is a difference between suppression and rejection. Rejection occurs when an idea has been explored and has been found to be clearly unjustified. Suppression occurs when social norms and processes prevent ideas from being explored or communicated. Although nonscientific actors (government, activists, etc.) may seek to suppress social science of which they disapprove, this chapter's focus is on the political biases of social psychologists and other social scientists, so we do not address *external* attempts at suppression further. There are two main types of scholarship suppression: suppression by others and self-suppression, and we discuss each next.

**Suppression by others** The most direct route to scholarship suppression in academia is to attempt to punish people for their ideas (suppression by others). The

most obvious modern manifestations of idea punishment include firing, loss of position (e.g., a dean is removed though may remain on the faculty), de-platforming, and retraction of published papers for anything other than fraud, misconduct, or flagrant and frequent data errors. If successful, the ideas being promulgated will be suppressed (e.g., see Frisby 2023a, b; Warne 2023). A retracted paper is no longer in the literature; a deplatformed speaker has lost a platform, a fired scholar may never return to academia or publishing. However, even if the attempt to punish fails, the work may still get suppressed because the scholar targeted has to spend time and effort defending against the attempt, and this is time not spent conducting or disseminating scholarship. Stevens et al. (2020) review a slew of real-world cases in which academic outrage mobs sought punishment of other academics, usually for violating left-activist equalitarian values.

**Self-suppression** However, one of the most powerful effects of such punishment attempts is to inspire waves of self-suppression. Self-suppression occurs when people do not pursue certain ideas or avoid trying to publish certain findings because they fear punishment or prefer that the findings do not see the light of day (Noelle-Neumann, 1974). Self-suppression is notoriously difficult to empirically assess because there is mostly an absence of evidence (if the idea is suppressed, it cannot usually be found).

Nonetheless, if our analysis is true at all, then findings that counter left or equalitarian narratives should be likely to be buried, hidden, or downplayed. Zigerell (2018) reports results consistent with this analysis. He first identified TESS studies of racial bias. TESS is a National Science Foundation-sponsored program that supports the conducting of experiments as part of nationally representative surveys. Zigerell (2018) identified 17 such studies, one finding that White respondents were biased against Black targets, the other 16 finding no bias, or biases favoring Black targets. Thirteen of these findings (one showing anti-Black bias, nine showing no bias, and three showing anti-White bias) were never published. Zigerell (2018) also found that, among these 17 studies, Black participants consistently favored Black targets, significantly so in seven studies and in an overall meta-analysis, and only two of these findings were published.

Although we do not know whether the researchers producing these findings tried but could not get them published, or simply did not try, the upshot is the same: the published scientific literature in social psychology will *overestimate* racist biases because a large number of high-quality studies based on nationally representative samples *are simply not in the literature*. Although one might object that, because Zigerell (2018) is now published, it *is* in the literature, this argument fails for two reasons. First, it would not have been in the literature without Zigerell's forensic efforts. Second, Zigerell (2018) has been cited a grand total of 19 times (as of 3/23/22), meaning that, for most practical purposes, it has been ignored.

The Zigerell (2018) study also raises an important question: How many *more* studies out there fail to find evidence of racism that have gone unpublished? In fact, it raises an *even bigger question*: How many studies *failing* to find evidence

**Table 5.4** Why canonization matters

Published research is:	Ignored	Canonized
Invalid	<i>IRRELEVANT</i> : No major harm, scientific process operating as intended	<i>REIGN OF ERROR</i> : Misunderstanding, misrepresentation, bad theory, ineffective and possibly counterproductive applications, time and resources wasted
Valid	<i>LOSS</i> : Understanding, theory, and practical application deprived of relevant knowledge	<i>IDEAL</i> : Understanding, theory, and practical application enhanced by relevant, robust, and extensively tested and validated knowledge

Adapted from Honeycutt and Jussim (2020)

supporting left-affirming narratives have gone unpublished? We may never know the answer to this question.

## Canonization

Canonization is the process by which research findings and conclusions are incorporated into a field's accepted base of knowledge (Jussim et al., 2019a). We characterize work as canonized when claims and findings are incorporated into journals of record, Annual Review and Handbook chapters, foundational textbooks, and similar outlets. Validity and robustness of findings would constitute grounds for concluding that a line of research is actually true, and thus should be canonized. Table 5.4 captures why canonization matters. The ideal and intended operation of the scientific process is for valid findings to be canonized and for invalid findings to be ignored.

***The canonization of implicit bias*** Many of the manifestations of political biases have come together to prematurely canonize the notion of implicit bias and, especially, its workhorse measure, the implicit association test (IAT). First, has the notion of “implicit bias” been canonized? If the standard is “thousands of articles employ the concept; it appears in outlets of record such as Annual Review chapters (multiple) and textbooks (multiple), and articles extolling its virtues and importance have been cited thousands of times,” then the answer is a resounding “yes” (e.g., the study announcing the IAT, Greenwald et al., 1998, has been cited almost 15,000 times according to Google Scholar). Triumphant reviews have declared that “the existence of implicit bias is beyond reasonable doubt” (title of Jost et al., 2009) and that we are in the midst of an “implicit revolution” (title of Greenwald & Banaji, 2017).

De Ridder (2022) recently published a philosophy of science article that helps understand the following: (1) Why implicit bias has been canonized though? (2) Almost everything about work on implicit bias justifies *not* treating any of the conclusions that have emerged from this area as actually true. De Ridder (2022) reviews

a great deal of the meta-scientific studies which show many of the ways in which such work in the social and biomedical sciences produces invalid claims, and he concludes with this (p. 16):

Recent meta-research shows that at least large swathes of the biomedical and social sciences are, on average, not very reliable. Even influential papers in high-profile outlets frequently cannot be replicated. For any individual published article, chapter, or monograph, the odds are thus against its central claims being objectively well-justified and likely true. Moreover, science doesn't reliably clean up the publication record. Finally, fraud and lesser misconduct is neither quickly discovered nor heavily penalised. Even though various reform movements to improve scientific practice have been greeted with initial enthusiasm, their adoption and implementation in the biomedical and social sciences is slow and things are improving very gradually at best.

Thus de Ridder's (2022) answer to the question, "Is trust in scientists epistemically justified?" (interpreted to mean, "can we trust scientists to be reliable informants?") is an emphatic "no."

What, then, is going on (in science generally, though we focus in this section on implicit bias and the IAT)? De Ridder (2022) provides a second interpretation of the "Is trust in scientists epistemically justified?" question. If this question is interpreted to mean, "can we trust scientists to reach conclusions by the methods common in their disciplines?," then, yes, trust is "epistemically justified" in this sense. Certainly, work on implicit bias and the IAT fits this latter interpretation. It is filled with experiments, statistics, correlations, and theories. These are the workhorse methods and statistics in psychology and related disciplines.

However, our view is that this latter sense is trivial and no one should care very much whether scientists reach conclusions that are justified by methods common in their disciplines. If the accepted method among physiologists and psychologists in the nineteenth century for determining a person's strengths and weaknesses was assessing the size, shape, and bumps a person had on their skull (phrenology), this is helpful for understanding why these scholars would believe one another. But, such methods and understandings did not produce an accurate understanding of a person's psychological strengths and weaknesses. Similarly, if one examines the methods used by the foremost proponents of implicit bias and the IAT, whether one can believe the most common conclusions becomes dubious indeed.

Readers interested in doing a deep dive into the flaws, limitations, and unjustified conclusions reached (from IATresearch) should consult the over 30 articles one of us (Jussim) posted in an open access repository at OSF (Jussim et al., 2021). A sense of those articles can be gleaned from some of the titles of articles that can be found there:

*More Error than Attitude in Implicit Association Tests*  
*Unconscious Racism: A Concept in Pursuit of a Measure*  
*Implicit? What Do You Mean? A Comprehensive Review of the Delusive Implicitness Construct in Attitude Research*  
*Sexy but Often Unreliable: The Impact of Unreliability on the Replicability of Experimental Findings with Implicit Measures*  
*Unconscious Gender Bias in the Academy: Scarcity of Evidence*

*Invalid Claims about the Validity of Implicit Association Tests by Prisoners of the Implicit Social-Cognition Paradigm*

Here, we briefly review and describe the substance of key limitations, flaws, and criticisms of the IAT and implicit bias. All of these points (as well as review of the relevant literatures) can be found in Jussim et al. ([in press](#)).

1. Claims based on the IAT were wildly oversold when it was first developed, including completely unjustified claims to the effect that 90% of Americans were supposedly found to be unconscious racists. Mitchell and Tetlock (2017) recount the history of how it was oversold immediately after publication of the first IAT article (Greenwald et al., 1998). Such claims are always inadvisable and imprudent, because the validity of any new method or measure cannot be established by any set of preliminary studies. Instead, doing so requires years, sometimes decades, of skeptical scrutiny by independent scientists before validity, if any, can be scientifically established with any certainty (Jussim et al., 2019b). Mitchell and Tetlock (2017) also review the historical record to show that there was a rush to influence policy and the law – a pattern consistent with one of the main themes of this chapter. Specifically, the entire history is consistent with the claim that ideological and activist agendas often insinuate themselves into scholarship claiming to be scientific in ways that undermine validity and then this dubious work is deployed by activists who can claim a veneer of scientific respectability to advance political goals. The next set of conceptual and methodological criticisms explains why such claims constituted leaping to an unjustified conclusion with respect to the IAT and implicit bias.
2. There is no widely accepted definition of implicit bias. A review of those definitions revealed that many papers that use the term do not even define it; implicitly (so to speak), they assume that implicit bias is whatever is being measured by their preferred measure, usually the IAT. Among those that do define it, the definitions are almost completely unconnected to one another. For example, it has been defined as behavior, cultural stereotypes, decision-making, and mental associations. These are entirely different constructs. Thus, it is impossible to even know whether researchers are discussing the same phenomenon when they use the same term, or even the same measure.
3. There is one variant that Greenwald (2017) claimed constituted a common working definition for most of the prior 20 years: “Introspectively unidentified (or inaccurately identified) effects of past experience that mediate discriminatory behavior.” Unfortunately, however, those who actually used this definition were soon to discover its assumptions were either logically or empirically unjustified. IAT scores are not “introspectively unidentified” (people are quite good at predicting what they will be). Furthermore, the IAT assesses neither behavior (in any meaningful sense beyond “reaction times to the IAT”) nor mediation (see Jussim et al., [in press](#), for a review).
4. The IAT is a reaction time measure. To claim reaction times constitute any sort of bias is to import a conclusion by fiat rather than evidence.

5. At best, the IAT measures strength of association of concepts in memory, which is not any type of bias or prejudice. And that is at best; a slew of statistical issues and methodological artifacts mean that the IAT is not even a clean measure of strength of association.
6. Critiques of the IAT have concluded that it contains more error than attitude (Chequer & Quinn, 2022); may capture cultural stereotypes (beliefs about what other people believe) as much as or more than own beliefs and attitudes (Arkes & Tetlock, 2004) or actual knowledge about actual group differences and conditions (Jussim et al., *in press*; Payne et al., 2017); and that IAT scores reflect four separate phenomena, of which attitude is just one (Conrey et al., 2005).
7. The IAT, as used and reported, has a potpourri of methodological and statistical oddities. These undercut simple interpretations of results using IATs (all of these are reviewed in Jussim et al., *in press*). Its test-retest reliability is usually low, about  $r = 0.4$ . Additionally, IAT scores are difference scores, which complexifies interpretation (relationships with other variables could result from relationships with only one of the variables involved in computing the difference, both, or their difference). As computed, the IAT is an effect size, yet, rather than simply reporting the mean IAT score as an effect size, its adherents often compute a Cohen's  $d$  from the IAT D-scores; this doubly computed effect size usually functions to exaggerate IAT effects (Jussim et al., *in press*). Any IAT difference will converge on a very high IAT D-score of 2.0, when within-trial variance goes to zero, meaning that the entire computational scheme creates the impression of larger than actual attitudinal differences.
8. Although recent work comparing scores on different IATs has been interpreted as vindicating the "true zero" interpretation of zero (i.e., as no bias; Cvencek et al., 2021), the only research that has ever attempted to validate IAT scores against external standards has found that scores well above zero (typically ranging from IAT D-scores of 0.3 to 0.6, depending on the study) correspond to egalitarianism (Blanton et al., 2015b). If IAT scores greater than zero correspond to egalitarianism, then almost every claim about the number of people who display "implicit" or "unconscious" racism based on the IAT is exaggerated. In addition, even if the zero really is the true point of egalitarianism, measurement and sampling errors should lead the egalitarianism point to fluctuate a great deal from sample to sample (Blanton et al., 2015a, b).
9. Many of the studies that use IAT scores to predict behavior find little or no anti-Black discrimination.
10. Whether IAT scores predict behavioral manifestations of bias beyond self-report prejudice scales is unclear, with some studies finding they do and others finding they do not.
11. Claims that small bias effects are "socially important" (Greenwald et al., 2015) have yet to provide any evidence demonstrating such social importance. Instead, they are based on the presumption that small effects accumulate, which is an empirical question and should not be a reified truth absent evidence. A similar claim was once made about small self-fulfilling prophecies being socially important if they accumulate, but once the evidence started rolling in, accumu-

- lation was rare. Instead, the already-small effects tended to dissipate (Jussim & Harber, 2005).
12. Procedures that change IAT scores have failed to produce changes in discriminatory behavior (Forscher et al., 2019).
  13. There is currently no evidence that implicit bias trainings accomplish anything other than teaching people about the research on implicit bias. That is, there is no evidence that IAT trainings reduce prejudice or inequalities. In their thorough review of the literature on prejudice reduction, Paluck et al. (2021, p. 549) conclude: “Thus, a fair assessment of our data on implicit prejudice reduction is that the evidence is thin. Together with the lack of evidence for diversity training, these studies do not justify the enthusiasm with which implicit prejudice reduction trainings have been received in the world over the past decade.” We speculate, however, that, in addition to teaching about the research, they likely do have another effect: to create an organizational culture of conformity, groupthink, and self-censorship around progressive ideological views regarding prejudice, discrimination, and inequality.
  14. A recent review of how the IAT is presented and taught to students in introductory psychology courses indicates that critiques and discussions of the limitations or weaknesses of the IAT are almost entirely ignored (Bartels & Schoenrade, 2022). Bartels and Schoenrade argue that this biased presentation of the IAT may lead to confusion and misunderstanding, both of the IAT as a test, and about one’s (potential) personal implicit biases.

***Other examples of unjustified canonization*** Although this is not a comprehensive review of unjustified canonization, some other examples consistent with left narratives include stereotype inaccuracy (Jussim et al., 2009, 2016), stereotype threat (Finnigan & Corker, 2016), social priming (Doyen et al., 2012), the power of stereotype and expectancy biases (Jussim, 2012), the power of microaggressions (Lilienfeld, 2017), the supposedly trivial size of most gender differences (Del Guidice et al., 2012), the supposed nonexistence of leftwing authoritarianism in the democratic West (Conway et al., 2018; Costello et al., 2021), and the supposedly greater propensity of conservatives to engage in biased processing of social and political information (Ditto et al., 2019).

***Empirical test of the role of political bias in premature canonization: Is there a disproportionately high number of replication failures of highly touted left-affirming studies?*** Clark and Winegard (2020) recently hypothesized that equalitarian-friendly findings would be overrepresented among psychology’s replication failures of highly touted studies. Although their phrase was “highly touted,” we view it as approximately synonymous with “canonized” – both usages refer to work that is widely celebrated and accepted as true. Note, however, that this is *not* a simple political bias/replicability hypothesis wherein left-affirming studies will be less replicable. They must also be “highly touted.” Although they did not provide a definition of “most-touted,” the case of “unreplicable” that they discussed was ste-

reotype threat, the initial reports of which have been cited thousands of times and which routinely appears in textbooks and diversity interventions.

Contra Reiner et al. (2020) and Clark and Winegard (2020) did not propose a general replicability difference between left- and right-affirming studies. Indeed, their hypothesis (p. 12) is restricted to *failures to replicate*: "...many of the most touted effects that fail to replicate and/or that are found to be relatively small, perhaps even trivial, in systematic analyses will likely be equalitarian-friendly findings." We propose here that "highly touted" is the "special sauce" that, contrary to the approach taken by Reiner et al. (2020), can actually predict replicability. This may work in at least two very different ways (which are not mutually exclusive).

First, studies can become highly touted for good reasons, such as when strong methods produce insights into broad patterns of human behavior. However, they can also become highly touted for bad reasons – such as when they seem to vindicate deeply held political beliefs and attitudes. The opportunity to use such findings for rhetorical or activist purposes may short-circuit the type of critical thinking necessary to first skeptically vet such studies to be sure their findings are actually credible. Note that this is *not* a general "replicability differences" between left- and right-affirming studies. It only predicts a replicability difference for the small subset of studies that hit a sufficiently strong political nerve to become highly touted.

Second, there may be bias in *what gets touted*. If psychologists place special value on results that they can rhetorically exploit for political purposes, they may be more likely to tout left-affirming studies *in general* (both strong and weak). Therefore, left-affirming studies on hot-button issues may be overrepresented among all highly touted studies. If they are overrepresented among highly touted studies *in general*, they are likely to be overrepresented among failed replications of highly touted studies. Here, the bias is not located in a failure of researchers to be sufficiently critical of left-affirming studies; it is, instead, located in their tendency to favor ("tout") left-affirming studies.

To test the Clark and Winegard (2020) hypothesis, one needs to (1) identify a population of highly touted studies that failed to replicate and (2) evaluate how many support or oppose equalitarianism. We do so here, though we also test whether this pattern holds for *any* left-affirming highly touted study, and not just equalitarian ones.

For this analysis, we focused exclusively on failed replications that helped trigger the Replication Crisis (published 2012–2016, see Table 5.5). We operationalized "highly touted" as papers having at least 1000 citations. We identified 18 such papers that were subject to replication failures in this time period. Six were equalitarian and one was on the liberal hot-button issue of environmentalism. One (Vohs et al., 2006) was borderline. Vohs et al. (2006) were not equalitarian and were not quite on a liberal hot-button issue. It is, however, plausibly viewed as anti-capitalist and anti-individualism – both of which *have* been condemned by social justice activists as "harmful" and even "malignant" contributors to racism and inequality (American Medical Association, 2021; Kendi, 2019).

**Table 5.5** Did failed replications that triggered the replication crisis (2010–2016) disproportionately support hot-button left beliefs and values?

Original paper	Citations <sup>1</sup>	Key finding of original paper	Does this support or oppose equalitarianism, or other left hot-button issues (environmentalism, abortion) or is it irrelevant to politics?	Why?	Failed replication
Bargh et al. (2001)	2884	Goals can be unconsciously primed	Irrelevant	Has nothing to do with prejudice, discrimination, stereotypes or explaining group differences, or other hot-button issues	Harris et al. (2013)
Bargh et al. (1996)	5959	Priming the elderly stereotype led people to walk more slowly	Supports equalitarianism	Priming stereotypes causes people to confirm them	Doyen et al. (2012)
Baumeister et al. (1998)	6632	Capacity for volition, self-regulation, and self-control is a limited resource	Irrelevant	Has nothing to do with prejudice, discrimination, stereotypes or explaining group differences, or other hot-button issues	Hagger et al. (2016)
Chen and Bargh (1999)	1842	Pervasive tendency to automatically categorize stimuli as good or bad	Supports equalitarianism	Explains implicit, unconscious or automatic prejudice, and stereotyping	Rotteveel et al. (2015)
Demerouti et al. (2010)	1064	Nature of burnout	Irrelevant	Has nothing to do with prejudice, discrimination, stereotypes or explaining group differences, or other hot-button issues	Choi (2013)

(continued)

**Table 5.5** (continued)

Original paper	Citations <sup>1</sup>	Key finding of original paper	Does this support or oppose equalitarianism, or other left hot-button issues (environmentalism, abortion) or is it irrelevant to politics?	Why?	Failed replication
Carney et al. (2010)	1386	Powerposing “embodies power.”	Supports equalitarianism	Women underperform because they have been socialized to lack confidence <sup>2</sup>	Ranehill et al. (2015)
Finkel et al. (2002)	1119	Relationship commitment relates to forgiveness	Irrelevant	Has nothing to do with prejudice, discrimination, stereotypes or explaining group differences, or other hot-button issues	Cheung et al. (2016)
Galinsky et al. (2006)	1488	The powerful are less likely to understand others’ perspectives	Supports equalitarianism	The powerful are bad	Ebersole et al. (2016)
Glenberg and Kaschak (2002)	2744	Language comprehension is related to action	Irrelevant	Has nothing to do with prejudice, discrimination, stereotypes or explaining group differences, or other hot-button issues	Papesh (2015)
Goldstein et al. (2008)	3244	Appeals to “provincial norms” increase hotel towel reuse more than other appeals	Supports environmentalism	Towel reuse conserves resources	Bohner and Schuter (2014)

(continued)

**Table 5.5** (continued)

Original paper	Citations <sup>1</sup>	Key finding of original paper	Does this support or oppose equalitarianism, or other left hot-button issues (environmentalism, abortion) or is it irrelevant to politics?	Why?	Failed replication
Haley and Fessler (2005)	1571	Subtle cues affect generosity	Irrelevant	Has nothing to do with prejudice, discrimination, stereotypes or explaining group differences, or other hot-button issues	Jolij, J., & de Haan, T. (2014)
Monin and Miller (2001)	1236	People are more willing to express prejudice if they have previously shown they are not prejudiced	Supports equalitarianism	Prejudice is everywhere, even among the supposedly unprejudiced	Ebersole et al. (2016)
Ophir et al. (2009)	2105	Multi-tasking produces distraction	Irrelevant	Has nothing to do with prejudice, discrimination, stereotypes or explaining group differences, or other hot-button issues	Alzahabi and Becker (2013)
Schnall et al. (2008)	1832	Disgust influences moral judgments	Irrelevant	Has nothing to do with prejudice, discrimination, stereotypes or explaining group differences, or other hot-button issues	Johnson et al. (2016)

(continued)

**Table 5.5** (continued)

Original paper	Citations <sup>1</sup>	Key finding of original paper	Does this support or oppose equalitarianism, or other left hot-button issues (environmentalism, abortion) or is it irrelevant to politics?	Why?	Failed replication
Spencer et al. (1999)	4832	Removing stereotype threat eliminates sex differences in math achievement	Supports equalitarianism	But for stereotypes, women would achieve as highly in math as do men	Finnigan and Corker (2016)
Strack et al. (1988)	2551	Facial feedback influences humor response	Irrelevant	Has nothing to do with prejudice, discrimination, stereotypes or explaining group differences, or other hot-button issues	Wagenmakers et al. (2016)
Vohs et al. (2006)	1717	Money priming increases individualism and reduces communalism	Borderline	Results <i>might</i> be viewed as reducing support for groups that have fared poorly under capitalism	Klein et al. (2014)
Walker et al. (2003)	1267	Evidence for three stages of memory processing	Irrelevant	Has nothing to do with prejudice, discrimination, stereotypes or explaining group differences, or other hot-button issues	Hardwicke et al. (2016)

<sup>1</sup>Citation counts obtained from Google Scholar between February 12, 2021, and October 12, 2021

<sup>2</sup>See Cuddy advance this interpretation in this 2017 interview: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qKENoimrXbY>

Bem (2011) fits the criteria for the wrong reasons. It is highly cited in large part because it is infamous, not as evidence that what it found is really true. Therefore, it is not included in the table

**Table 5.6** Statistical tests of the hypothesis that failures to replicate highly touted studies triggered the replication crisis (2012–2016) were disproportionately left-affirming

	20% base rate With Vohs et al. (2006) as equalitarian	20% base rate Without Vohs et al. (2006) as equalitarian	3% base rate With Vohs et al. (2006) as equalitarian	3% base rate Without Vohs et al. (2006) as equalitarian
Equalitarian	7, 0.04, 0.051	6, 0.11, 0.13	7, <0.001, <0.001,	6, <0.001, <0.001
Left hot button	8, 0.01, 0.02	7, 0.04, 0.051	8, <0.001, <0.001	7, <0.001, <0.001

Base rate refers to the proportion of studies leaning left as per Reinero et al.'s (2020) two sets of analyses. First number in each cell is the number of equalitarian studies (in the first row) and the number of left hot-button studies (in the second row). The second number in each cell is the  $p$ -value. This refers to the probability of obtaining that many, or more, equalitarian or left hot-button failures to replicate out of 17 total failures to replicate (not including Baumeister et al. (1998) identified as being highly touted between 2012 and 2016 (see text for explanation), given the base rate of left leaning studies. The third number in each cell is almost the same as the second, except that it is the  $p$ -value obtained out of 18 failures to replicate, including Baumeister et al. (1998)

Similarly, we were not sure what to do with the Hagger et al. (2016) failure to replicate on ego-depletion. The original ego-depletion study (Baumeister et al., 1998) has been cited over 6600 times. However, Hagger et al. (2016) was a direct replication of Sripada et al. (2014), which did address ego-depletion, but used a somewhat different method (computer based rather than in person).

Therefore, we had three separate choice points: (1) Do we include Vohs et al. (2006) as a left-serving or not? (2) Do we include the pro-environmental study (Goldstein et al., 2008) as left-serving or not? (3) Do we include Baumeister et al. (1998) as a paper subject to failed replication? We answered all questions with a “yes, we will do both.” Specifically, we performed a multiverse analysis (Steege et al., 2016). Given that there were several different ways to analyze these data and all were defensible, we performed all of them. One set of analyses was just for equalitarian studies; another set was for all left hot-button studies. One set of analyses included the borderline study (Vohs et al., 2006) as equalitarian (and left leaning), and one set did not. And one set included Baumeister et al. (1998) and one did not.

This produced a 2 (how left? Just equalitarian or all hot-button articles)  $\times$  2 (with/without the one borderline article)  $\times$  2 (with/without Baumeister et al., 1998)  $\times$  2 (20% v. 3% base rate of left-leaning articles) table of 16 separate analyses. All results reported in Table 5.6 are the probabilities that emerged from binomial tests, which were used to determine the likelihood that the observed number of failed replications of highly touted studies left-serving studies, or more, would occur if the base rate of replication attempts of highly touted (more than 1000 citations) left-leaning studies equaled the base rate of left-leaning studies reported in Reinero et al. (2020). Put simply, how likely is it that, given Reinero et al.'s (2020) base rates, six, seven, or eight (or more) out of 17 or 18 highly touted studies that have failed to replicate would have provided equalitarian or left-affirming findings?

One could argue that our criticisms of Reinero et al. (2020) render it dubious to use any of its results as a benchmark. However, we do so for three reasons. First, as a paper published in one of the outlets of record in psychology, we suspect that many of our colleagues give it more credibility than we do. If so, then despite *our* reservations, by the standards used by those who consider it credible, this is an appropriate standard. Second, despite our reservations, we have estimated the proportion of politicized studies to be about the same as that found by Reinero et al. (2020) (see Stevens et al., 2017).

All 16 binomial tests (Table 5.6) indicated that it was unlikely that the base rate of replications reported in Reinero et al. (2020) would produce the observed pattern of failed replications of highly touted studies. Despite the fact that the small sample of 18 works against finding “statistical significance,” 12 of the 16 analyses reached the conventional standard of “ $p < 0.05$ ,” and two others were at  $p = 0.051$ . These results confirm Clark and Winegard’s (2020) hypothesis that failures to replicate would occur disproportionately for highly touted equalitarian studies. In addition, this also confirms our slightly broader hypothesis that failures to replicate would occur disproportionately for highly touted studies seeming to support liberal positions on hot-button topics.

## Conclusion: Can Anything Be Done?

We are not optimistic about whether anything can be done anytime soon to substantially limit social psychology and the social sciences’ political biases. Our view is that many of the main professional psychology organizations (e.g., APA, APS, SPSP, SPSSI) have fully embraced activism and advocacy, and are complicit in the canonization of work riddled with political biases. It is clear that, when most social psychological and social science organizations and officials refer to “diversity” and “inclusion,” they are *not* talking about *diversity of political perspectives or identities* (Redding, 2001) and they are not talking about “including” nonleftists. When American social psychologists refer to “underrepresented” groups, they are restricting their reference to social justice, racial reckonings, being “on the right side of history,” and the like.<sup>1</sup> They are not referring to the fact that conservatives are one of the most underrepresented groups in all of social psychology (SPSP, 2019). Their use of the term “underrepresented” is primarily defined by how much the group is perceived to have been historically oppressed in America.

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<sup>1</sup>We do not have enough information about social psychologists in, e.g., Nigeria, Bhutan, Iran, or Albania to have opinions about the representation of conservatives in other country’s social psychological organizations. Thus, our claim here is restricted to the U.S.

The widespread acceptance of the sort of linguistic legerdemain by which “underrepresented” becomes synonymous with “oppressed” renders it difficult to use “underrepresented” in such a manner that ensures that modern social scientists will understand what we mean by it. Therefore, we define it here. We use the term “underrepresented” to refer to this ratio, which reflects the proportion of representation:

$$\frac{\text{Proportion of Group in Social Psychology}}{\text{Proportion of Group in USA}}$$

If our colleagues meant “underrepresented” in the “proportion of representation” sense, and if they valued ensuring adequate representation of underrepresented groups (as defined here), then they would embrace policies and efforts to increase non-left representation in social psychology and the social sciences and to reduce hostility toward, and derogation of, nonleftists. Of course, this is in no way antithetical to *also* seeking to increase representation of underrepresented demographic groups. But, not only are they doing nothing to increase representation of underrepresented mainstream political groups, they are instead continuing to press the purity spiral described earlier. That is, social psychology, as a field, is actively embracing and participating in the activist to activism pipeline (Fig. 5.1).

This is not to say that all social psychologists (or social scientists) are activists. Plenty of social psychologists study non-politicized topics and, as we have stated repeatedly, political biases do not influence the study of apolitical topics. Nonetheless, these non-activist scholars are sitting on the sidelines and are almost entirely silent as activists press the purity spiral and political biases even further. If more scholars had the courage to speak out, this could potentially start to help limit political biases. But thus far few have demonstrated the fortitude or willingness to do so.

What about adversarial collaboration? (See Tetlock, 2023) Adversarial collaborations are often touted as a solution to social psychology’s potential problems with political biases (e.g., Duarte et al., 2015). However, we now believe that the much-touted practice of adversarial collaboration has become largely precluded as a solution to the study of politicized topics. Why? Because there are almost no non-leftists remaining or entering social psychology, so a political adversarial collaboration is all-but-impossible, at least within the field. Of course, one can still engage in a theoretical adversarial collaboration, and one might even be able to engage in a political one if one’s collaborators come from outside of academia.

One might argue for special efforts to attract non-left students into the field so that, down the road, there are more non-left faculty than at present. However, given that the field has created a hostile work environment for people who do not subscribe to leftist orthodoxies, it’s not clear that attracting non-left students is either ethical or possible, at least with respect to careers in the academic social sciences.

One could seek to embrace Mertonian norms, but Merton's (1942/1973) core claim was that these work because they are *norms* that are widely accepted. You, gentle reader, if you are seeking advice, cannot single-handedly change a field's norms, no matter how much you seek to adhere to them personally.

Other possibilities are more grim. As the public learns that the social sciences have become vehicles for progressive and woke activism, public support will likely erode. Some of this we are already starting to see, for example, with substantial percentages of Americans saying that colleges/universities are having a negative impact on the way things are going in the country (Pew Research Center, 2017, 2021). Perhaps legislators who eschew progressive/woke politics will organize to defund highly political/politicized research, researchers, and institutions. Though even if such draconian policies were adopted, because of tenure, the current generation cannot possibly be replaced anytime soon. Because of academic freedom protections, mass firings seem unlikely as well and are undesirable. Our view is that, as bad as it is in academia, government dictating what academics can and cannot study is a solution vastly worse than the crime of political bias. But this is not to say that it wouldn't be in the interest of academics to try to gain back credibility lost among non-leftist legislators (for a discussion of this, see Inbar & Lammers, 2016). Nor is it to say that legislative or policy solutions to academia's extreme skew cannot be found, but a consideration of such solutions is beyond the scope of this chapter.

A somewhat less grim possibility, though we do not view it as much of a "solution," is to create new organizations and institutions within the field that prioritize truth-seeking over activism and welcome scholars from across the political spectrum. When the professional environment turns hostile, one solution may be to leave and create an entirely new one. This has been a route taken by those excluded from clubs, professions, and guilds for centuries. "If, as a culture, you thrust people out, you run the risk of those same people realizing they like it better on the outside" (Mach, 2019, p.19). Such organizations might preserve truth-seeking on politicized topics, though it will likely take some time before such groups actually start to change the way the social sciences or the field of psychology operates.

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**Part II**  
**Applications of Bias in Psychology**

# Chapter 6

## Psychology's Language and Free Speech Problem



Pamela Paresky and Bradley Campbell

In 2018, The American Psychological Association published its “Guidelines for Psychological Practice with Boys and Men” (APA, 2018). In it, they defined “traditional masculinity” as “anti-femininity, achievement, eschewal of the appearance of weakness,” and “adventure, risk, and violence” (APA, 2018). In sessions ostensibly intended to be therapeutic for male clients, clinical psychologists were encouraged to “address issues of privilege and power related to sexism” (APA, 2018). Though appealing to progressives, these concepts appeared to be untethered to empirical evidence. APA member Chris Ferguson, a practicing psychologist, reviewed a draft version of the guidelines and strongly recommended against adopting them. “If clinicians were to implement some of the recommendations,” he warned, “the potential for harm to some clients is non-trivial” (Paresky, 2019a, b, c).

Rather than reading as true guidelines for clinical practice, the document contained “copious” amount of progressive jargon (e.g., the word “privilege” appeared nineteen times, and “sexist” or “sexism” appeared 32 times<sup>1</sup>) and read as a politically progressive “invective against ‘traditional’ masculinity,” Ferguson noted (Paresky, 2019a, b, c). He drew attention to the portrayal of traditional men as “nearly monstrous,” with masculine cultural values being “associated with everything from sexism to promiscuity to [men’s] own declining health.” He was alarmed that this seemed like the kind of “victim-blaming” psychologists generally try to avoid (Paresky, 2019a, b, c). Ferguson’s warning was an opportunity for the APA to recognize that the professional organization had a problem of political bias. That opportunity was not seized.

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<sup>1</sup>Appearances of “privilege” and “sexist”/ “sexism” include references and footnotes.

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Psychology's infamous "replication crisis" (Open Science Collaboration, 2015) presented a similar opportunity for the academic discipline to take stock. In analyzing correlates of non-replicability, some researchers suggested that politically slanted studies may be less replicable (Reinero et al., 2020). But other possible effects of political bias are less direct. As campus cultures have become increasingly politically progressive (Abrams, 2018), it has become more challenging for academics to propose politically controversial research questions (Duarte et al., 2014). This can lead to the stifling of intellectual risk-taking (Lilienfeld, 2017a, b), resulting in the absence of whole areas of inquiry deemed "controversial" to progressives. Self-censorship of this kind goes hand-in-hand with other kinds of censorship resulting from political bias in psychology and leading to the creation of ideological monocultures.

The United States provides the most robust speech protections in history (Strossen, 2018). But even the less robust protections found in other modern liberal democracies remain a source of controversy. Many current arguments against free speech, especially in universities, are similar to the arguments of the past, but each era's moral and political trends determine the kind of speech that is targeted. In the lead-up to the civil war, for example, those on campus who defended slavery in the North faced consequences, as did those who challenged it in the South. During the McCarthy era, Yale's president, Charles Seymour, announced that no one with Communist sympathies would be welcome – even boasting "there will be no witch hunts at Yale, because there will be no witches" (Stone, 2016).

Campus activists who are trying to disrupt speakers, and media companies who ban people from their platform do not see themselves as merely preventing political dissent. Instead, they believe they are preventing harm to those from vulnerable groups (Senju, 2017). And often, the harm envisioned is not, as one might expect, the potential effect on people's behavior or on policy if large numbers of people were persuaded by the ideas of the disfavored speaker in question. Instead, the harm is the expected psychological trauma purportedly caused by the speech itself, or even just by the presence of the speaker.

We will examine three trends that give rise to this newest impulse toward censorship: The first is safetyism, which seeks to eliminate harm without consideration for tradeoffs demanded by other practical or moral concerns; the second is a particular kind of "social justice" that provides a framework for interpreting all interactions in terms of group oppression and victimhood; and the third is the combination of a focus on mental illness and new conceptions of identity.

## Safetyism and Free Speech

Cultures vary in their concern for safety. In circumstances where injuries and deaths are largely out of our control, there may be less concern for even those that may be avoidable. In the nineteenth century, as legal scholar Lawrence Friedman points out, "life itself was precarious. It hung by a thread." There was "no real defense against

plague and disease. Medicine was primitive by modern standards; on the whole, doctors probably killed more people than they helped” (Friedman, 1994, p. 47). If we go back further, in the sixteenth century, a person was typically “one of four, five, or six children; two or three of these would surely die before age fifteen... There was an even chance that [a man] or his wife would die before their middle forties” (Friedman, 1994, pp. 47–48). For most of our ancestors, life “was a drama of tremendous uncertainty. A person could not expect to pass through life without sudden catastrophe—in other words, life was filled with cosmic unfairness, or if you will, injustice” (Friedman, 1994, p. 50).

This is of course still true in one sense—life is still unfair and unpredictable—but as Friedman points out, modern technology has nevertheless altered our lives and our perceptions of what is normal: “Technology has made the world over, and in doing so has vastly reduced certain kinds of uncertainty” (1994, p. 51). Technology of various kinds has given us longer lifespans, eradicated many diseases, and enabled us to avoid injuries in ways that would have been impossible in the past. This has altered our expectations about how much risk is reasonable, how much uncertainty to expect, and how much discomfort is tolerable. According to Friedman, it has also led us to demand more from our governments and courts. It has led us to require that the government ensure that our food and consumer products are safe, for example, and that we are compensated for our injuries and losses.

As greater knowledge, improved technology, and other resources allow us more control of our environments, we have become more concerned with safety. We can be grateful for the resulting decrease in injury and death—we do not miss a world before seat belts, motorcycle helmets, antibiotics, or vaccines. But a cultural and legal emphasis on any one value to the exclusion of others can reach a point of diminishing returns and can even lead to unintended consequences.

In their book, *The Coddling of the American Mind*, Lukianoff and Haidt (2018) argue that this has happened with the prioritization of safety. One aspect is to sacralize safety, which results in an unwillingness to make tradeoffs where perceived safety is concerned. Another is the expansion of the concept of safety itself to include the idea of “feeling safe,”<sup>2</sup> rather than limiting the definition of safety to protection from legitimate harms. The result is what Lukianoff and Haidt call *safetyism*, a moral culture in which the concept of safety “trumps everything else, no matter how unlikely or trivial the potential danger” (2018, p. 30).

When safety becomes a supreme value rather than just one among many, our attempts to prevent things like accidents or defective products risk stifling our economy with overregulation. We risk enacting burdensome limits on our freedoms as we try to prevent terrorism and other forms of violence, and we risk delaying the approval of life-saving medicines or vaccines in our efforts to ensure that they don't produce negative side effects. As long as safety means preventing *physical* harms, however, the pursuit of safety above all else is unlikely to involve restricting *speech*.

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<sup>2</sup>As distinct from the concept of “psychological safety,” the understanding that one can take interpersonal risks without negative consequences.

It is only when the second aspect of safetyism—an expanded conception of safety and harm—is also present, that censorship begins to make sense.

Norms of free speech rest in part on a distinction between speech and violence. This is expressed in the old saying, “Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words can never hurt me.” We teach children this mantra not because we believe, in any absolute sense, that words cannot hurt—it is normally when children *are* hurt by words that they repeat it—but because we believe the harm that results from words is substantially different from the harm caused by violence.

The major difference is that a physical injury due to violence is unmediated by our interpretations or emotional responses; if our bones are broken, they are broken regardless of how we feel about it. But the emotional pain from hurtful words depends in part on our interpretation of those words and our subsequent reaction to them. It may be difficult to ignore words or avoid being upset by them, but it is not, in principle, impossible. And one reason we encourage children to repeat a silly mantra about not being hurt by words is that, with practice, it may help them to *experience* words as less hurtful.

We also teach children that ignoring insults is preferable to reacting violently. Words are different from sticks and stones—not just in measure, but in kind. We do not see it as appropriate for a child to respond to an insult with violence; “use your words,” we instruct. We expect what we teach our children about words to apply in adulthood, too. In a society in which civil norms govern our behavior, the proper response to the pain we experience from others’ words is verbal. Our culture is not one that encourages dueling or other kinds of violence in response to insults. In a society of civil norms, we have police and criminal courts to intervene in the case of violence and physical injury and civil courts for defamation and libel.

But safetyism is new. And it leads us to blur the distinction between speech and violence. If we must protect people from the subjective experience of “feeling unsafe” as much as we do from actual threats to safety, all kinds of speech must be prohibited. Lukianoff and Haidt discuss how the rhetoric of safety on college campuses purports to protect students from the potential emotional harms of fairly ordinary speech.

Oberlin College, for example, urged faculty to provide *trigger warnings* about course content. The guidance defined a trigger as “something that recalls a traumatic event to an individual” and cautioned that “individuals may feel *any range of emotion* during and after a trigger” (emphasis added). In addition to “some form of intimate partner violence” (which the now-deleted webpage claimed 1 in 3 women and 1 in 4 men have experienced), instructors were urged to “be aware” of other topics that might be “triggering” such as “racism, classism, sexism, heterosexism, cissexism, ableism, and other issues of privilege and oppression.” Triggers in any of these categories, they were told, “may make some students *feel* unsafe in your classroom” (emphasis added).

“Issue a trigger warning,” the Oberlin Office of Equity Concerns advised professors, “so that your class can examine this [“triggering” material] in the most productive *and safe* manner possible” (emphasis added). The webpage defined a trigger

warning as “a statement that warns people of a potential trigger, so that they can prepare for *or choose to avoid* the trigger” (emphasis added).

“Issuing a trigger warning will also show students that you care about their *safety*” (emphasis added) the webpage offered. As Lukianoff and Haidt note in *The Coddling of the American Mind* (2018: 24), Oberlin administrators could have encouraged the use of trigger warnings to “show students that you care about their *feelings*” (emphasis in original), which would make much more sense. But with the distinction between words and violence blurred, hurt feelings became a matter of safety. Oberlin professors were even urged to use others’ preferred gender pronouns not because it is respectful or sensitive, but because using incorrect pronouns for people “prevents or impairs their *safety* in a classroom” (emphasis added).

Lukianoff and Haidt describe the problem:

If students have been told that they can request gender-neutral pronouns and then a professor fails to use one, students may be disappointed or upset. But are these students *unsafe*? Are students in any *danger* in the classroom if a professor uses the wrong pronoun? Professors should indeed be mindful of their students’ feelings, but how might it change Oberlin students—and the nature of class discussions—when the community is told repeatedly that they should judge the speech of others in terms of safety and danger? (Lukianoff & Haidt, 2018, p. 25)

The idea is that by hearing certain words, participating in certain kinds of discussions, or not being sufficiently warned about those words or discussions, students may be reminded of a past trauma and could become upset. And although there is no threat to their actual safety, these things can make them *feel* unsafe. While the experience described is that of memory and emotion, the language used is that of harm and danger. A person’s subjective feeling of being unsafe, no matter how untheoretical to the objective reality of their safety, is the only necessary criterion for a university to declare that something must be done, some action must be taken, to ameliorate—or at least validate—that subjective feeling.

Similar to this is the idea that campuses should provide “safe spaces” where students are protected from speakers and discussions they find upsetting. At Brown University in 2015, for example, in response to a debate in which it was understood that one speaker was likely to criticize the term *rape culture*, students created a “safe space”—a room where people who interpreted anything that speaker said as “troubling” or “triggering,” could go in order to avoid the debate and be comforted. Judith Shulevitz (2015) described the room in her essay in the New York Times Sunday Review this way: “The room was equipped with cookies, coloring books, bubbles, Play-Doh, calming music, pillows, blankets and a video of frolicking puppies.”

Trigger warnings and safe spaces do not necessarily impinge on free speech, particularly when they are optional, but once speech is seen as a threat to safety—equivalent to an act of violence (Senju, 2017)—it is almost inevitable in a context of increasing safetyism that people would seek to restrict it. Worse, if speech *is* violence, then physical violence is a legitimate defense against speech.

## Critical Social Justice, Psychology, and Free Speech

Safetyism lays the groundwork for censorship, but it is not much of a threat to free speech on its own—or at least there is little evidence that it is in practice. Hypervigilance about children being kidnapped might lead parents to restrict their children’s freedom too much, concerns about peanut allergies might lead to unnecessary bans on peanuts, and so on, but none of that is about speech. And when we do hear the language of safety being invoked to restrict speech—when we hear the idea that something offensive is “unsafe”—it does not apply to just anything that might offend anyone. The language of safety and speech almost always has a political overlay; some kinds of offenses are more important than others and it is okay to offend some people and not others.

In a number of high-profile cases, for example, campus activists have claimed that the presence of speakers and professors made the campus unsafe—or at least made certain populations unsafe. What those targeted speakers—such as Milo Yiannopoulos (Paresky, 2017a, b, c, d, e), Ben Shapiro (Park, 2017), Heather Mac Donald (Jaschik, 2017), James Damore (Paresky, 2017a, b, c, d, e), Charles Murray (Beinart, 2017), Nicholas and Erika Christakis (Paresky, 2015), Bret Weinstein (Heying & Weinstein, 2017), Helen Pluckrose (Ngo, 2018), Laura Kipnis (Paresky, 2017a, b, c, d, e), Samuel Abrams (Paresky, 2019a, b, c), Ronald Sullivan (Paresky, 2020), and more recently, Dorian Abbot (Paresky, 2021) have in common is not that they were on the political right, though some of them were. It is that they had criticized some of the actions and beliefs of left-wing campus activists and espoused views that did not conform to the prevailing campus orthodoxy.

Milo Yiannopoulos, for example, a gay, conservative provocateur, made a name for himself by capitalizing on the outrage his talks engendered. An editor at the right-wing publication *Breitbart News*, his response to what was at the time referred to as “outrage culture” (a precursor to “cancel culture”), was that the “only proper response to outrage culture is to be outrageous” (Logue, 2016). In mocking claims that his talks made people “unsafe,” he called his speaking tour the “Dangerous Faggot” tour.

The outrage he inspired in early 2017 when he was scheduled to speak at the University of California’s Berkeley campus resulted in efforts by students and professors to convince the university administration to cancel his talk (Members of the UC Faculty, 2017) in the name of “protect[ing] the campus community from *harm*” (emphasis added). But the administration refused. As ticket-holders lined up to attend the talk, the campus erupted in violence. Rioters with their faces covered, dressed entirely in black, smashed windows, caused fires, and left over \$100,000 of damage on campus as well as more than a half-million dollars of property damage in the surrounding area (Dinkelspiel, 2018). Six or more would-be audience members were assaulted, some beaten until bloody. At least one was beaten until unconscious. University police locked down the campus and the talk was canceled (Svrluga, 2019).

Students who participated in the violence (which they later referred to as just “protests”) justified their actions by arguing that allowing Yiannopoulos to speak was “more terrifying” than “injury or arrest;” that “asking people to maintain peaceful dialogue with those who legitimately do not think their lives matter is a violent act” (Dang, 2017); and, as one opinion editorial was titled, “violence helped ensure safety of students” (Prieto, 2017). In other words, the violence had merely been “self-defense” (Senju, 2017).

Later that year, when conservative speaker Ben Shapiro was slated to give a talk at the same campus, although Shapiro had spoken there before without extra precautions, UC Berkeley spent approximately \$600,000 on security to prevent violent rioting (Mcphate, 2017). Chancellor Carol T. Christ announced that the university would “not tolerate violence,” and would “hold anyone accountable” who engaged in it (Berkeley News Public Affairs Staff, 2017). Executive Vice Chancellor and Provost Paul Alivisatos’s message, however, included offering students, staff, and faculty “support and counseling services” because the administration was “deeply concerned about the impact” Shapiro might have on some people’s “*sense of safety and belonging*” (emphasis added) even implying that Shapiro’s presence made some “*feel threatened or harassed*” (emphases added) (Berkeley News Staff, 2017).

Of course, if Shapiro were to engage in true threats or harassment, that would violate the law. But not only does Shapiro not threaten or harass people when he gives talks, the provost didn’t claim that Shapiro ever had or even that he would. Nor did he claim that Shapiro was an actual threat to anyone’s safety. Alivisatos’s concern was about some people’s *sense* of safety (and belonging), and about some people *feeling* threatened or harassed.

Why would Shapiro’s presence impact some students’ “sense” of safety? In a culture of safetyism, concepts of harm encompass an ever-widening array. For example, Shapiro is an Orthodox Jew, a vocal “NeverTrumper,” and was listed in 2016 by the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) as the number one target of online antisemitism (ADL, 2016). Nonetheless, the Coalition of Concerned Students (2018) at Stanford University, who protested his talk two years after he appeared at Berkeley, complained he was a “fascist talking head” with a “white supremacist social media following” who engages in “*violent speech*” (emphasis added). In a culture of safetyism, disagreement with a conservative political ideology such as Shapiro’s must be dressed in the language of safety and framed as protection against harm and violence. “We place our *bodies* directly against this *harmful* event and these *harmful* people” (emphasis added), the Coalition added in their protest letter.

As a result of the significant preemptive steps the Berkeley administration took to ensure everyone’s *actual* safety, no violence erupted, though nine protesters were arrested—some of them with weapons. In a pointed illustration of a common campus misunderstanding of the limits of free speech, “Free Speech Is Not Hate Speech” was written in chalk in front of the building in which Shapiro’s talk was held.

What happened at Harvard University to Ronald S. Sullivan, Jr. is another example of the expanded perception of harm. Sullivan is the director of the Criminal Justice Institute at Harvard Law School, the faculty advisor to Harvard’s Black Law Students Association, and a professor at Harvard Law School. He was the Director

of the Public Defender Service for the District of Columbia (where he never lost a case) before arriving at Harvard. Supreme Court Justice Elena Kagan, who was the Dean of Harvard Law School at the time, recruited Sullivan away from Yale, where he won an outstanding teaching award.

For many years, Sullivan and his wife, Stephanie Robinson, a lecturer at the law school, served as Winthrop House Faculty Deans at Harvard College. Until 2019, students never complained that his representation of controversial clients made them “feel unsafe”—though his clients included a convicted murderer and the family of a suspected terrorist. Nonetheless in 2019, when Sullivan joined the legal defense team for Hollywood producer Harvey Weinstein, whose alleged sexual misconduct sparked the #MeToo movement, students protested.

A film student who organized a rally told the Harvard Crimson, “when the #MeToo thing happened with Harvey Weinstein’s case breaking out in the first place, I was deeply shocked and saddened and very afraid.” She started a [change.org](#) petition to remove Sullivan from his position. Carrying signs that read, “#MeToo,” “Do your job,” “Down with the Dean,” “Remove Sullivan,” and “@Harvard do something,” protesters with tape on their mouths staged a rally. They called for Sullivan to be removed as faculty dean—and apologize. “Even if he puts out an apology,” one student said, “the fact that he didn’t even think of the impact this would have is probably the most damning element of this” (Avi-Yonah & Ryan, 2019a, b, c).

The Association of Black Harvard Women called on Sullivan to resign as the Faculty Dean of Winthrop House. If he refused, their statement read, they would “implore” the Administration to remove him from his position because he had created a “harmful situation” for black students (Avi-Yonah & Ryan, 2019a, b, c). Six “houses” (dormitories) at Harvard held “listening sessions” so students could “air their concerns about Sullivan,” and the Office for Sexual Assault Prevention and Response encouraged “concerned students” to “contact their staff, or to utilize confidential University resources like Counseling and Mental Health Services and the Harvard Chaplains, as well as private resources like the Title IX Office” (Avi-Yonah & Ryan, 2019a, b, c). All because a criminal defense attorney who teaches criminal law was going to defend an infamous and reviled alleged criminal.

Sullivan had attempted to reason with the protesters. “To the degree we deny unpopular defendants basic due process rights,” he wrote in an email to Winthrop House students, “we cease to be the country we imagine ourselves to be” (Ryan, 2019a, b). The Harvard Black Law Students Association, for which Sullivan was the faculty advisor, released a statement in support of Sullivan representing Weinstein (Ryan, 2019a, b). But undergraduates remained unconvinced. Graffiti appeared on campus buildings, reading “Our rage is self-defense,” “Whose side are you on?” and “Down W Sullivan!” (Ransom & Gold, 2019; Kennedy, 2019). The Harvard Crimson’s editorial board “condemned” his decision to represent Weinstein (Crimson Editorial Board, 2019). Some reports indicate the couple received death threats—yet it was students who claimed that they didn’t “feel safe” (Stossel, 2019).

It made no difference that Sullivan had also represented the family of Michael Brown—the man whose death touched off protests and riots in Ferguson, Missouri.

Or that for many years he had been involved in freeing improperly convicted individuals through a conviction-review program in Brooklyn. And it didn't matter that Sullivan had recently represented a black Harvard student whose arrest by Cambridge Police resulted in allegations of police brutality.

Students "communicated their concerns" to the administration (Taylor, 2019), and for the first time in Harvard's history, a faculty dean was subjected to what Sullivan described as "a 'climate review' in the middle of some controversy" (Ransom & Gold, 2019; Avi-Yonah & Franklin, 2019). Shortly thereafter, it was announced that after 10 years in their positions, the Sullivans, the first African American faculty deans in Harvard's history, would be relieved of those duties (Taylor, 2019).

A year earlier, students at Sarah Lawrence College who called themselves the "Diaspora Coalition" occupied an administrative building, saying they would continue their sit-in "until an agreement is made with—and signed by—senior members of the Sarah Lawrence administration" (Baptiste, 2019). Among their demands were several relating to Samuel Abrams, a professor who, 5 months earlier, had published an op-ed in the *New York Times* titled "Think Professors Are Liberal? Try School Administrators" (Abrams, 2018). The article examined the ideological bent of student-facing administrators, especially those in "Residence Life," and the effect they have on campus culture. In the op-ed, Abrams, a "conservative-leaning" professor, described receiving an email from the college's Office of Diversity and Campus Engagement about an event titled, "Our Liberation Summit," which he characterized as "politically lopsided."

"The conference would touch on such progressive topics as liberation spaces on campus, Black Lives Matter and justice for women," he wrote, "as well as for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, asexual and allied people." He later learned that the school's Office of Student Affairs, planned and held "many overtly progressive events—programs with names like 'Stay Healthy, Stay Woke,' 'Microaggressions' and 'Understanding White Privilege'—without offering any programming that offered a meaningful ideological alternative."

Abrams is a social scientist. Curious about whether this was common at other institutions, he surveyed roughly 900 student-facing administrators to learn about their political leanings and found that the liberal to conservative ratio was 12–1. (In an earlier study, he'd found that the ratio among professors was 6–1.) He concluded that "a fairly liberal student body is being taught by a very liberal professoriate—and socialized by an incredibly liberal group of administrators."

The reaction to the opinion piece was unexpected. Students vandalized his door, tearing down a picture of his newborn son and posting in its place notes that included a checklist of apologies he was to issue, several copies of a sheet of paper with the word "QUIT" written in large letters, and one that read "our right to exist is not ideological [sic] asshole" (The Phoenix, 2018a, b). Elsewhere on campus, a sign that once read "welcome to SLC" was overpainted with the words, "Sam Abrams go home" along with his name painted several more times and several instances of the phrase "fucks students," and in one place, "ur mom" (The Phoenix, 2018a, b).

Eventually the campus chaos died down, but five months later, during the student occupation of the administration building, complaints about him resurfaced.

**We demand that Samuel Abrams' position at the College be put up to tenure review** to a panel of the Diaspora Coalition and at least three faculty members of color," the Diaspora Coalition wrote. "In addition, **the College must issue a statement condemning the harm that Abrams has caused** to the college community, specifically queer, Black, and female students, whilst **apologizing for its refusal to protect marginalized students** wounded by his op-ed and the ignorant dialogue that followed. **Abrams must issue a public apology to the broader SLC community and cease to target Black people, queer people, and women.** (All emphases in the original.)

## Psychology, Safetyism, and Censorship

What is going on?

Student activists see themselves as pursuing social justice, while they see their critics as undermining it. A generous interpretation of claims of "harm," injury," and "feeling unsafe" understands their assertions as stemming from seeing people who disagree with their social justice activism as actively harming people and even endangering lives by supporting policies activists believe do damage. It is not safetyism alone, then, that leads to censorship in these contexts; it is safetyism combined with new ideas about social justice. Political disagreement thus becomes a safety issue.

Censorship comes from both the right and the left, but the overwhelmingly leftward bent of academia means that while right-wing attempts to censor professors tend to come from off-campus, censorship on campuses comes mostly from the left (Haidt, 2017a, b). In particular, these are from activists who have, in recent years, begun to abandon traditional, liberal commitments to free speech—or at least to see free speech rights as secondary to certain kinds of social justice concerns. In *The Rise of Victimhood Culture*, Bradley Campbell and Jason Manning (2018) discuss the emergence of a new moral culture—*victimhood culture*, or what we might call *critical social justice culture*—that is seen in its most extreme form among campus activists. Those who embrace this new culture see dealing with oppression as the foremost moral concern, and through the lens of critical theories, they tend to see social institutions and interactions in terms of the oppression and victimization of groups such as women, ethnic, sexual, and gender minorities, and the disabled.

Moral cultures do not usually value completely different things; they just differ from one another in their emphasis on certain values. But these small differences can have wide-ranging consequences, and the new social justice culture, by emphasizing critical theory's conception of social justice, ends up differing in key ways from other moral cultures. One way it differs is in its view of speech.

Consider how the new culture differs from traditional *honor cultures* as well as modern *dignity cultures* (Ayers, 1984; Berger, 1970; Cooney, 1998). Many traditional societies emphasized the importance of physical bravery, and in honor

cultures, one's social standing depended upon one's willingness to fight and to expose oneself to danger. Being thought a coward was dishonorable, and typically this meant that one had to respond aggressively not only to violent attacks but also to slights, insults, and in many honor cultures, blasphemy. In some honor cultures, the prescribed response to certain kinds of insults was to challenge the offender to a duel. This meant that when the matter was not resolved without resorting to violence, the two parties would agree on a time and place to fire guns at one another. In other situations, depending on the culture, the violence might not be as rule-bound, but in any case, honor cultures were not cultures of free speech. The boundary between speech and violence was blurred, at least in the sense that certain kinds of speech were deemed equivalent enough to violence to be worthy of a truly violent response.

The dignity cultures that replaced honor cultures emphasized the equal inherent worth of all human beings. This led not to rejecting bravery or embracing cowardice, but to de-emphasizing their importance in contrast to other virtues such as wisdom, humility, and kindness. If you recognize that you have dignity regardless of what anyone says about you, there is no need when insulted to prove your worth through violence. Slight and insults can be ignored, and violence, theft, and other more serious offenses can be dealt with through a system of laws.

It is in dignity cultures that parents teach their children the "sticks and stones" aphorism—which, of course, is more of an affirmation than a truism. Words can "hurt," but they don't have to do "harm." This does not mean that people in dignity cultures support completely unrestricted speech, or that everyone in dignity cultures supports free speech, but it does mean that those who do support free speech have been able to draw from a dignity culture's moral logic, which holds that speech and violence should be treated differently.

Social justice cultures do not necessarily reject the idea of dignity (the equal worth of everyone) any more than they completely reject the idea of honor (that bravery is better than cowardice). But our current "critical" social justice culture, with its focus on "dismantling" liberal, pluralist systems, its emphasis on group marginalization and oppression, and its reliance on tribal rather than civic norms requires that it diverge from honor and dignity cultures in a number of ways.

One way is that oppression and victimhood create a master framework for understanding social reality. This is similar to what happens in honor cultures where all kinds of behaviors are interpreted in terms of whether one is displaying bravery or cowardice. Here though, what is relevant is whether any given behavior, institution, action, or lack of action is thought to be increasing, maintaining, or reversing oppression.

Just as honor (or a reputation for bravery) is the most salient moral status in honor cultures, since the stated goal of a critical social justice culture is to protect, elevate, and empower victims of oppression, victimhood becomes the most salient moral status. In analyzing any kind of speech, then, a critical social justice activist would want to know whether it elevates or at least protects members of victimized groups. That which does not may be labeled "violence," or at least sufficiently akin to violence that it should be silenced.

In practice, then, as victimhood rather than equal dignity bestows moral status, legal principles of equality under the law come into question. This results in the speech of those viewed as oppressors being considered undeserving of the same protections as the speech of those seen as victims. Critical social justice activists may even deny that censoring an oppressor is censorship at all, as a group of Brown University students did when they wrote, “The oppressed by definition cannot censor their oppressor” (Dean-Johnson et al., 2015).

While certainly not their intention, students at Brown were actually onto something. The legitimately disempowered, by definition, do not have the power to censor. This is, in large measure, why freedom of speech is so important for the truly marginalized and oppressed. Historically, freedom of speech has been significant in efforts to obtain equal rights for all kinds of historically marginalized groups. And any person or group who truly fears those who wield the power to censor will be loath to demand censorship.

It is unsurprising then, that those who embrace the current social justice ideology, which has become dominant on campus and in an increasing array of professions, see censorship as a useful tool. First, they tend to see an array of liberal institutions and norms, including those that offer protections for free speech, as furthering the oppression of victim groups. They also see an array of behaviors, including “hate speech” (and in many cases, even ordinary conversations) as doing the same. Second, they believe that these things are objectively harmful and even deadly. And third, although they don’t see themselves as having power, in reality, they have enough power to successfully petition university administrations, CEOs of certain companies, editors, publishers, and heads of nonprofits to silence people by firing them or forcing them to resign.

This combination of the language of harm and the language of victimhood—a concoction of safetyism and critical social justice—undermines long-held norms that protect free speech. It is persuasive in many settings because not only does it draw from a culture of safetyism, it plays on Americans’ embrace of equal dignity and a widespread concern for the kind of social justice that results in equal rights—one much more mainstream than the critical social justice ideology of campus activists. And activists often get support from psychologists—both mainstream psychologists and those more committed to social justice activism, because of the expansion of our understanding of psychological concepts related to harm.

Nick Haslam (2016) calls the larger process of expanding concepts *concept creep*. He explains that in psychology many concepts having to do with harm have undergone both vertical and horizontal expansion: Vertical, where the concept comes to be used for much lesser degrees of a phenomenon, and horizontal, where the concept comes to be used to refer to different phenomena altogether. Thus, *abuse* used to refer to certain kinds of harm that involved nonconsensual sexual contact or violent physical contact, but then it was expanded vertically to include much less violent contact and horizontally to include emotional abuse and neglect. Concepts such as *bullying* and *trauma* have undergone similar transformations.

These changes may be defensible in some cases—Haslam is describing a process of change rather than critiquing it—but all the changes tend to follow the same

pattern: Only concepts that refer to harmful or undesirable behaviors—the negative concepts—tend to expand. Whatever the merits of concept creep in particular situations, then, if psychological language increasingly fails to distinguish different kinds of harm, or to distinguish between violence and speech, it becomes difficult to understand and defend the case for free speech, especially in a culture increasingly focused on preventing harm.

This is especially true when the concept creep seen in mainstream psychology is combined with the language of critical social justice. For example, Derald Wing Sue (2007, 2010) and various colleagues have in recent years popularized the concept of *microaggressions*. The concept has been around for several decades, but it was not widely known before about 2015. It refers to small (and usually unintentional) slights perceived by a person from an ethnic minority group. The examples range from obviously offensive remarks to awkward missteps to fairly common political views such as opposition to affirmative action. It includes views about the United States as a welcoming place for immigrants (such as “America is a melting pot” and “America is the land of opportunity”) and, depending on the identity of the interlocutor, ordinary conversation fillers such as “where are you from?” and even asking quiet people to join a conversation (Sue, 2010; Campbell & Manning, 2018, pp. 3–6).

In each case it is neither the objective properties of the statement nor the intention of the speaker that classifies something as a microaggression, but how it is subjectively perceived by the listener, or how it *could* be perceived by an imaginary listener. The identities of the speaker and listener also matter. Sue makes it clear, for example, that a white person cannot be the victim of a racial microaggression nor a man the victim of a sexual microaggression. “That’s a misapplication of the concept,” he says (quoted in Hampson, 2016). In addition to slights that could be perceived by members of marginalized racial groups, it quickly became used to refer to potential slights that might be perceived by a member of another group that falls into a category of historical marginalization.

However useful the concept of microaggressions might be in describing the experiences of members of disadvantaged groups, it introduces a view of victimization and conflict that is at odds with dignity culture. While the “sticks and stones” aphorism implores people to ignore slights and insults—to brush them off as something that does not and cannot lower their worth as a human being—the microaggressions concept insists not only that certain kinds of slights do immense individual and social harm, but also that they constitute a kind of aggressive act.

We see here the concept creep Haslam talks about, with vertical and horizontal expansions of the concepts of aggression and harm, but using a critical social justice lens, the expansion is also narrowly targeted so that it aligns with the specific ideas about identity, oppression, and victimhood. Not everyone who uses the concept supports censorship. Most are simply seeking to raise awareness of harms that speech can cause, but it is not a stretch to argue that if microaggressions are actually a kind of aggression—if the harms they cause can be equated with the harms caused by violence—then they should be banned just as other acts of aggression are.

Psychologists have even made this argument explicitly. Lisa Feldman Barrett (2017), for example, wrote a New York Times op-ed in which she concludes that we must “halt speech that bullies and torments.” These are, she contends, “literally a form of violence.” She argues that it would be “reasonable, scientifically speaking, not to allow a provocateur and hater like Milo Yiannopoulos to speak at your school” (Barrett, 2017). Her reasoning is that Yiannopoulos’s presence would help to create a hateful political climate, and that, similar to a climate of bullying in a school, such climates have toxic effects on one’s body, just as violence does.

Barrett refers in her op-ed to the relationship between chronic stress and telomeres (Epel et al., 2004), and claims that because some emotional effects can have physical consequences, some forms of speech *are* (quite literally) “violence” (Barrett, 2017). Chronic stress, she asserts, shrinks telomeres, and this can shorten a person’s life.

There are several problems with this argument. First is her definition of violence, which is both misguided and illogical. All kinds of things that no one considers to be literal acts of violence can have negative emotional and even physical effects—being fired from a job, for example, or being abandoned by a spouse. Barrett is clearly drawing from the language of safetyism and social justice in arguing against the distinction between speech and violence—a key distinction for free speech advocates. Suffering, an unavoidable psychological experience, is conflated with injury, and within a victimhood culture, an injury cannot be inflicted without a perpetrator. The language of harm is quickly taken over by the language of violence, and there must always be someone or something to blame.

## Psychology, Identity, and Free Speech

In addition to the obvious flaws in Barrett’s argument, the larger problem is the denial of individual agency and the elevation of personal interpretation. Setting aside the various First Amendment issues (for public universities) and contractual issues (for private ones) with respect to disinviting previously invited speakers, Barrett wants to adjudicate “which kinds of controversial speech should and shouldn’t be acceptable on campus and in civil society” by answering the question of “whether the speech is abusive or merely offensive.” The assumption, of course, is that there is an objective answer and that university officials will reliably find it. But even a cursory look at the canonical list of alleged “microaggressions” illustrates that what one person sees as disagreement is seen by another as offensive, and what one person sees as offensive is seen by another as abusive.

The lens of safetyism, which prioritizes preventing harm over all other concerns, combined with that of critical social justice, which sees everyone as a member of either an oppressive or oppressed group, leads to the psychological fallacy of negating the role of individual interpretation. In actuality, two people who experience the same event can have different perceptions of it, and how they interpret that event is what determines the effect it will have on them. If, for example, a student who

disagrees with Yiannopoulos perceives him as a threat, that person is more likely to experience negative effects of stress upon learning that he is on their campus. Another student on the same campus who disagrees with Yiannopoulos but doesn't interpret his presence as threatening will have a different physiological reaction to his presence.

Even our beliefs about what causes harm can have an effect on whether we are harmed (Paresky, 2017a, b, c, d, e). People who believe that stress causes harm may suffer more harm from stress than people who don't (Keller et al., 2012), while people who believe that stress is enhancing can experience an increase in anabolic hormones (Crum et al., 2017). But while Barret seems to assume it is a simple matter to delineate between that which is merely offensive and that which is abusive, in her own essay, the example she uses as something that should clearly be allowed on campus—a debate about eugenics—is now decried by many as abusive. It is even framed as a denial of certain people's right to exist. Like the word “violence,” “abuse” has undergone significant concept creep.

Describing speech as “violent” or “abusive” is a way for identity groups to create shared interpretations among their members and also make a moral claim that provides justification for silencing speech that does not conform to their preferred narratives. But it also illuminates the elevation of a certain conception of identity that requires a kind of ideological conformity (Paresky, 2019a, b, c). This includes an acceptance of ideas about harm, and also notions about evidence, objectivity, and truth—such that in a critical social justice culture, the strength of an argument is not assessed on the basis of logic or critical thinking, but on the identity of the person making it.

This method of argumentation amounts to replacing individual thought with social identification. It replaces unique individual thinkers with representatives of identity groups. And it results in a system in which, no matter how factually inaccurate a narrative's claims, no amount of evidence can successfully compete so long as the narrative in question is the ideologically appropriate perspective of a member of a marginalized identity group. This puts additional pressure on freedom of speech. Even though all the data indicate that freedom of speech benefits minority voices and the historically disempowered, the narrative of “violent” and “abusive” speech causing “injury” is more compelling to many.

Given how important freedom of speech was to the Civil Rights Movement, it is no coincidence that the critical social justice efforts now dominant on campus (and off) do not draw their inspiration from the Civil Rights Movement. Nor do they draw from ideas about interracial harmony, equal dignity of every human being, or individual flourishing that suffused that effort. Current social justice ideology is a profoundly anti-liberal project drawing on theories that only see the world in terms of the relative privilege, power, and oppression of identity groups. It rejects liberal democratic concepts such as the uniqueness of the individual, personal agency and responsibility, the rule of law, merit, reason, knowledge, and even truth. “Unlike traditional civil rights,” proponents of CRT, Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic write in *Critical Race Theory: An Introduction* (2001), “critical race theory

questions the very foundations of the liberal order, including equality theory, legal reasoning, Enlightenment rationalism, and neutral principles of constitutional law.”

According to this ideology, which undergirds current social justice efforts, foundational liberal ideas are constructs created by the white cisheteropatriarchy in order to perpetuate injustices against BIPOC groups (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color). The theory is operationalized, in part, by the popular conception of “intersectionality,” which holds that each person is defined by overlapping and interdependent identities marked by either discrimination and marginalization or privilege and power—each of which are things that are “done *to* a person individually, interpersonally, and institutionally because of a complex interaction of attitudes, history, and systems” (Lee, 2018).

People who subscribe to this ideology come to see themselves as a set of marginalized and oppressed or dominant and privileged identities. Being “abled” (as opposed to “dis-abled” or “differently-abled”) including being free from mental illness, is among the categories of dominant and privileged identities. In contrast, a diagnosis such as a personality disorder, depression, anxiety, PTSD, and so on moves a person from a dominant and privileged category into a marginalized and oppressed category, thereby releasing the individual from at least one category in which they would otherwise play the role of oppressor.

This integration of identity and psychological distress can potentially have negative long-term ramifications for the individual. The degree to which illness or trauma is central to a person’s identity, the more negative the outcomes—including in the realms of PTSD, the severity of symptoms, self-esteem, suicide risk, and general coping skills (Yanos et al., 2010; George et al., 2016).

Perhaps this is what Northwestern professor Laura Kipnis noticed when she expressed concern about “the infantilization of women” becoming “fused with identity politics, so that being vulnerable, a potential victim—or survivor, in the new parlance—becomes a form of identity.” In 2017, Kipnis presented a talk at Wellesley College (Kipnis, 2017). Afterward, six members of the faculty penned a letter to those who invited her, likening her invitation to giving her “the freedom to bully the relatively disempowered” (Paresky, 2017a, b, c, d, e).

They were “especially concerned with the impact of speakers’ presentations on Wellesley students, who often feel the *injury* most acutely...” (emphasis added). Ironically, Kipnis had been invited to speak about her view that feminism had been “hijacked by melodrama.” She saw campuses as places where “sexual paranoia reigns” and where “students are trauma cases waiting to happen.” She argued, “feminism is broken if anyone thinks the sexual hysteria overtaking American campuses is a sign of gender progress.”

The Wellesley students who protested did so nonviolently and without disrupting Kipnis’s talk. Three students (who did not attend her talk) released a video titled “Shutting Down the Bullshit” in which they claimed that Kipnis’s “rhetoric” was “*harmful*,” and that Kipnis is not a feminist—because “white feminism is not feminism.” Feminism, they asserted, “shuts down patriarchal bullshit instead of adding to it” (Keane-Lee, 2017).

Kipnis later described those who did attend her talk as having exhibited tough-mindedness and intelligence. Nonetheless, the faculty complained in their letter that “dozens of students” had told them they were “in *distress* as a result of a speaker’s words.” The faculty referred to this “a pattern of *harm*” (emphasis added).

Why are we seeing such insistence that students are being harmed by words? In part, it results from the campus dominance of various critical theories as the primary filter through which language must be received. In Kipnis’s case, critical feminist theory rejects the idea that individual women have the agency and resilience to, for example, reject unwanted advances and not feel traumatized by them. Instead, women as a group are disempowered and oppressed victims of the patriarchy. Only men truly have agency. In the case of microaggressions, critical race theory insists that only white people (the one group who cannot be microaggressed against) truly have agency.<sup>3</sup>

In 2017, Scott Lilienfeld noted that many of the claims made by advocates of microaggression training programs are backed by little or no evidence. In 2021, the concept remains unfalsifiable—there is no phrase or behavior that can be ruled out as a microaggression (provided the identity of the “perpetrator” is considered less oppressed than the identity of the “victim”) and it is therefore impossible to empirically test with any validity. Studies have not demonstrated the negative effects that microaggressions are claimed to cause, and it is unclear whether microaggression training programs or similar educational endeavors produce any of their intended effects. For example, evidence suggests that trigger warnings may actually work to increase anxiety (Bellet et al., 2018; Bellet et al., 2020; Jones et al., 2020) and many diversity programs are more damaging than helpful (Williams & Thomas, 2020).

Echoing this latter point, Jonathan Haidt (2017a) calls the idea of microaggressions the “unwisest idea on campus” because it rejects ancient wisdom from many traditions; for example, the Buddhist idea that it is easy to see others’ faults but hard to see one’s own, and the Christian idea of focusing on the log in one’s own eye rather than the speck in one’s neighbor’s (Haidt, 2017a, p. 176). Encouraging people to look for microaggressions rather than giving people the benefit of the doubt may even do psychological damage to those it is intended to help, creating a tendency toward hostile attributions.

Nonetheless, not only do colleges train students in how to find microaggressions, Loudon County, Virginia, according to a lawsuit brought by parents of middle and high school students, created “equity ambassadors,” a role only available to students of color who, among other things, were tasked with identifying microaggressions—among them, the denial that white privilege exists (Belkin & Gershman, 2021). This demonization of people whose political proclivities differ from the preferred progressive, critical social justice ideology, is both cause and effect of hostile attribution bias.

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<sup>3</sup>There are no microaggressions against Jews on the canonical list. Jews of European descent are considered “white” according to Critical Race Theory. Those Jews who are categorized by CRT as “Jews of color” are victims of racial microaggressions, but not antisemitic ones.

Lukianoff and Haidt (2018) argue that cognitive behavior therapy (CBT), which is backed by strong evidentiary support, lends further credence to the value of giving people the benefit of the doubt and relying on charitable interpretations of others. CBT focuses on dealing with depression, anxiety, and a number of other problems by training one's thinking to avoid cognitive distortions. Common cognitive distortions include things like magnification, where one, for example, gives the worst interpretation of one's troubles; mind-reading, where, for instance, one assumes the negative intentions of others; and labeling, where one might chalk up disfavored ideas to a negative and simplistic characterization of the person who holds them.

For people who subscribe to critical social justice ideology, however, instead of being seen as helping people overcome negative and maladaptive thinking, CBT amounts to "gaslighting." CBT is a therapeutic technique, and its claims should not be taken as settled fact, but its success at least suggests the possibility that the microaggression program and other ideas that emanate from critical social justice culture, through encouraging magnification, mind-reading, labeling, and other cognitive distortions, might be worse than ineffective—they might be causing harm to those who embrace them.

But what about the key issue of the distinction between speech and violence? What about the "sticks and stones" aphorism? If taken literally, enough psychological evidence exists to allow us to dismiss it as an empirical claim. Of course, words can hurt. But those who crafted the aphorism already knew that, and like many other words of wisdom such as "Fortune favors the prepared mind," "No man is an island," "The early bird catches the worm," it is intended as a guidepost rather than as a literal and unqualified description of reality. Acting a certain way and thinking in a certain way can generally—even if not always—have certain effects. The question should not be whether words can *ever* hurt us; of course they can. And the question should not be whether we would *ever* prefer to endure some form of violence to hearing some words; we might. The question is whether the aphorism is *generally* good advice.

CBT's effectiveness suggests that it is. It also gives further weight to the importance of making a distinction between speech and violence, and even between the psychological harms that come from speech, which we can control at least some of the time, and the physical harms that come from violence—which we cannot.

While it appears to be in one's individual interest to generally treat speech and violence differently, and while there is good psychological evidence to support this claim, that still leaves open the question of the degree to which the state and social institutions like schools should attempt to restrict harmful speech. Certain kinds of speech are already restricted: true threats, incitement to imminent lawless action, harassment, etc. But should there be further restrictions? Should opinions that people claim harm them, such as certain political, religious, and scientific ideas, be banned if they can be shown to be associated with psychological harm? After all, even if harm is not exactly the same as violence, there are other nonviolent harms the state tries to prevent.

This is a moral question that psychology cannot answer. But psychology can point toward a valuable line of inquiry. Supporters of free speech rarely claim that speech is *never* harmful, though they have a range of ideas about how much harm it causes and about the individual and social benefits of free speech. Another argument is that no one in a position to impose further restrictions on speech is competent to do so in a way that would provide more benefits than detriments. And as CRT becomes more widely known as the basis of certain programs implemented in schools and workplaces, proposed laws and lawsuits are proliferating; some proposed laws attempt to prohibit CRT-based programming (Foster et al., 2021), and some lawsuits push back against negative educational, social, and psychological effects of such programs on individual students and educators (Dunn, 2021; Belkin & Gershman, 2021).

Psychologists can point to an array of psychological findings demonstrating the limits of human knowledge. We are all prone to cognitive biases. No one, including our leaders and even our best experts, is immune. As Stephen Ceci and Wendy Williams point out, “it is not only that our biases lead us to *interpret* our perceptions differently—we actually *perceive* different things when we view the identical situation” (2018, p. 312).

An understanding that people can perceive and interpret the same situation differently comes with maturity. Young children lack a theory of mind—the ability to recognize that other's thoughts don't always correspond to one's own. Practices such as playing devil's advocate, debating, and role-playing could help young people acquire greater sensitivity to others' differing viewpoints. But in our era of social media, treating political opponents with compassion and understanding is not merely underappreciated, it is explicitly discouraged. Rather than attempting to understand the mind of a political “other,” partisans are encouraged to publicly shame those who fail to conform to their preferred views. Increasingly, the capacity to see people whose political views differ from one's own as decent human beings has been lost. The line between an incorrect or disfavored opinion and moral abhorrence is faint if at all present.

While psychology and other social sciences cannot adjudicate moral claims or decide how to balance tradeoffs between competing moral concerns, the empirical claims made by free speech advocates are underpinned by psychological science. Other currents within psychology, however, have encouraged the adoption of much of the language of safetyism and critical social justice, creating ethical questions and opening additional avenues for lawsuits (Paresky, 2021). And free speech opponents sometimes appeal to psychological claims in order to reinforce their arguments. But their basis for doing so is thin.

As psychology gives us a greater awareness of our failings, even in perceiving the world around us, intellectual humility seems like a reasonable response. We might try, in Ceci and Williams's words, to have “modesty with respect to our opinions, and openness to the views of those with whom we disagree” (Ceci & Williams, 2018, p. 312). Though the focus in discourse about free speech is often on what kind of speech is harmful, what might be more relevant is whether we can clearly

distinguish between that which is beneficial and that which is harmful, and whether we can, or should, put our trust in anyone to do so for everyone.

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# Chapter 7

## Prejudice and the Quality of the Science of Contemporary Social Justice Efforts in Psychology



William T. O'Donohue

This chapter will examine the scientific status of a significant segment of what might be called the “social justice movement” within psychology (e.g., Sue, 2017), as this movement relates to longstanding problems of prejudice, bias, discrimination, and oppression. Nothing in this chapter is meant to suggest that there are not social and interpersonal problems that are not real. These problems have been shown to be widespread, harmful, and relevant to the tasks of a psychologist and the clients they serve (Pieterse et al., 2012). To date, however, the scientific status of much of these efforts in psychology—and particularly the resultant progressiveness of these efforts is questioned. The importance of these problems should necessitate using the most effective problem-solving tools available, as well as the use of the most effective tools to produce consensus on these divisive issues. Science is an unparalleled problem-solving process—both for practical problems (e.g., how to accurately measure the presence of a certain virus) as well as for more abstract problems (e.g., what kinds of matter exist). The political realm does not enjoy the same problem-solving efficacy. The political realm may be effective in trying to persuade citizens regarding policy options. It is also helpful for influencing the votes of citizens who decide to participate in the political process. However, even with these tasks there are reasonable concerns about the influence of money, as well as concern over a very large rate of citizen nonparticipation.

The general conclusions of the chapter are multifaceted: (1) In addressing social problems, central constructs are borrowed from the lexicon of politics rather than from science; (2) despite the political left’s stated preference for “diversity,” constructs are borrowed from only one end of the political spectrum, the left; (3) unfortunately there is little to no attempt to employ scientific principles of construct validation to derive a more precise delineation of the meaning of these constructs;

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(4) there have been no successful attempts to develop valid measures of most of these constructs; (5) there has been little to no effort to link constructs to theory or nomological networks within psychology; (6) little attention has been spent on constructive conceptual or empirical criticisms of these constructs—despite criticism and error elimination being central to the scientific method and rationality (Popper, 1959; although see Lilienfeld, 2017 for an exception); and (7) little attention has been paid to the possible iatrogenic effects of the typical use of these constructs.

Others have noted similar concerns. For example, Tetlock has stated, “Are we ideologues masquerading as scientists: Have we rigged the research dice in favor of our political agenda?” (Tetlock, 1994, p. 528). This point also raises the valid concern that even when science has been conducted in attempts to address these social problems, there can be serious problems with the quality of these scientific efforts. This chapter countenances that scientific constructs may begin in everyday language but that these often need to be refined by the scientific process. To date, this has not been done in this movement—as all too often the constructs birthed from leftist activism unfortunately have been transferred without any additional refinement to psychology. Thus, when these constructs appear in claims made by psychologists, the problems are transferred to these claims—whether these are putatively descriptive, explanatory, or predictive. This neglect of science results in little progress that is made on these important problems—such as prejudice, discrimination, and bias in the lived experience of many humans.

For some, simply raising these concerns may be regarded as a seriously problematic act that is reflective of immorality, prejudice, or bad faith. However, Popper (1959) argued that criticism as the essence of both rationality and science—and that any attempt to punish criticism is a harmful, dogmatic, and authoritarian act. It is worth noting that these constructs have not only entered the scientific realm, but are embedded in ethical codes, administrative codes, hiring procedures, training and curricula, and everyday discourse. This is part of the reason why a critical response is of the utmost importance.

To date, there has been so little concern about the refinement of the constructs frequently used by the political left such as microaggression, implicit bias, systemic racism, privilege, cultural appropriation, and so on. In addition, there is a general unwillingness to understand these phenomena using the processes of science. Munz (1985), a student of Popper's, provided an interesting conjecture regarding the non-cognitive, affiliative function of dogmatically held beliefs:

With the emergence of consciousness, we get a further change in the nature of change. Conscious organisms can create falsehoods; they can lie and delude and deceive both themselves and others... In this way, cultures are created. The most elementary strategy used in the development of cultures is the artificial protection of knowledge from criticism. Certain pieces of knowledge, though obviously not all knowledge, are set aside and protected from critical appraisal. The thunder is identified with a god, the shadow of a man with his soul, and twins with cucumbers. Rational doubts are nipped in the bud by the mere absence of competing alternative proposals. Such protected knowledge can be used as a social bond. People who subscribe to it are members of a society; people who don't are outside that society. In this way, a lot of knowledge is siphoned off and used for non-cognitive purposes—that is, as catechism. But such siphoning-off though initially obviously counter-

adaptive, is an oblique advantage. A society so constituted is larger than a group of people bonded by nothing but the web of kinship and is therefore capable of effective division of labour and cooperation. (p. 282)

Similarly, Haidt (2012) argued that morality both “binds and blinds.” Clark and Winegard (2020) stated that “Belief is guided like iron filings around a magnetic field by the forces of tribalism” and developed this point along similar lines as Munz:

Expressions of belief or support for policies and theories strongly affect one’s social status because such expressions function as a signal of tribal identity, loyalty, and commitment to shared group goals and therefore increase or decrease a person’s value to a coalition (Clark, Liu, Winegard, & Ditto, 2019; Kurzban & Christner, 2011; Pietraszewski, Curry, Petersen, Cosmides, & Tooby, 2015). The truth is sometimes not more valuable to the fitness of an organism than is social status. And if the fitness-related social consequences of belief or disbelief (e.g., achieving status versus being ostracized) are higher than the fitness-related empirical consequences (e.g., the costs of believing something that isn’t true), then humans “should” base their belief on the social consequences (Gelpi, Cunningham, & Buchsbaum, in press; Kahan, Peters, Dawson, & Slovic, 2017). (pg. 3)

The beliefs of the dominant political ideology in psychology (i.e., that of the political left) may serve these extra-epistemic functions. This is at least one explanation for why science has been neglected or consistently so poor and the conceptual and empirical criticism that does exist has been deemphasized. Psychologists may fail to use science to properly evaluate these claims or to criticize them. This may be because these beliefs are seen as central to all that is good and right, and thus proponents want to show that they are on the “right” side, are “good” people, and therefore belong with others who are also right and good.

This chapter argues that the importance of the problems around the phenomena of prejudice, bias, and oppression necessitates a thoroughgoing commitment to psychological science—not political ideology. A renewed commitment to science—perhaps one that embraces adversarial research paradigms and other approaches, may help address these ideological biases. However, this is necessary in order to grow a more accurate understanding of these phenomena, as well as to discover more effective means of change. Moreover, this chapter advances these arguments because the current political approach may be doing more harm than good. This chapter argues that the current politicized approach diverts time and energy away from epistemically sounder scientific analyses, as well as creates constructs that are so poorly understood that their possible iatrogenic uses are a serious concern. Individuals are fired, vilified, sued, denied rights, and psychologically harmed through the use of these problematic constructs (see O’Donohue, 2020a; O’Donohue & Fisher, 2023; [thefire.org](http://thefire.org)).

## Scientific Psychology

Psychologists are involved in both basic and applied research as well as applications of this knowledge to a wide variety of practical problems. In basic research, psychologists are attempting to discover regularities regarding human behavior. As

applied scientists, psychologists attempt to take these basic findings in order to apply these scientific regularities to help understand and/or remediate problematic human behavior. At times when there aren't known regularities from basic research, psychologists may need to conduct research in an attempt to discover regularities in applied contexts. A canonical example of the application of scientific principles to an applied problem would be a cognitive behavior therapist taking the well-established principles of learning and conditioning (e.g., Skinner, 1965) and applying these to teach a developmentally disabled individual language and self-care skills (e.g., Lovaas, 2000). But other examples abound, applying findings of cognitive psychology to treat depression (e.g., Hollon et al., 2019), or the use of exposure processes to treat anxiety (e.g., Foa & Rotbaum, 2001). Cognitive behavior therapy has a myriad of these examples (e.g., O'Donohue & Fisher, 2012). Although to be fair at times, the effect sizes are not large, and these studies have focused on understanding outcomes. In addition, the process variables (i.e., mechanisms of change) involved often are not perfectly clear. Moreover, even if these change processes have yet to be clearly established, evidence-based practice necessitates the use of randomly controlled trials to understand the efficacy and effectiveness of these interventions (Chambless & Hollon, 1998). However, the application of the processes of science to these problems has clearly resulted in progress relative to the pre-scientific era dominated by psychoanalysis and other approaches.

Unfortunately, in recent years not all such efforts to address applied problems are based on science and the knowledge that scientific investigations reveal (Lilienfeld, 2007; McFall, 1991). There has been a long and continuing practice of psychologists and others developing therapies with little relation to established psychological regularities. These therapies can also be implemented even before any randomly controlled clinical trials have shed light on their safety or outcomes. Thus, many applied practices are delivered even when there is little evidence of the intervention's effectiveness or safety. Applied practices are delivered despite basic causal claims not being well defined, not measured in a valid way, and the absence of any consideration of whether or not their causal process claims are true. There are incidents in which questionable research and reporting practices are used to oversell the evidential credentials for certain therapies (see O'Donohue et al., 2016). Lilienfeld (2007) has called a certain group of therapies pseudoscientific and found evidence that some are even iatrogenic (i.e., causing harm to clients). McFall (1991) famously stated as the "cardinal principle": "Scientific clinical psychology is the only legitimate and acceptable form of clinical psychology." McFall further stated,

This first principle seems clear and straightforward to me—at least as an ideal to be pursued without compromise. After all, what is the alternative? *Unscientific* clinical psychology? Would anyone openly argue that unscientific clinical psychology is a desirable goal that should be considered seriously as an alternative to scientific clinical psychology? (pg. 75)

Why would psychologists want *unscientific* approaches to social justice? This is not to say that empirical problems are the only ones that are best addressed by science. Philosophers of science have argued correctly that science does not address all questions, particularly due to the is/ought distinction (Hempel, 1967). Science addresses questions about empirical states of affairs but cannot address questions of

morality or “ought” questions. For example, science can address questions about how individuals react after an abortion or even what causes someone to adopt a certain political stance (e.g., why someone believes it is not a woman’s right to have an abortion). However, science cannot solve the question of whether abortion is actually morally right or wrong or even what moral issues are relevant to this action (e.g., whether the pregnancy is due to sexual assault, the duration of the pregnancy, risk to the mothers’ life). Philosophical arguments, the analysis and use of meta-ethical and normative ethical theories, and conceptual explication (e.g., when human life begins) are all relevant for these extra-scientific questions.

However, it is also fair to say that wrestling with philosophical arguments and engaging in deeper levels of conceptual analysis has also not been accomplished in this field. For example, there has been little work in understanding the conceptual or ethical status of “cultural insensitivity” (O’Donohue & Benuto, 2008) despite the inclusion of such in the APA’s ethical code (see O’Donohue, 2018). As many have argued (Clark & Winegard, 2020; Haidt, 2012), much research in modern psychology is characterized by embedded political values, typically from the political left (see Redding, this volume). These embedded political values cause problems and emanate when researchers in psychology are generally unaware of the extent to which their political perspectives infiltrate and even bias their research regarding the phenomena that they are studying. Values become embedded when value statements or ideological claims are wrongly treated as objective truth, and observed deviation from that truth is treated as error.

## **Brief Historical Background of the Psychology of Prejudice**

Psychologists have been concerned about understanding and remediating serious and widespread problems that plague society at large relating to prejudice, oppression, discrimination, and stigma (see most recently, Benuto et al., 2020). Important work beginning in the early and mid-twentieth century has attempted to understand these phenomena. In the early twentieth century, for example, Katz and Braly (1933) examined the role of stereotypes and social norms in an attempt to understand prejudice. Here, participants were given 84 adjectives and asked which of these were most characteristic of ten racial and national groups. Results indicated that there was consensus among participants in assigning these traits to the groups, indicating that there is wide societal agreement in defining particular stereotypes. However, participants were relatively unfamiliar with certain groups such as Turks, Chinese, and Japanese. Results for these groups showed little consensus, suggesting that there were no clear norms for some groups. Interestingly, the results were interpreted to indicate that this consensus did not seem to be the result of familiarity with the members of the groups, but instead seemed to be the result of what the researchers called “shared societal norms.” Participants held negative and consensual attitudes even about groups with whom they were fairly familiar, such as “Negroes”, Irish, and Italians.

After World War II, there were experiments that attempted to understand attitudes toward the Holocaust (e.g., Chein, 1946; Lewin, 1952). During this period, Gordon Allport (1954) wrote his classic *The Nature of Prejudice* in 1954. In this text, he stated, “all groups (whether ingroups or reference groups) develop a way of living with characteristic codes and beliefs, standards, and ‘enemies’ to suit their own adaptive needs” (pg. 39). Allport suggested that if one wanted to decrease prejudice, it would be easier to try to change group norms rather than individual prejudicial attitudes. Other key historical works on prejudice include Guthrie’s (2003) book, “Even the Rat was White” (Guthrie, 2003) in which he documented the many overlooked contributions of African-American psychologists.

The Stanford psychologist Claude Steele wrote about stereotype threat in the 1990s (Steele & Aronson, 1995). Steele and Aronson (1995) had African-American and European-American college students complete a difficult verbal test taken from the GRE. African-American students did not perform as well on the test, and their observed scores were consistent with past means. Steele and Aronson then divided participants into three groups: (1) stereotype-threat (the test was described as “diagnostic of intellectual ability”); (2) non-stereotype threat (the test was described as “a laboratory problem-solving task that was nondiagnostic of ability”); and (3) a third condition in which the test was again described as nondiagnostic of ability, but participants were asked to view the difficult test as a challenge. The results indicated that changing the instructions on the test could reduce African-American students’ concern about confirming a negative stereotype about their group. Supporting this conclusion, Steele and Aronson found that African-American students who regarded the test as a measure of intelligence had more thoughts related to negative stereotypes of their group. Additionally, results also indicated that African Americans participants who thought the test measured intelligence were more likely to complete word fragments using words associated with relevant negative stereotypes (e.g., completing “\_\_mb” as “dumb” rather than as “numb”). However it is also important to note that recent meta-analyses have found that stereotype threat effects are small, even negligible, and further may be limited to certain subgroups.

The problems associated with prejudice, bias, and discrimination are admittedly very complex and difficult to study, let alone to remediate. Thomas Kuhn, an historian of science, has perceptively argued:

... [T]he insulation of the scientific community from society permits the individual scientist to concentrate his attention upon problems that he has good reason to believe he will be able to solve. Unlike the engineer, and many doctors, and most theologians, the scientist need not choose problems because they urgently need solution and without regard for the tools available to solve them. In this respect, also, the contrast between natural scientists and many social scientists proves instructive. The latter often tend, as the former almost never do, to defend their choice of a research problem—e.g., the effects of racial discrimination or the causes of the business cycle—chiefly in terms of the social importance of achieving a solution. Which group would one then expect to solve problems at a more rapid rate? (Kuhn, 1970, p. 164)

Kuhn’s cautions are instructive—even though there may be a particularly important problem that we would wish solved, it may be that the current tools in the applied scientist’s toolbox are just not sufficient. However, this does not mean that a

scientific approach should be abandoned for a political approach. Science is still associated with unprecedented problem-solving effectiveness, which includes providing accurate information on both providing a basic understanding of the phenomena of interest as well as providing information on what works and what does not in modifying these phenomena. Certainly, scientific progress can be difficult, and it can be easier just to “speak one’s truth.” However, the ability of science to provide consensus and clear information is then largely or entirely lost. It seems that this message of the importance of science has been lost in this area in recent decades.

## **More Recent Efforts: The Rise of Social Justice Activism and the Attendant Neglect of Science**

These past efforts were clearly in the tradition of scientific psychology; attempts were made to develop some theoretical account, clearly define terms in the account, develop measures to validly assess these, and then to design experiments to attempt to falsify or corroborate these. There was also some emphasis on the parsimony in the constructs used, as prejudice, norms, ingroups, outgroups, and a few other constructs that covered a lot of ground. In the past few decades, this seems to have changed for many psychologists. There seems to be a rise in activism on the part of psychologists and a corresponding move away from science. While attempting to disseminate sound psychological research to address these pernicious problems is to be applauded, it seems like there has been less concern for adherence to scientific principles in these pursuits. While there is some variability in their theoretical and empirical programs, recently there has been an increased use of relatively novel constructs that are often central to these pursuits. These constructs have little or no basis in scientific psychology, but are generally borrowed wholesale from the political arena—particularly from the ideology of the political left. What follows next is a critical examination of the political bias of academic psychology as well as the constructs which emerged from this context.

## **Psychology (Including Psychological Research) Is Biased Toward the Political Left**

### *Academia and Political Bias*

First, it may be useful to examine the overall trend in institutes of higher learning to provide some context for what has happened in psychology departments over time. For example, Langbert (2018) surveyed 8688 doctoral-level professors in 51 of the top-ranked liberal arts colleges in the United States and found that 39% of these colleges were “Republican free,” i.e., having zero self-described Republicans. In

general, of course, Democrats would be more politically liberal while Republicans would be more on the political right. Langbert found that there are so few Republicans in many colleges that he concluded, "Thus, 78.2 percent of the academic departments in my sample have either zero Republicans, or so few as to make no difference." (pg. 7) In an another earlier survey, the voter registration of 7243 professors was examined and the results indicated that 3623 were registered Democratic and 314 were registered Republican, for an overall Democrat to Republican (D:R) ratio of 11.5:1. This ratio did vary across disciplines: the D:R ratios were 4.5:1 (Economics), 33.5:1 (History), 20.0:1 (Journalism/Communications), 8.6:1 (Law), and 17.4:1 (Psychology). These results also found a trend in that the D:R ratios have increased since 2004, and the age profile suggests that in the future these will be even higher.

Other research also found that most psychologists describe themselves as politically liberal. In a recent study, Buss and Von Hippel (2018) surveyed members of the Society of Experimental Social Psychology regarding their voting in the 2012 U.S. presidential election: 305 of the 335 (91%) of these respondents indicated that they had voted for Barack Obama, and only 4 (1.2%) indicated that they had voted for Mitt Romney. Moreover, on politically divisive social issues such as abortion, gay marriage, and gun control, psychologists were overwhelmingly liberal—their mean rating was within 2 points of the extreme liberal end of an 11-point scale. Finally, when asked about their political orientation, 89.3% indicated being "left of center," 8.3% indicated being "centrist," and only 2.5% indicated being "right of center."

Inbar and Lammers (2012) conducted a survey of the Society for Personality and Social Psychology discussion list, and found that 85% of social psychologists self-described as liberal, 9% as moderate, and only 6% as conservative. Importantly, the trend toward leftist political homogeneity may be increasing across cohorts. Results indicated that while 10% of faculty were conservative, only 2% of graduate students and post-docs were. Moreover, this survey also revealed that 19% of respondents reported that they would have a bias against a conservative-leaning paper; 24% against a conservative-leaning grant application; 14% against inviting a conservative to a symposium; and 38%, against choosing a conservative as a future colleague.

In addition, there are other results showing that psychologists rated the quality of research methodology differently depending on whether it is framed as conservative or liberal/progressive (Ceci et al., 1985). Ceci et al. (1985) submitted research proposals to 150 Internal Review Boards proposals to investigate "reverse discrimination" (against white males) and found that these were approved only half as often as otherwise identical proposals to investigate discrimination against women and minorities even though all procedures were identical. The committee's justifications for their rejections were explicitly political (e.g., these would "discredit affirmative action policies"). Abramowitz et al. (1975) found that psychologists who described themselves as liberal gave more positive reviews of a manuscript describing liberal student activists as better adjusted than non-activists as opposed to their reviews of the same manuscript modified only to indicate results that supported the opposite conclusion.

Finally, Abrams (2018) conducted a nationally representative survey of 900 college administrators, querying participants about their political interests, and found that on university campuses, liberal administrators outnumbered conservative administrators by a 12-to-1 ratio. Only 6% of campus administrators identified as to some extent conservative, while 71 percent classified themselves as “liberal or very liberal.” Interestingly, Abrams’s previous research found that self-identified liberal faculty members outnumber conservatives by roughly a 6-to-1 margin. This means that there is actually less ideological diversity among university administrators than there is among faculty. As Abrams concluded, “A *fairly* liberal student body is being taught by a *very* liberal professoriate—and socialized by an *incredibly* liberal group of administrators.”

This hegemony of the political left has led Jussim (2012) to claim that leftist psychologists are “privileged” within psychology. Following classic claims of the use of privilege regarding race, Jussim has asserted the leftist-leaning psychologists experience the following privileges:

1. “I can avoid spending time with colleagues who mistrust me because of my politics.
2. If I apply for a job, I can be confident my political views are more likely to be an asset than liability.
3. I can be confident that the political beliefs I hold and the political candidates I support will not be routinely mocked by my colleagues.
4. I can be pretty confident that, if I present results at colloquia and conferences that validate my political views, I will not be mocked or insulted by my colleagues.
5. I can be pretty sure that my students who share my political views and go on to academic jobs will be able to focus on being competent teachers and scientists and will not have to worry about hiding their politics from senior faculty.
6. I can paint caricature-like pictures based on the most extreme and irrational beliefs of those who differ from me ideologically without feeling any penalty for doing so.
7. I can criticize colleagues’ research that differs from mine on issues such as race, sex, or politics without fear of being accused of being an authoritarian, racist, or sexist.
8. I can systematically misinterpret, misrepresent, or ignore research in such a manner as to sustain my political views and be confident that such misinterpretations, misrepresentations, or oversights are unlikely to be recognized by my colleagues.
9. If I work in politically charged areas, such as race, gender, class, and politics and if my papers, grants, or symposia are rejected, I need not ask each time if political bias led to the rejection.
10. I will feel welcomed and “normal” in the usual walks of my academic life.
11. I will not have to worry whether citations to and impact of my scholarship will be artificially diluted because most of my colleagues do not like its political implications.

12. I do not have to worry that reviewers and editors will require a higher standard to publish or fund my research than they require to publish or fund research with implications for the opposite ideology.
13. In order to publish my research demonstrating moral failures or cognitive biases among those with different ideological beliefs than mine, I will not need to consider camouflaging my results or sugarcoating the conclusions to avoid offending the political sensitivities of reviewers.
14. I can be confident that vanishingly few of my colleagues will be publishing “scientific” articles claiming that people holding political beliefs like mine are particularly deficient in intelligence and morality.”

We turn now to an analysis of not only how bias works with the leftist ideological hegemony but how this hegemony has also resulted in problematic constructs and construct validation in psychological science.

## Science and Scientific Constructs

Examined first is a list of constructs from a canonical scientific discipline—chemistry. Note that many similar lists could be constructed for other branches of science such as physics, or virology, or physiology, and so on.

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### *Constructs in Science—Chemistry*

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Element	Electron	Solvent
Hydrogen	Proton	Reagent
Helium (could continue for all elements)	Neutron	Electrolyte
Covalent bonding	Valence	pH
Ionic bonding	Atomic number	Titration
compound	Anion	Stoichiometry
Atom	Cation	Absolute zero
Molecule	Mole	Acid
Isotope	Gas	Base
	Solid	Catalyst
	Liquid	Mass
	Melting point	Salt
	Boiling point	
	Avogadro's constant	

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Note that these scientific constructs have several important properties:

1. Each of these has a clear, precise definition—one can look these up in any chemistry text and these are precisely and consistently defined.
2. These definitions may be related to common lexical definitions, but their definitions come not from this lexical usage but from empirical research that revealed the boundaries of the term by the way these function in scientific regularities. Salt for example can be defined lexically as a table seasoning or scientifically

as “any chemical compound formed from the reaction of an acid with a base, with all or part of the hydrogen of the acid replaced by a metal or other cation.”

3. These definitions of scientific terms are consensual—these definitions have little or no substantive variance.
4. These constructs are interconnected in a nomological net—these are not isolated with vague or unclear relationship to one another. The construct of “molecule” for example uses the constructs “element” and “covalent bond” or “ionic bond” among other constructs in its definition.
5. These are well researched—there is a very rich and extensive body of empirical research which demonstrates the worth of these constructs by their ability to “carve nature at its joints.” This is little to no research that casts doubt on the definition of these constructs or their function in empirical regularities.
6. These can be precisely measured—there are clear and accurate measurement operations which can precisely assess each of these.
7. Each of these is necessary/essential—these cannot be easily eliminated by a reduction to another construct.
8. These constructs are essentially involved in scientific descriptions, explanations, and predictions. None are superfluous.
9. There are few underlying assumptions, or poorly researched and questionable empirical ones.
10. These are not used to make moral or value judgments. These are natural as opposed to axiological constructs.

These kinds of constructs can only be found in the natural or so-called “hard” sciences (what some philosophers call the *Naturwissenschaften* as opposed to the human sciences, the *Geisteswissenschaften*) because these are more “mature” or do not have to deal with the complexities of humans. However, each of the ten points above can be said about the constructs found in the psychology field of human learning and conditioning:

*Constructs in Psychology—Conditioning and Learning*

Operant conditioning	Variable ratio schedule	Matching
Classical conditioning	Continuous schedule	Functional analysis
Modeling	Variable interval schedule	Classical conditioning
Positive reinforcement	Primary reinforcer	Observational learning
Negative reinforcement	Secondary reinforcer	Unconditioned response
Punishment	Response chains	Unconditioned stimulus
Discrimination	Avoidance learning	Conditioned response
S delta	Escape learning	Conditional stimulus
Generalization	Aversive control	Blocking
Schedules of reinforcement	Positive control	Spontaneous recovery
Intermittent schedules	Extinction	
	Shaping	

Examine the differences of these two group of scientific constructs with the constructs listed below. This chapter argues that these constructs are contained in pre-scientific, politically loaded constructs within psychology associated with

the contemporary social justice movement. This movement, in turn, is heavily influenced by the ideology of the political left. The dates of origin, importance, and frequency in use of these constructs vary greatly.

Microaggressions	Toxic masculinity	Cis-gendered
Intersectionality	Trigger warning	Post-racial
Safe space	LGBTQ+	Social justice
White privilege	Cultural appropriation	Progressive
Heteronormativity	Racial and ethno-cultural responsiveness	Climate justice
Systemic racism	Marginalization	Euro-centric
Homophobia	Speciesism	Dehumanization
Islamophobia	Implicit bias	ethnocentrism
Transphobia	shaming (slut, body)	Sustainability
Silencing	De-colonializing	Two spirit
Diversity	Inclusiveness	Discourse
Ableism	Identifying as...	Narrative
Ageism	Queer	Deconstruction
Enculturation	Cultural insensitivity	Eco-feminism
Positionality	Whiteness	Undocumented worker
People of color	Food deserts	Essentialism
Colorblindness	Community	Indigenous peoples
Mansplaining	Woke	Pinkwashing
White fragility	Calling out	Objectification
Hegemony	Non-Binaries	Positionality
Colorism	Gender neutral Pronouns (Zie, Sie, Ey)	Womxn
Internalized racism	Uncomfortable	Decarbonize
Aversive racism	Offensive	Institutional racism
Erasure of x		Ally
Othered		Consciousness raising
Hierarchies of oppression		

Some of these terms have appeared in the psychology lexicon virtually from “thin air.” Others constitute terms that had an entirely different (nonpoliticized) meaning before social justice ideology assigned an entirely new politicized meaning. Note that these can be confusing when these occur individually, e.g., “Bob commits microaggressions frequently.” But these can be even more confusing and unclear when used simultaneously with multiple of these terms (e.g., “Bob commits microaggressions probably due to his toxic masculinity when he is culturally insensitive to the queer culture”).

Although it is beyond the scope of this chapter to examine each of these terms individually, none of these constructs have precise consensual definitions, have valid measurement operations, are essentially involved in any well-formed psychological nomological net, or function essentially in any scientific regularities (e.g., Lilienfeld, 2019). These terms can be regarded as pre-scientific (perhaps they will eventually hold these properties), pseudoscientific (they have some sort of façade that make them appear to some at least to be scientific but they are not), or they are unscientific simply because they do not have the ten properties listed above.

## Constructs and Construct Validation

What is needed and what scientific psychology can add is the process of construct validation. Strauss and Smith (2009) provide a useful summary:

Measures of psychological constructs are validated by testing whether they relate to measures of other constructs as specified by theory. Each test of relations between measures reflects on the validity of both the measures and the theory driving the test. Construct validation concerns the simultaneous process of measure and theory validation.

Further, these authors also emphasize the importance of the link between constructs and the theories within which they function. Cronbach (1988) addressed this problem by contrasting strong and weak programs of construct validity. According to Cronbach, strong programs depend on precise theory, and are perhaps accurately understood to represent an ideal. In contrast, weak programs are associated with weak, or at least less fully articulated theories and construct definitions. With weak construct validation programs, there is less guidance as to what counts as validity evidence (Kane, 2001). One problematic result of a weak construct validation program can be approached in which almost any correlation can be described as validation evidence. In the absence of precise construct definitions and specific theories, validation research can have an ad hoc, opportunistic quality (Kane, 2001), and therefore their results are not very informative. Moreover, all too often these constructs are not even tied to any psychological nomological—or at best a very inchoate one. For example, advocates of racism theory argue: “There is a lot of prejudice which comes in manifold forms, due to unclear reasons—one group—an outgroup—is largely responsible for this—pointing this out will be useful—and there are some means which can change this.” But again, this deviates significantly from anything like a clearly specified and well-tested scientific paradigm in psychology.

Finally, the importance of another psychometric property needs to be stressed, i.e., discriminant validity—of making sure one is not inadvertently measuring an unrelated, nuisance construct. As Bryant (2000) effectively described,

Imagine, for example, that you created an instrument to measure the extent to which an individual is a “nerd.” To demonstrate construct validity, you would need a clear initial definition of what a nerd is to show that the instrument in fact measures “nerdiness.” Furthermore, without a precise definition of nerd, you would have no way of distinguishing your measure of the nerdiness construct from measures of shyness, introversion or nonconformity. (p. 112)

Messick (1989) advanced a conceptualization of construct validity that is unified and multi-faceted. In this view all forms of validity are connected to, and are dependent on, the overall quality of the construct. In Messick’s account, there are six aspects of construct validity:

1. *Consequential* – What are the potential risks if the scores are invalid or inappropriately interpreted? Is the test still worthwhile given the risks?
2. *Content* – Do test items appear to be measuring the construct of interest?

3. *Substantive* – Is the theoretical foundation underlying the construct of interest sound?
4. *Structural* – Do the interrelationships of dimensions measured by the test correlate with the construct of interest and test scores?
5. *External* – Does the test have convergent, discriminant, and predictive qualities?
6. *Generalizability* – Does the test generalize across different groups, settings, and tasks?

Speaking broadly it is fair to say that unfortunately there is too little evidence to answer these important questions regarding the constructs from the contemporary social justice movement in psychology. This is not to say that these constructs are meaningless. Lexically many listeners can gain some information (e.g., that someone did something wrong according to the speaker; or that the wrongness was due to deviations from some politically-inspired norms). Moreover, it is usually the case that the listener can assume that this violation is not trivial—its seriousness often requires some significant corrective action and perhaps even severe punishment for those thought responsible for the negative state of affairs. The point is, common vernacular might have some meaning, but it is usually not sufficient to function as scientific language. For example, the vernacular use of “reward” is not the same as the scientifically more precise and useful construct of “positive reinforcement.” Philosophers of science have warned against the “bewitchment of intelligence by language.” That is, some well-formed English sentences can seem more meaningful than they actually are. The canonical example is “Green ideas sleep furiously.” This sentence is syntactically correct but meaningless.

Thus, poorly defined terms also can detract from the meaningfulness of the sentence, and this can affect the ability of scientists to test claims. Popper (1959), for example, suggested that the empirical content of the sentence is the observable states of affairs that the sentence rules out. The sentence, “Jane is currently holding 2 green apples in her left hand.” has a clear set of empirical falsifiers—as observations of 0, 1, 3, or 4 green apples in Jane’s hand falsifies this claim. The sentence, “Jane is culturally insensitive because of her frequent microaggressions.” does not contain a clear set of observations that potentially can falsify it. Hence, its empirical content is unclear and dubious—and thus not a scientific claim but what Popper would call a metaphysical claim.

Concern over poorly defined terms in politicized writing is not new. In one famous example, Alan Sokal, a physics professor at New York University, published a fabricated article in *Social Text*, an academic journal of postmodern cultural studies. The article was called, “Transgressing the Boundaries: Towards a Transformative Hermeneutics of Quantum Gravity” (Sokal, 1996). An illustration of the quality and clarity of the article’s content, as well as its (feigned) underlying political ideology, the article concludes as follows:

“Finally, the content of any science is profoundly constrained by the language within which its discourses are formulated; and mainstream Western physical science has, since Galileo, been formulated in the language of mathematics. But *whose* mathematics? The question is a fundamental one, for, as Aronowitz has observed, “neither logic nor mathematics escapes

the ‘contamination’ of the social.” And as feminist thinkers have repeatedly pointed out, in the present culture this contamination is overwhelmingly capitalist, patriarchal and militaristic: “mathematics is portrayed as a woman whose nature desires to be the conquered Other.” Thus, a liberatory science cannot be complete without a profound revision of the canon of mathematics. As yet no such emancipatory mathematics exists, and we can only speculate upon its eventual content. We can see hints of it in the multidimensional and nonlinear logic of fuzzy systems theory; but this approach is still heavily marked by its origins in the crisis of late-capitalist production relations. Catastrophe theory, with its dialectical emphases on smoothness/discontinuity and metamorphosis/unfolding, will indubitably play a major role in the future mathematics; but much theoretical work remains to be done before this approach can become a concrete tool of progressive political praxis.”

The hoax produced a firestorm and it is interesting to note one of Sokal’s own conclusions from the affair:

“The results of my little experiment demonstrate, at the very least, that some fashionable sectors of the American academic Left have been getting intellectually lazy. The editors of *Social Text* liked my article because they liked its conclusion: that “the content and methodology of postmodern science provide powerful intellectual support for the progressive political project” [sec. 6]. They apparently felt no need to analyze the quality of the evidence, the cogency of the arguments, or even the relevance of the arguments to the purported conclusion.”

The Sokal affair is not the only example of this problem. More recently, in what has become known as “Sokal squared,” three self-described politically liberal researchers sent 20 papers containing leftist jargon to a number of what they called “grievance study” journals. These journals concentrated on race and gender. One manuscript was entitled, “An Ethnography of Breastaurant Masculinity: Themes of Objectification, Sexual Conquest, Male Control, and Masculine Toughness in a Sexually Objectifying Restaurant” that was eventually accepted and then retracted in the journal *Sex Roles* in 2018. The abstract of the paper illustrates abundant use of leftist jargon:

“The present study is based on a 2-year participant-observer ethnography of a group of men in a breastaurant to characterize the unique masculinity features that environment evokes. Currently, whereas some research examines sexually objectifying restaurant environments regarding their impacts upon women in those spaces, no known scholarly attention has been given to men and masculinities in these environments. Through the maticanalysis of table dialogue supplemented by brief unstructured interviews, I identify four major and one minor theme of breastaurant masculinity as distinctive to that environment. These include sexual objectification, sexual conquest, male control of women, masculine toughness, and (as a minor theme) rationalizations for why men frequent breastaurants. Following recent trends in masculinities research, my study interprets the breastaurant as a type of male preserve that erects a local pastiche hegemony in which these themes gain protected status. It also theorizes that the unique interactive environment of the breastaurant between (mostly) male patrons and attractive female servers who provide heterosexual aesthetic labor to the patrons, primarily in the form of ersatz sexual availability, produces these masculinity features. Given their current rapid expansion and popularity within masculine subcultures, the breastaurant therefore becomes an important site for critical masculinities research. Practice implications are discussed for management and counseling professionals who aim to improve outcomes in social and professional situations for both women and men.”

Thus, it does not seem that the field has learned much from the original Sokal affair. Here, the clarity of terms, the meaningfulness of claims, as well as the soundness of the research design, seem secondary in importance provided that conclusions seem agreeable to leftist political ideology.

In its genuine interest to find solutions to certain social problems, the political left often moves away from science and entirely toward political rhetoric. These entail consequences that are cause for concern, which includes:

1. Science (and indeed rationality itself) are associated with criticism and its attempt to identify, root out, and replace error (Popper, 1959). Empirical criticism comes from attempting to discover if empirical states of affairs obtain—but if constructs are vague, are not empirically operationalized, or cannot be validly measured this criticism that is the essence of science cannot be accomplished.
2. These constructs are not derived from sound, well-articulated, or well-researched psychological theories. Rather, they appear to be borrowed or imported from progressive political ideology with little to no steps taken to try to make these scientific. For example, Lilienfeld (2017) examined the construct of microaggressions and found that it was marked by “an absence of connectivity to key domains of psychological science, including psychometrics, social cognition, cognitive-behavioral therapy, behavior genetics, and personality, health, and industrial-organizational psychology.” (pg. 168).
3. These constructs are poorly researched—there is often poor empirical support for common assertions associated with these. “Group x commits more microaggressions than group y.”; or “Book b will trigger members of group z”; or “A required graduate class in cultural sensitivity will reduce cultural insensitivity.” (O’Donohue & Benuto, 2008). Lilienfeld (2017) has suggested that the construct of microaggressions has had an overreliance on self-report—that if a person claims that they have experienced a microaggression, then they have. However, this is simply irrationally subjectivist—it implies that no person’s claim can ever be wrong, or that the facts of the matter are irrelevant.
4. Leftist ideology often entails pragmatic problems. For example, O’Donohue (2016) noted that it is impossible to comply with the APA’s code of ethics when it mandates behavior such as,

Psychologists are aware of and respect cultural, individual, and role differences, including those based on *age, gender, gender identity, race, ethnicity, culture, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, disability, language, and socioeconomic status* [emphasis added] and consider these factors when working with members of such groups. Psychologists try to eliminate the effect on their work of biases based on those factors, and they do not knowingly participate in or condone activities of others based upon such prejudices.

O’Donohue (2016) argued that this violates the philosopher Immanuel Kant’s dictum that “ought implies can.” That is, knowing how all these categories apply to an individual or individuals—as well as their interactions—is pragmatically impossible. Hence, it is wrong-headed for the ethical code to mandate what practically cannot be done.

5. Because these are often regarded in a dogmatic manner as sacrosanct, then these constructs are often immune to criticism. To criticize these is viewed by supporters as evidence of character flaws (such as racism or sexism). The notion seems to be that these constructs do not need research because they are so obvious and important.
6. These may say more about the person's subjective characteristics than about the alleged problems with external stimuli. Lilienfeld (2017) has suggested that the process of alleging microaggressions being committed by others may at least partly be a function of the accuser's personality. Lilienfeld argued:

Because people's interpretations of ambiguous stimuli are shaped by their personality dispositions, such as negative emotionality (Watson & Clark, 1984), scores on microaggression scales are very likely saturated with extraneous trait variance. Dating back at least to Allport (1937), psychologists have recognized that personality traits operate in part by influencing people's evaluation of ambiguous situations (see also Funder, 1991). Framed in cognitive lingo, traits generate schemas that affect information processing (Bowers, 1973). As Haidt observes, the MRP (microaggressions research program) largely neglects the role of personality in influencing responses to ostensible microaggressions, placing the locus of causation—and typically the onus of responsibility—squarely on the alleged deliverers of microaggressions.

In sum, it is important to clearly understand what the major limitations are of a failure to possess clear definitions and valid measuring operations. These limitations have generally been ignored by proponents of these essentially political constructs in the social justice movement in psychology:

1. *It is impossible to make existence claims.* One can make the claim that a certain number of molecules of oxygen exist in this container on my lab bench. But when constructs are not clearly defined, empirically operationalized, and validly measured, one simply is never in the epistemic position to say that that construct has been experienced.
2. *It is impossible to make frequency claims.* Relatedly, if one cannot make existence claims then it follows that one cannot make frequency claims, as frequency claims are just an enumeration of existence claims, e.g., one molecule, two molecules, x molecules. Thus one cannot say x emits more microaggressions than y; or even that an intervention reduced the frequency of microaggressions
3. *It is impossible to make causal claims.* Relatedly, one cannot make causal claims. One cannot say, that an intervention caused microaggressions to decrease or that an authoritarian personality or a certain political affiliation causes microaggressions
4. *It is impossible to make predictions or post-dictions.* Relatedly, one cannot predictions across time. If one cannot detect the presence of an item currently, one cannot detect its presence or absence in the future.

## Further Problems

Thus far the focus on the chapter has been on problems with the constructs and construct validation with the constructs found in contemporary psychology associated with the social justice movement. However, these are not the only problems in the quality of the work done in this area. This chapter will close with a brief discussion of some of these.

*These constructs can ignore hard cases that are essential in determining the boundaries of the construct* For example, APA (2009) holds that a pro-life position denies rights—such as the alleged right to “reproductive freedom.” The APA (1989) has taken an intellectually problematic stance on this—advancing a pro-abortion position (the typical position of the left) that is based mainly on two considerations: (1) it is sexist to deny women the right to do what they want with their bodies—an alleged, but unargued for, right to “reproductive freedom”; and (2) post-abortion women suffer no ill psychological effects. However, claiming that a pro-life stance is an example of prejudice such as sexism is problematic for several reasons: (1) many women are pro-life, which would then necessitate some sort of construct such as internalized sexism; (2) this position ignores that for at least some that their abortion stance is based on the teaching of their religion which in turn may be intertwined with their culture (e.g., Hispanic women are often Roman Catholic or some other Christian religion (Pew Research Center, 2009) that views elective abortion as sinful and thus this seems—even by the left’s own terminology—culturally insensitive, or at a minimum as leading to a conflict in values between the ideals of cultural sensitivity and the ideal of avoiding sexism by denying a women’s right to do what she wishes with her body; (3) there are other critical dimensions of the abortion issue that are clearly beyond the competence of psychologists to answer such as whether abortions are actually the killing of human life vs. a simple removal of some bodily tissue; (4) the research that the APA cites is flawed or limited in many ways and as such limits the certainty of the conclusion that abortion produces no harmful effects (even if only in a certain subgroup)—too few studies with many methodological limitations, such as unrepresentative samples and poor measurement strategies; and finally, (5) if abortion is indeed killing innocent life, approximately half of those killed will be female, and a stance that involved being against the killing of females seems at least somewhat relevant to the construct of sexism. Sorting out these issues is difficult—but these difficulties call out for rational scrutiny rather than simply being neglected.

The issue of the rights properly accorded to GLBTQ+ raises similar issues regarding the proper boundary of constructs. Some minority cultures such as Latinos, African Americans, and Muslims have large percentages of members who believe that homosexual behavior is a sin, again often based on the culture’s religious beliefs (see for example, O’Donohue & Cassettes, 1993). The hard case then is how does one define GLBTQ+ rights while still being culturally sensitive to these racial/ethnic minority groups? All too often, these hard cases are simply

ignored rather than having arguments presented and limitations honestly acknowledged.

***When misapplied, these constructs can cause significant harm*** There has been too little concern about false positives involving these constructs (e.g., “You just made a racist statement.”—when this claim is false) as well as the broad-brushed nature of generalizations using these terms (e.g., “Men support a rape culture.”). There needs to be more concern when using these terms to avoid miscarriages of justice regarding the power associated with these terms (e.g., the Duke Lacrosse case), the denial of rights such as free speech (e.g., O’Donohue & Fisher, 2022 as well as [thefire.org](#) for many cases); and in general a neglect of due process involving allegations when these terms are used (see O’Donohue & Fisher, 2023). For example, many individuals have been labeled as implicitly racist for some workplace mistake, and mandated into what is viewed as rehabilitatory training programs. This happens even though there are neither valid measures of this construct nor well controlled scientific evidence of the efficacy of rehabilitation interventions (Tetlock, 2012).

There are three major concerns over possible harm that may come of this. First, there has not been research investigating the negative effects on individuals who are so mislabeled. There seems to be a surprising lack of concern of such iatrogenesis. Regarding hasty interpretations of the Implicit Association Test (IAT), Mitchell & Tetlock (2006) have stated,

It is this claimed connection between implicit attitudes and discrimination that can make IAT [implicit association test] feedback particularly disturbing to test takers. It also is the feature that makes research on the IAT of broad interdisciplinary interest. If the race IAT reliably predicts discriminatory behavior that cannot be consciously controlled, then society should take note. As but one example, the great majority of White Americans who have taken the IAT have been classified as anti-Black. This then points to an epidemic, either of unconscious racism (Greenwald & Krieger, 2006) or of false-positive accusations of unconscious racism (Mitchell & Tetlock, 2006).

Second, the use of these constructs can ignore other important values such as procedural justice and the role of due process (O’Donohue & Fisher, 2023). Cases such as the infamous Duke Lacrosse case where mere allegations of sexual assault, although very serious, seemed to be judged by university officials by leftist demographic categories (poor minority female vs. richer white males). Although these allegations turned out to false, these were initially sufficient to have students expelled, scholarships withdrawn, coaches fired, and reputations ruined—all without any initial due process (Taylor & Johnson, 2010). There has been too little intellectual humility—individuals armed with these terms are so convinced they are doing good that they are blind to the harm they may be doing when falsely applying these constructs to innocent individuals. All too often with the use of these constructs, individuals seem to be seen as guilty until proven innocent—or even more strongly no proof or due process is even needed. This may apply particularly to individuals in certain demographic categories and to individuals who are not sufficiently leftist in their politics (e.g. see Dreger’s (2010) account of how sex

researchers and psychologists J. Michael Bailey and Kenneth Zucker were treated by transsexual rights advocates).

Third, often these terms can be divisive as they create an ingroup vs. an outgroup. Haidt (2012) has stated:

Tetlock (2002) summarized a great deal of research on social cognition by saying that people sometimes become “intuitive prosecutors,” with a “prosecutorial mindset” that can get switched on and off as needed. He said that we often strive to be fair, as prosecutors, but he noted how “blatantly biased ingroups are toward outgroups” (p. 461). If we allow that many academics studying politically charged topics might, at least sometimes, be in “intuitive prosecutor” mode, then we can expect them to make three kinds of conceptual moves that would be helpful in prosecuting the perceived enemies of social justice (i.e., conservatives, and members of “privileged” groups). (1) Maximize the victim class. A good prosecutor will strive to recruit ever more groups to register complaints against the accused. This might explain the ever-lengthening list of groups and identities that fall under the protection of diversity and inclusion policies. This is a form of horizontal creep in the concept of victimhood. (2) Maximize the damages. A prosecutor has a stronger case if she can show that the damages done to victims are far graver than they appear at first sight. Thus scholars from across the academy have an incentive to find new ways in which members of allegedly victimized groups are harmed by current practices. This prosecutorial imperative might explain the creeping concepts of “marginalization” and “exclusion” (horizontal creep), as well as the constant lowering of the criteria (vertical creep) for harm in general and trauma in particular that Haslam described in his essay. (3) Minimize the defendant’s defenses. In criminal cases, most serious charges require mens rea— a “guilty mind.” You can’t convict someone of murder or assault if the harm was entirely unintentional. But if you develop a new legal theory that removes the need for mens rea, you can vastly increase your conviction rate. This is one of the central innovations of microaggression theory. Microaggressions are defined as “brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional [emphasis added], that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults toward people of color” (Sue et al., 2007, p. 271). Indeed, Haslam specifically notes that many creeping concepts, including abuse, bullying, and discrimination, have shed their older requirements for mens rea, requiring only a subjective assessment by the apparent victim. Unlike courts of law, in academic settings a lack of intent—or even the presence of good intentions—is no longer a valid defense against charges of racism, sexism, or other crimes. All that matters is that a member of a protected group felt marginalized. This is why we are increasingly hearing from left-leaning professors who write essays with titles such as “I’m a liberal professor, and my liberal students terrify me”.

***There are too many broad-brush claims about the frequency even the omnipresence of the “isms” or phobias like transphobia*** As previously stated without valid definitions and measurement operations, frequency claims simply cannot be made. In fact, there is some evidence against the frequency that is often implied. For example, females now are more frequently graduating from college than males, and females now hold more wealth than men. As another example, Squazzoni et al. (2021) examined how manuscripts authored either by women or men were treated during peer review. They examined 760,000 reviews of nearly 350,000 papers from 145 academic journals. Their analysis found no evidence of systematic biases against women in reviews or editorial decisions. In fact, results indicated that manuscripts with a higher proportion of female authors were more likely to be accepted by biomedical, physical, and health sciences journals. However, it seems like these

kinds of findings that are contradictory to the narratives of the left have little to no influence on the claims of the frequency of alleged prejudice.

***There ought to be a recognition of the significant problems of what might be called the cogito/gnostic move of the epistemically privileged first-person sentence*** The philosopher Rene Descartes (1999) famously attempted to build the foundations of knowledge by finding a proposition that was impossible to be false. He offered his well-known *cogito* statement, “I think therefore I am.” Scientific psychology has struggled with the scientific study of internal experience because it is not directly observable by another person. It is difficult for any external observer to critically assess the truth value of, for example, my claim that my tooth is hurting me now. In the social justice field, however, first person claims that involve these constructs have been seen as epistemically privileged. For example, according to many in the social justice movement if a person states that they have been triggered by a professor’s statement in class, then there is no other response but to believe that this claim is true. And perhaps more strongly, that any scrutiny of the truth value of this claim is itself morally problematic. However, beyond ignoring basic human fallibility and other human foibles—i.e., that people lie, that people can be confused, and so on, Maranto provided (2020) a useful *reductio ad absurdum*. Maranto pointed out that Hitler in his infamous *Mein Kampf* (My Struggle) described his first-person experience at the hands of his perceived oppressors and the social and economic injustice that his oppressors allegedly caused him to experience. Hitler even made the assertion that this injustice extended to biasing science—and when he came to power he attempted to correct this bias (particularly of what he called “Jewish science”). The question becomes, if those in the social justice movement would reasonably wish to reject both Hitler’s first-person account of his felt oppression as well as his claim of biased science—then how can the contemporary social justice movement in psychology be consistent in accepting (or as they might say “privileging”) the same kinds of claims, backed by similar epistemic evidence—but just these involve different cultural groups?

***Some of the key allegedly ameliorative interventions that the leftist social justice movement promotes have very poor evidence of their efficacy or safety despite the passage of decades*** For example, despite the fact that cultural competency training has been recommended and even mandated for over 40 years, to date there is little scientific evidence that the field actually possesses the knowledge how to intervene, for example to remediate poor cultural sensitivity into acceptable levels of cultural sensitivity. Benuto et al. (2018) reviewed 17 studies that purported to deliver effective cultural competence training. They found no evidence that such training has had beneficial effects on minority clients. In addition, the review also found that despite much time and resources devoted to this end, there is no evidence-based “best practice” which has shown to be effective in training clinicians to be culturally competent. They state:

“Over 10 years ago, Smith et al. (2006) noted problems associated with retrospective research and the reliance on single-group pre- to posttest designs. They encouraged researchers to use more rigorous designs (i.e., RCTs) and to examine the durability of training outcomes via longitudinal research. These recommendations have not been implemented. Of the 17 studies that were identified in the Benuto et al. (2018) study, only 2 were RCTs and an additional 5 had a control group (but no random assignment). Half of the quantitative studies examined outcomes either pre- and posttraining or posttraining-only outcomes and long-term effects of trainings were not assessed.” (Pg. 9)

This lack of scientific progressivity has not been adequately recognized. Instead, too many in professional psychology pretend that (1) the field knows how to validly measure cultural sensitivity, (2) the field knows how to teach cultural sensitivity, (3) and the field knows how to teach this in a way that it generalizes over time and situations, (4) that this teaching will produce uninformedly positive results, (5) and that the field knows procedures that can accomplish this for all the diverse cultural and intersectional groups. These views are not supported by the Benuto et al. (2018) evidence.

***These constructs may contain false stereotypes themselves*** Some activists associated with the political left has kept certain speakers from speaking on campus (see e.g., Ceci & Williams, 2018). For example, the prominent conservative Charles Murray was invited to speak at Middlebury College. However, a group shouted him down and eventually physically assaulted both Murray and a professor who was actually there to debate him. Ceci and Williams (2018) conducted an interesting experiment. These researchers sent a partial transcript of Murray’s talk to 68 faculty members. The investigators did not disclose that the transcription was from a talk by Murray. They asked the participants to rate the manuscript on a 9-point scale where 1 was very liberal, 5 was politically neutral, and 9 was very conservative. The median rating of Murray’s talk was 5, indicating politically neutral content. Ceci and Williams concluded that the faculty did not view “Murray’s comments as dangerously conservative, and none of their written comments suggested anything remotely oriented toward hate speech.” In fact, they pointed out that “many faculty provided comments about why they regarded the talk as liberal.” The researchers then asked another sample of 68 faculty to do the same rating, with one difference: the faculty in this sample was told that the text was from a speech by Charles Murray. The results showed that with this label, faculty then rated the comments as more conservative than did their blinded counterparts. However, even this group’s mean rating was close to the middle of the road politically. Thus, it seems that at times individuals are making prejudgments by reacting to political labels or to prejudgments regarding possible political content rather than careful exegesis.

***At times the use of the label may be inherently hypocritical*** For example, at times the use of the cultural sensitivity construct may be itself insensitive. The commonly used cultural constructs like “Asian-Americans” are insensitive to all the diverse cultures lumped together in this construct for the speaker’s convenience. The same can be applied to other labels such as Latino-American or Native-American. In addition, Martinez (1994) argued that the concept of cultural sensitivity “has evolved

into a caricatured concept that has led to stereotypic overgeneralizations of entire ethnic populations” (p. 12). There is an inherent tension that exists between categorizing and avoiding stereotypes. In addition, there are concerns regarding overlooking more useful variables. Montalvo’s & Guterrez’s (1983) “stereotypic ethnic vacuums” are described by Martinez (1994) as resulting from the practice of taking cultural variables into account to the point of overemphasis. “The stereotypic ethnic vacuum refers to the implication that, by identifying a cultural reason for the existence of a behavior, the behavior is understood as being inherent to the culture and therefore dismissed or minimized. This sometimes preempts intervention or prevents change” (p. 76).

***These constructs may not actually result the causal relations assumed*** Two examples will be illustrative of this problem. Part of the cultural sensitivity movement has been advocating cultural tailoring because of a wide range of alleged beneficial effects such as improved therapy outcomes. However, Huey et al. (2014) concluded from a meta-analytic review:

Overall, these findings present a mixed picture of the benefits of cultural tailoring. Although culturally adapted treatments are clearly efficacious with ethnic minorities when compared to conventional control groups, it is less evident whether culturally adapted interventions are more efficacious than unadapted interventions. Some meta-analyses suggest that cultural tailoring may be a powerful tool for enhancing treatment effectiveness for ethnically diverse groups (Benish et al. 2011, Smith et al. 2011). However, other meta-analytic evidence suggests that some forms of cultural tailoring may provide little added benefit to ethnic minorities compared to standard treatments and, in some cases, may even reduce treatment effectiveness (Huey 2013, Yuen 2004). Further research is needed to understand the effects of cultural tailoring and determine what forms are effective and for whom.

Second, Bellet et al. (2018) examined some of the alleged causal relationships involved with the construct of trigger warnings. Broadly, trigger warnings are thought to attempt to help individuals avoid distress caused by certain experiences because these events may remind individuals of past negative experiences, particularly traumatic experiences. A trigger warning allegedly may allow an individual to somehow psychologically prepare for the forthcoming aversive experience or perhaps even to leave the environment to avoid the “trigger.” These researchers randomly assigned participants to receive or not receive trigger warnings prior to reading literary passages that varied in potentially disturbing content. The results indicated that participants in the trigger warning group believed themselves and people in general to be more emotionally vulnerable if they were to experience trauma. Participants who received trigger warnings reported greater anxiety in response to reading potentially distressing passages, but only if they believed that words can cause harm. These researchers concluded that trigger warnings may inadvertently undermine some aspects of emotional resilience.

***These constructs may become involved in common practice although the research does not support this*** Implicit bias training has become standard in both public and private institutions. However, Tetlock has argued that not only is there reason to

believe that implicit bias cannot be validly measured, its relationship to prejudicial or discriminatory behaviors is non-existent. Tetlock has concluded,

The overarching question addressed by the meta-analyses of Greenwald, Poehlman, Uhlmann, and Banaji (2009) and Oswald, Mitchell, Blanton, Jaccard, and Tetlock (2013) was how well Implicit Association Test (IAT) scores predict behaviors, judgments, and decisions potentially indicative of ethnic or racial discrimination. No matter which data selection rules were followed, no matter how the data were aggregated, and no matter which statistical approach was employed to analyze the data, mean effect sizes within and across data groupings generally were small (or very small) and often not in line with theoretical predictions or common-sense expectations. Nothing presented in the reanalysis of our meta-analysis by Greenwald, Banaji, and Nosek (2015) alters that conclusion. This convergence of findings by two different research groups indicates that, by current scientific standards, IATs possess only a limited ability to predict ethnic and racial discrimination and, by implication, to explain discrimination by attributing it to unconscious biases.

## Conclusions

In sum, the problems with contemporary psychology's efforts to understand problems like prejudice, bias, and discrimination may be classified into five categories: (1) all too often the necessary scientific work such as construct validation for the myriad of constructs used in the contemporary social justice movement in psychology (e.g., trigger, unconscious bias, microaggression) is absent. Unfortunately, this important evidential gap has not hindered psychologists from using these poorly defined and poorly measured constructs in contexts that can have significant consequences for many individuals; (2) some scientific efforts have occurred but these have been ideologically biased; (3) when science has occurred that refutes or at least provides data that is not consistent with the claims of the political left, all too often these data and critiques have been simply ignored; (4) often embedded in the social justice movement are extra-scientific problems like the moral correctness of certain value positions. Unfortunately, these "ought" claims too are largely accepted uncritically and thus there are missing arguments for these value assertions; and (5) much of this work by the political left, especially with the use of these constructs associated with leftist political ideology is unconnected to psychological theory or nomological networks in psychology.

There are potential remedies for this. To avoid these problems, it is important to ask a series of critical questions regarding any proposed construct. This recommended list is contained in Table 7.1.

Of course there are other recommendations that may fall into the broad class of "doing better science." These include paying attention to disconfirmatory data as well as conceptual critiques, and realizing that there are moral and ethical dimensions of these problems that need extra-scientific arguments. In general too, there are legitimate concerns about vigilantism where these constructs are employed to intimidate or hurt others would be advisable. Finally, more mutual respect, kindness, and intellectual humility would allow a climate where these important

**Table 7.1** Proposed questions that are remedies for the unscientific constructs of the political left

Is this construct clearly defined?
How is this construct operationalized and are there any problems with this—e.g., excessive reliance on self-report?
How accurately can this construct be measured? What has the construct validation process looked like?
Has the construct's discriminant validity established—how sure can we be that we are not measuring another construct such as a personality dimension or political affiliation?
What is the relationship of this construct to other constructs? How would can its nomological net be depicted? And how well are these other constructs do on these issues?
What is the role of this construct in some larger theory?
Has this theory been empirically tested and what do the relevant data indicate?
Has this theory been criticized and how valid are these?
What is the incremental validity of this construct? Can some better-established construct do the work of this construct?
Is there any possible iatrogenesis regarding this construct and if so can I can minimize this?
What are false positive vs. false negatives in categorizing with this construct?
What are hard cases and how can these be resolved?
Does this construct impact rights especially constitutionally protected rights like free speech or the practice of religion, or other freedoms? Is the use of this construct authoritarian?
Are there improper authoritarian uses of this construct?
Does this construct involve political positions that others with other legitimate political positions may have legitimate disagreements with?
Is the construct showing progressiveness at addressing the above?
Does the construct involve harmful stereotypes such as all members of some outgroup are bad in some way?
Does the construct attempt to hide or naturalize moral questions?
Are these are often used in a naïve manner with respect to other knowledge (economic, biological)?
Are these are advanced in hostile, nontolerant manner?
Do these have any demonstrated incremental validity over constructs like prejudice or ingroup/outgroup?
What are relevant criticism and data that are not supportive and what is a fair response to these?

problems can be more effectively studied and addressed. The underlying problems associated with harm and injustice are just too important to fail to use the most effective problem solving tools associated with science. Certainly it is problematic to produce more harm and injustice in these efforts. Assertions and interventions in which scientific scrutiny are minimized or completely avoided do not allow the error detection and error elimination functions of science to operate. Enterprises that minimize or avoid these functions of science are dogmatic or at best pseudoscientific.

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# Chapter 8

## Multiculturalism in Contemporary American Psychology (Part 1)



Craig L. Frisby

No other topics are as strong of a magnet for debate, controversy, and politicization within American psychology than those dealing with race and ethnicity. In contemporary psychology, ‘multiculturalism’ is the preferred term that functions as a polite euphemism for issues that often involve race and ethnicity.

### Definitional Issues

When the word ‘multiculturalism’ is broken down into its constituent parts, their meanings give only a superficial understanding of the deeper issues that are associated with the complete word. ‘Multi-’ means many. ‘Cultural’ is an adjective meaning ‘as or relating to culture’ (Cultural | Definition of Cultural by Merriam-Webster ([merriam-webster.com](https://www.merriam-webster.com))).

The culture concept has, and continues to be, the focus of considerable scholarship by anthropologists, psychologists, and sociologists of considerable stature and reputation (e.g., Sigmund Freud, Erik Erikson, Emile Durkheim, Franz Boas, Arthur C. Brooks, Ed Crane, Alfred Weber, Margaret Mead, Ruth Benedict, Edward Sapir, Cora Dubois, Abram Kardiner, Ralph Linton, Robert LeVine, Melford Spiro, Clyde Kluckhohn, and Geert Hofstede, to name a few).

Unfortunately, the search for a consensus definition of ‘culture’ has eluded culture theorists across many decades of study (e.g., see Baldwin & Lindsley, 1994; Kroeber & Kluckhohn, 1952). Up to the time of this writing, there have been over 300 different definitions of culture that have been proposed (Baldwin

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et al., 2006). Theorists argue over the extent to which the culture concept reflects a tangible reality (e.g., behavior and experiences, and their codification in customs and rituals), takes symbolic form (e.g., language and meanings), or if it is an unobservable, intangible, but malleable abstraction (e.g., thinking, values, beliefs). This begs the question of what exactly constitutes characteristics of human beings that are ‘cultural’, versus which characteristics of human beings that are ‘not cultural’.

In addition, a central feature of culture definitions is that they are constructed from, and are characteristic of, observations of groups. When the culture concept is applied to reality, however, there is difficulty in deciding what constitutes a culture for one group, versus a different and mutually exclusive culture for another group. This is because the culture concept can circumscribe groups as small as a single family unit, to groups as large as an entire country, continent, or global hemisphere. This difficulty is further compounded by the truism that different groups can be formed using one criterion (e.g., religious differences), but completely different configurations of groups can be formed using a different criterion (e.g., language differences). Such groupings can overlap considerably in the membership that is shared within groups. Practically, then, two persons can be culturally different (according to one set of criteria) but culturally similar (according to a different set of criteria) *at the same time*.

Although race and ethnicity are currently the simplest and most popular criteria in contemporary American psychology for distinguishing between cultural groupings, the reality is that many different racial and ethnic groups can belong to a single culture, and conversely many different cultural groups can belong to a single race or ethnicity.

Finally, the suffix ‘ism’ modifies root words (i.e., ‘multicultural’) by adding the idea of an ideology, a system of thinking, a school of thought, or a doctrine that is shaped by its own implicit assumptions, values, worldview, and sociopolitical objectives.

## ***Chapter Intent***

The overall purpose of this chapter is to discuss the ideology of multiculturalism as it is manifested in research, applied, and professional American psychology. The discussion begins with a general description of these areas. This is followed by a discussion of how these areas have been politicized, then concludes with a discussion (in the next chapter) of the problems that result from politicization of the multicultural concept.

## Multiculturalism in Research Psychology

### *Cultural and Cross-Cultural Psychology*

*Cross-cultural psychology* emphasizes quantitative approaches that seek to discover general scientific laws (i.e., the nomothetic approach), while *cultural psychology* tends to emphasize qualitative research where interpretations of data are grounded in a group's unique symbols, icons, folk tales, and beliefs (i.e., the ideographic approach; Lonner & Hayes, 2007; Lonner et al., 2019). These differences are often framed as differences between 'etic' (cross-cultural psychology) versus 'emic' (cultural psychology) approaches (Berry, 1989, 1999; Feleppa, 1986; Harris, 1976; Headland et al., 1990; Mead Niblo & Jackson, 2004).

Many reasons have been given as to why cultural and cross-cultural psychology are important. According to Lonner et al. (2019), "Culture is as important as genes in understanding human thought and behavior" (p. 11). They opine that the importance of studying cultural and cross-cultural psychology is self-evident, as psychologists should naturally want to consult "all that is human". In this view, such study "provides insight into who we are as a species in a vast universe, where we came from, and where we may be going" (Lonner et al., 2019, p. 11). Lonner et al. (2019) opine that understanding different cultures and ethnicities is "one of the hallmarks of an educated person" (p. 11), and that cross-cultural psychology prepares human beings for more effective cross-cultural interactions (Lonner et al., 2019, p. 11). Arguing from a scientific perspective, the study of other cultures presumably helps psychology to "extend the range of variation in psychological functioning" (Lonner et al., 2019, p. 11).

### *Specific Applications of Cultural and Cross-Cultural Psychology*

There are many branches of psychology that intersect with human differences based on race, ethnicity, language, and culture. A brief sampling is described below.

*Differential psychology* is the name given to the branch of psychology that deals with measuring and comparing individual and group differences in psychological traits and behaviors (Differential psychology | Britannica). In experimental psychology, conditions are systematically manipulated by researchers to gauge its influence on outcomes. In contrast, 'correlational psychology' (i.e., an early name for differential psychology; Cronbach, 1957) observes naturally occurring differences in psychological traits or behaviors among individuals, develops methods of measuring and quantifying these individual differences (Binet & Simon, 2007), then correlates these quantified observations with other quantified observations of individuals that occur in the natural world. Early research in differential psychology showed that many naturally occurring traits are measurable on a continuum often resulting in a bell-shaped curve – where the majority of individuals measured on a given trait

cluster near the center of the curve, with a gradual decrease in frequencies toward the extremes of the curve (Galton, 1894). Growth in related areas of genetics (Plomin et al., 2012), developmental psychology (Keil, 2014), and psychological testing (Cooper, 2019) broadened the scope of differential psychology considerably.

*Social Psychology* is the name given to a branch of psychology that studies how individual or group behavior is influenced by the presence and/or behavior of others (What Is Social Psychology? Definition, Key Terms & Examples ([maryville.edu](http://maryville.edu))). In social psychology, human behavior is often explained as being the result of the relationship between internalized mental states (e.g., perceptions, cognitions, attitudes, self-concept) and social situations. That is, social psychologists study the social conditions experienced by groups (e.g., group norms, roles, relationships) under which internalized thoughts, feelings, as well as externalized behaviors occur – and how such variables influence social interactions (e.g., intra-/intergroup behavior, decision-making).

There is a robust social psychological literature on the topics of race, ethnicity, and the relationships between racial and ethnic groups within societies (Richeson & Sommers, 2016; Roberts & Rizzo, 2020). This literature includes investigations of the meaning of race and/or ethnicity; how racial and ethnic categories are formed; how racial identity develops within individuals; understanding the roots, development, and remedies for prejudice, discrimination, racism, and intergroup conflict; and how individuals construe and experience racial/ethnic diversity.

All throughout recorded history, people groups have traveled to, as well as settled in, different parts of the world for greater economic opportunities, to flee political persecution or natural disasters, or to conquer and/or colonize other people groups (Berry & Sam, 2016). The meeting of different cultural groups and the resulting cultural, psychological, and behavioral changes are what collectively have come to be known as ‘acculturation’ (Berry & Sam, 2016). *Acculturation psychology* is the field of study designed to research and answer the fundamental question: How do people born and raised in one society manage to live in another society that is culturally different from the one they are used to (Berry & Sam, 2016, p. 4)?

*Psychometrics* is the name given to the branch of research and applied psychology that deals with the use and application of the measurement of psychological traits (Furr & Bacharach, 2014). The intersection of psychometrics with cross-cultural and cultural psychology finds its home in the study of alleged test bias (AERA, APA, NCME, 2014) and measurement invariance (Vandenberg & Lance, 2000). In a general sense, measurement invariance research specifies the conditions which have to be fulfilled (e.g., configural, metric, and scalar invariance; He & van de Vijver, 2012) before valid inferences can be drawn from the comparison of test scores in cross-national/cross-cultural studies. When an instrument is said to demonstrate evidence of measurement invariance, this means that scores from the instrument used in different cultural groups measure the same construct in the same way (Chen, 2008; Davidov et al., 2014; Millsap, 2011).

## Multiculturalism in Applied Psychology

Lonner et al. (2019) opine that the term *multicultural psychology* can be difficult to differentiate from ‘cross-cultural psychology’ and ‘cultural psychology’ – since the three subdisciplines often share the same textbooks and publish in the same journals. Nevertheless, they attempt to differentiate multicultural psychology (sometimes called ‘racial and ethnic minority psychology’, see Leong, 2014) as that branch of psychology that focuses on topics such as social justice, prejudice, bias, discrimination, stereotyping, inequalities, and various other social problems encountered in multi-racial and multi-ethnic communities.

Applied psychologists use knowledge learned from academic and research psychology to treat problems that people have in real-world settings (i.e., home, schools, hospitals, clinics, religious institutions, work settings). Since applied psychologists naturally desire for clients to improve their emotional, interpersonal, vocational, and medical functioning within society, it comes as no surprise that the study of social problems (that can have significant effects on the life functioning of individuals) would be included in applied clinical training. However, issues related to social justice, prejudice, bias, discrimination, stereotyping, and subgroup inequalities are more susceptible to being politicized compared to other topics studied under the traditions of cross-cultural and cultural psychology. Here, the entire *raison d’être* for racial and ethnic minority psychology is often traced to a profound dissatisfaction among scholars based on the following perceptions and impressions (Guthrie, 2004; Leong, 2014):

- Not enough research is conducted on minorities and minority communities in countries within which they are not the majority
- There is a White, ‘Eurocentric’ bias within the field of American psychology
- There is a need to highlight the ‘lived experiences’ of racial and ethnic minorities, which have been sorely neglected in the past by academic and applied psychology
- There is a need to correct the ‘skewed and biased models’ of culturally different populations held by academic and applied psychology

## Multiculturalism in Professional Psychology Organizations

The purposes of national, state, and regional professional organizations are for psychologists to: (a) represent the ‘face’ of professional and research psychology to the national, state, and local public, and (b) establish standards for psychology training program accreditation, establish standards for professional certification and licensure, establish standards for professional and ethical practice, and (c) provide resources for training and continuing education. The American

Psychological Association (APA) is currently the largest scientific and professional organization representing psychology in the United States. Its internal governing and administrative structure are described in detail within a variety of online documents (Governance ([apa.org](http://apa.org)); PowerPoint Presentation ([apaservices.org](http://apaservices.org)) Education Directorate ([apa.org](http://apa.org)); APA Practice Directorate; Public Interest Directorate ([apa.org](http://apa.org)); Public Interest Directorate ([apa.org](http://apa.org)); Science Directorate ([apa.org](http://apa.org))).

APA has 54 divisions, which are interest groups representing different subspecialties or topical areas in psychology. Although APA (generally) or any particular division (specifically) can technically address issues related to racial/ethnic minority groups, the divisions that are most directly involved with multicultural issues are Division 9 (Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues), Division 45 (Society for the Psychological Study of Culture, Ethnicity and Race), and Division 52 (International Psychology). These divisions issue policy and position statements of various matters deemed to be of social importance to racial, ethnic, and cultural minority groups (e.g., immigration, police brutality, racism, mental health equity in services).

A listing of contemporary English-language psychology or psychology-related journals, sponsored by APA or its divisions, is listed in Table 8.1.

**Table 8.1** Select English-language racial/ethnic minority psychology and psychology-related journals (as of April 2021)

Asian American Journal of Psychology
Cultural Diversity & Ethnic Minority Psychology
Culture & Psychology
Darkmatter: In the Ruins of Imperial Culture
Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences
International Journal of Critical Pedagogy
Journal of Black Psychology
Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology
Journal of Cultural Diversity
Journal of Diversity in Higher Education
Journal of Ethnic & Cultural Diversity in Social Work
Journal of Latinx Psychology
Journal of Multicultural Counseling & Development
Multicultural Perspectives
School Psychology International
Transcultural Psychiatry

## The Politicization of Multiculturalism in American Psychology

Leong (2014) states explicitly that “ethnic minority psychology is ... oriented toward political advocacy and social justice and social change” (p. xxii). Political battles within multiculturalism ultimately arise from disagreements over how to interpret and respond to subgroup differences in psychological test scores (Meisenberg, 2019); social, academic, and economic achievements; and mental/physical health disparities (Williams et al., 2019). These battles play out in numerous ways within research psychology, applied psychology, and professional psychology organizations.

### *The Politicization of Multiculturalism in Research Psychology*

#### The Politicization of Race

One writer opines that “differences between human racial groups are [arguably] the most controversial topic in all of the social sciences, with almost every conceivable fact being contested by two or more opposing factions” (Kirkegaard, 2019, p. 142).

Scientific discussion over the validity of racial categories – as well as the effects that scientific opinions may have on the general problem of racism, discrimination, and prejudice in contemporary society – is illustrated in an early document *Four Statements on the Race Question* published by United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 1969). From these and other publications, scientific and scholarly opinions on the validity of racial categories can be broadly characterized as falling into two broad camps: ‘Race Deniers’ vs. ‘Race Acknowledgers’ (Frisby, 2018). Race Deniers are those who tend to reject the scientific validity of racial classification systems – while Race Acknowledgers accept their validity. These two broad categories can be expanded to encompass four nuanced categories:

1. *Full Race Realism*: Full Race Realists are those who not only acknowledge the scientific validity of racial categories (McCulloch, 2002), but they also acknowledge the validity of scientific research supporting the near (yet not fully complete) universality in the measurement and interpretation of certain psychological constructs (e.g., intelligence, personality traits, behavior); acknowledge the validity of average mean differences between subgroup distributions in such traits; and explore the significant social/societal implications of these average mean differences (Dutton, 2020; Entine, 2000; Hernnstein & Murray, 1994; Levin, 2005; Lynn, 2019; Rushton & Jensen, 2005; Sarich & Miele, 2004).
2. *Partial Race Realism*: Partial Race Realists acknowledge that biological races exist (or at minimum, they do not *deny* the existence of biologically distinct racial groups), but tend to emphasize environmental, sociological, or measurement-related (as opposed to genetic or biological) explanations for

subgroup differences in outcomes (Nisbet, 2010; Sternberg, 2005; Suzuki & Aronson, 2005; UNESCO, 1969; Zuckerman, 2003). While Partial Race Realists may acknowledge subgroup differences in some areas, they tend to argue that these differences have little ‘real-world’ relevance for politically sensitive applications (e.g., sports, education, criminal justice, economic attainment).

3. *Partial Race Denialism*: Partial Race Denialists argue that racial categories are by and large socially rather than biologically constructed (Anemone, 2019; Gannon, 2016; Helms et al., 2005). Such arguments are based on a variety of observations related to the significant degrees of genetic similarities across groups – as well as the smooth continuum of variability in phenotypic traits within groups (see brief summary of these arguments in Frisby, 2018, pp. 283–284). The primary conviction fueling this view is that belief in the biological validity of racial groups is a necessary precursor (whether consciously or unconsciously) for supporting racism (Helms et al., 2005) – and as a corollary, ridding societies of racism requires the rejection of a belief in biologically-inspired racial categories. On the other hand, Partial Race Denialists argue that racial designations are so deeply embedded within human psychology, identity, and behaviors – that it remains a powerful psychological and social variable (though socially constructed; Carter, 2005; Helms, 2020; Jaret & Reitzes, 1999; Keleher, n.d.; Knowles, 2004; Sue et al., 2019a).
4. *Full Race Denialism*: Use of the word ‘denialism’ here does *not* mean that persons do not believe in, or acknowledge, biological/phenotypic differences between people groups. Rather, ‘denialism’ here connotes the view that racial differences between people groups are seen as ultimately subordinate to the broader universality of the human race. In this perspective, the highest morally defensible position is to view biological differences between people groups as insignificant and meaningless (whether race is considered socially constructed or not). This view is often reflected in the phrase: “*There is only one race – the human race*” (Ham, 2017; Perz, 2013). Writers who adopt a theological and particularly Judeo-Christian analysis of human diversity, as interpreted by the Old and New Testaments of the Bible, are key supporters of this view (e.g., Ham, 2017; Ham & Ware, 2019).

The criticisms that are hurled at opposing viewpoints among these camps are indeed heated. Partial Race Realists and Partial Race Denialists accuse Full Race Realists of using ‘extreme right-wing clichés’ (Brown, 2006, p. 190); being principally motivated by racism (Reed, 1995; Rodriguez, 2020); engaging in research that is dangerous, irresponsible (Block & Dworkin, 1974), and also threatening to the enforcement of groups’ ‘right to equality’ (Kourany, 2016). Full Race Realists are also accused of exaggerating claims of being discriminated against when attempting to publish hereditarian research (Jackson & Winston, 2021). Full Race Realists accuse Partial Race Denialists of engaging in ‘pseudoscience’ (Sterling, 2014), trafficking in personal attacks without rebutting evidence (Gottfredson, 2012), as well as fostering a destructive ‘racism explains all problems’ mindset (McDonald, 2019). Full Race Realists characterize Full Race Denialists’ claim that ‘there is only one race-the

human race' as a naïve and 'mawkish sentiment' (Hamilton, 2008, p. 11). Full Race Denialists are concerned that the obsession with race identity and equal outcomes – characteristic of Partial Race Realists – is morally destructive to societies (Rogers, 2021).

### **The Politicization of Race Differences Research**

There exist basic questions (and ensuing debates) related to the role of 'race research' in psychological science, and whether it is appropriate, moral, or even ethical for such research to be conducted. On one side are differential psychologists who study cognitive and personality test scores, measures of physical maturation, social/emotional development, sexual behavior, law abidingness, and criminal behavior (among many other variables) using large datasets from Black, Caucasian, and Asian people groups around the world. Their research uncovers consistent patterns where the central tendencies (i.e., means, medians) of measured variables show Black and Asian samples at opposite ends of the continuum and Caucasians positioned in the middle (Lynn, 2019; Rushton, 1995, 1998; Rushton & Jensen, 2005). Such research also shows that variation within racial groups is wider than average differences across groups.

According to these psychologists, these data sets best explain disproportionalities in social, economic, educational, and physical outcomes that are strongly influenced by these variables, and this will be most noticeable at the extremes of variable distributions – a finding which is largely orthogonal to the political conditions of the countries containing these groups (Sowell, 1994, 1996, 1998).

Their defense of race research is that such investigations reflect one among many avenues for answering the basic question of why human beings are different. They would argue that they follow high standards of scientific integrity and refuse to be intimidated by outside political pressures to alter findings in socially acceptable ways (Gottfredson, 2005; Meisenberg, 2019). They would argue that such research provides the simplest and most parsimonious explanation that explains longstanding patterns of subgroup differences in a wide variety of societal outcomes. Defenders of race differences research argue that such lines of inquiry are crucial for honest science, and that the suppression or outright banning of such research does more harm (to those presumed to be protected from such research) than good (Carl, 2018).

On the other side are those who argue that such research is motivated by racial animus (see Yakushko, Chap. 24, this text) – or at the very least, the effects of consuming such research will feed racial animus. As a result, scholars who conduct this kind of research should be publicly exposed as 'scientific racists' – and that their research deserves banishment from the marketplace of scholarly ideas (Newitz, 2014; Saini, 2019). In this politicized environment, any outlet that publishes research from 'tainted' (or "canceled") scholars, any scientist that is perceived as collaborating too closely with such scholars (or whose research relies too heavily on their

work), or any individual who even publicly agrees with conclusions that stem from such research – is also targeted for persecution (Asthana & Salter, 2006).

Somewhat midway between these two camps are scholars who may agree that race research is legitimate. However, due to the highly volatile climate in which such research is conducted, it needs to meet much higher evidentiary peer review standards for public dissemination (see comments from Gottfredson, 2007).

### **The Politicization of Conducting Research in Ethnocultural Communities**

Multicultural psychology calls for more research to be conducted within nonwhite communities (Brady et al., 2019; Schulson, 2020), in order to counter the perceived historical neglect of research projects in these communities. However, psychologists conducting multi-cultural research have argued that in order for research to be conducted properly (in their view), certain conditions must be met.

Multicultural psychology argues that early research with ethnocultural communities was plagued by overtly racist and unethical practices (see review by Trimble et al. 2014). These include, but were not limited to, writing up research results that portray any aspect of the community in terms that could be construed as insulting, insensitive, or offensive; engaging in practices that either intentionally or unintentionally exposed communities to life-threatening or physically harmful conditions; failure to honor promised confidentiality; failure to inform research participants of the goals of research studies; publishing information that communities preferred to be kept private; and failure to collaborate with community leaders in formulating and providing recommendations in final research reports (see Native American Center for Excellence, n.d.).

Trimble et al. (2014) argue that these problems arise from wrong assumptions that (primarily White) researchers hold about minority communities. Multicultural psychology points to the works of Martin-Baró (see Liberation Psychology, Table 8.2), who argues for an ‘epistemological shift’ from traditional Western assumptions to a view of psychology as a ‘liberatory practice’ that seeks to change ‘oppressive realities’ for marginalized ethnocultural communities (p. 66). In order to counteract these perceived abuses, the following corrections are proffered (Trimble et al., 2014):

*Researchers should be prepared to collaborate with communities, share results that have practical value, and accept the conditions imposed by the community regarding access to information and respondents. (p. 60)*

### ***The Politicization of Multiculturalism in Applied Psychology***

Political influences on multiculturalism in applied psychology (as specifically manifested in school, counseling, and clinical psychology) ultimately have their roots in Marxist theory and its offshoots (Woods, 2018). The influential roots of Marxism on applied multicultural psychology are identified and traced in Table 8.2.

**Table 8.2** The Marxist Roots of Politicized Multiculturalism in Applied Psychology

<b>Last Half of Nineteenth Century</b>
<p><b>Karl Marx:</b> Karl Marx (1818–1883) was a German philosopher, sociologist, historian, and economist. His best-known publications are the 1848 pamphlet <i>The Communist Manifesto</i> and the three-volume work <i>Das Kapital</i>. Marx’s economic/political writings became collectively known as <i>Marxism</i> – which holds that human societies develop through class-based conflicts between the ruling classes (known as the bourgeoisie) that control the means of production, versus the working classes (known as the proletariat) that enable these means by selling their labor in return for wages. The task of the proletariat is to become conscious of their oppression and work to overthrow their oppressors toward the establishment of a classless, communist society. Along with Max Weber and Emil Durkheim, Karl Marx is widely considered to be among the most influential figures in modern social science</p>
<p>In a book chapter on facilitating cultural competence in mental health settings, Liu et al. (2006) praised the Marxist criticism of the proposition that inequality of outcomes was natural – considered by Marx as a ‘false consciousness’ that needs to be overcome by oppressed peoples so that true equality could be achieved (p. 67)</p>
<p><b>Max Horkheimer:</b> Max Horkheimer (1894–1972) was a German-American philosopher and social theorist who is most famous for his work in ‘critical theory’ as a member of the Frankfurt School of social research. His book <i>Dialectic of Enlightenment</i> (Horkheimer &amp; Adorno, 2002) contains, in didactic form, many of the elements of ‘critical theory’ (see below). In this book, Horkheimer argues that the content of popular mass culture is an effective means by which authoritarian control is maintained over the broad mass of Westerners.</p>
<p><b>Herbert Marcuse:</b> Herbert Marcuse (1898–1979) was a philosopher, social theorist, educator, and author whose doctrines undergirded the radical social theory of the ‘New Left’ of the 1960s counterculture. Marcuse taught, advised, and influenced Angela Davis (1960s–70s American activist; Davis, 1974; Angela Davis on Protest, 1968, and Her Old Teacher, Herbert Marcuse &lt; Literary Hub (lithub.com)). Marcuse originated the concept of ‘repressive tolerance’, defined as the withdrawal of toleration of speech and assembly from groups and movements that are supporters of what would be considered ‘right wing’ causes (Wolff, 1965). Here, Marcuse believed that freedom of speech and expression should be regulated in order to suppress intolerant conservative views in order to protect and promote the views of marginalized minority groups – thereby usuring in a more fair and equitable society. This is widely considered to represent the origin of ‘political correctness’ (Breshears, 2020)</p>
<p><b>Antonio Gramsci:</b> Antonio Gramsci (1891–1937) was an Italian Marxist philosopher and linguist who is most identified with the movement called ‘cultural Marxism’ (Gramsci, 2011). He originated the theory of <i>cultural hegemony</i> (hegemony means ‘domination’), which is the domination by one group over other groups in society. According to this theory, the dominant ruling class oppresses other groups by making their values the common-sense and accepted norms of the culture</p>

(continued)

**Table 8.2** (continued)

<b>First Half of Twentieth Century</b>
<p><b>Franz Fanon:</b> Franz Fanon (1925–1961) was a French West Indian psychiatrist and political philosopher whose works have become influential in the fields of post-colonial studies, critical theory, and Marxism. Fanon wrote extensively on race and the psychopathology of colonization and the cultural consequences of decolonization (Bulhan, 1985; Gordon, 1995). Fanon’s most famous works include <i>The Wretched of the Earth</i> (Fanon, 1952, 1967) and <i>Black Skin, White Masks</i> (Fanon, 1967, 2004). These works discuss the implicit tension Blacks face in being themselves (with their fellow Blacks) versus how they must speak and behave in the presence of Whites. These and other experiences with racism causes emotional trauma within Blacks. Fanon’s works are viewed as an inspiration for liberation movements in a variety of countries and the United States, including Black Lives Matter. Fanon’s works are also influential in various liberation psychology and racial trauma movements in multicultural psychology (e.g., Hartmann et al., 2019)</p>
<p><b>Paulo Freire:</b> Paulo Freire (1921–1997) was a Brazilian philosopher and educator who was a leading advocate of critical pedagogy. He is best known for his book <i>Pedagogy of the Oppressed</i> (Freire, 1971), which is widely considered to be a foundational text of the critical pedagogy movement (and central to numerous teacher training programs in the United States; Stern, 2009). The book applies the oppressor/oppressed distinction to education. Freire argued that education is inextricably linked with politics, where teaching and learning are implicitly political acts (particularly Marxist principles). In these processes, oppressors must rethink their way of life and recognize their role in the oppression of others, and the oppressed must take an active role in cultivating a ‘critical consciousness’, regaining their humanity and liberation, and overcoming their oppression.</p>
<p><b>Frankfurt School:</b> Institut für Sozialforschung (Institute for Social Research) was established in Frankfurt Germany in 1923 as the first Marxist-oriented research center affiliated with a major German university. Most members of the institute were Jews and Marxist radicals who fled Germany after Hitler’s rise to power. The work of the institute was to develop an interdisciplinary social theory (i.e., critical theory) that could serve as an instrument of social transformation. This work synthesized philosophy, sociology, psychology, cultural studies, and political economy.</p>
<p>The Institute referred to its work as “critical theory of society”, which is a euphemism for a social theory rooted in Hegelian-Marxian dialectics, historical materialism, and a critique of political economy. Horkheimer became director of the institute in 1930, and gathered around him theorists Erich Fromm, Franz Neuman, Leo Lowenthal, Herbert Marcuse, and T.W. Adorno</p>
<p>The majority of scholars of the ‘Frankfurt school’ emigrated to the United States, where the institute for social research became affiliated with Columbia University from 1931–1949, after which it returned to Frankfurt, Germany</p>
<p><b>Critical Theory:</b> ‘Critical Theory’ has both a narrow and a broad meaning within the disciplines of philosophy and the social sciences (Bohman, 2005). In its narrow sense, critical theory is associated with the ‘Frankfurt school’ of German philosophers whose writings followed the Western European Marxist tradition. According to these philosophers, a theory is ‘critical’ to the extent that it seeks human ‘emancipation from slavery’, acts as a ‘liberating influence’, and works ‘to create a world which satisfies the needs and powers’ of human beings (Horkheimer, 1972/1992). In the broad sense, critical theory refers to theories that undergird social movements whose goal is to explain and transform all of the circumstances perceived to oppress, dominate, or enslave human beings (e.g., critical race theory, critical gender theory, critical queer theory, critical disability theory). Critical theory is a social philosophy which argues that social problems are influenced and created more by societal structures and cultural assumptions than by individual and/or psychological factors (Crenshaw et al., 1995)</p>

(continued)

Table 8.2 (continued)

<b>Last Half of Twentieth Century</b>
<p><b>Liberation Psychology (LP):</b> LP (Comas-Días &amp; Rivera, 2020) is generally credited as being founded by Ignacio Martín-Baró, a Jesuit priest born in Spain in 1942, and began as a movement in Latin America in the 1980s (Tate et al., 2013). After obtaining his doctoral degree in social psychology, Martín-Baró returned to El Salvador and immersed himself in a poor community experiencing major political upheaval. After experiencing firsthand the poverty, suffering, marginalization, human rights violations, and political persecution of this and other local communities – Martín-Baró was lead to advocate for psychologists moving away from an exclusive focus on problems of the individual psyche toward the study of individual’s experiences within the context of their environmental conditions (Domínguez et al., 2020). LP emerges as a reaction against traditional approaches to psychology that are perceived as failing to benefit impoverished and marginalized communities. The goal of LP is to practice and apply ‘critical consciousness’ to understand the unique struggles and perspectives of politically oppressed communities. According to LP, this will liberate individuals and communities from ‘hegemonic systems’ that oppress them (Martín-Baró, 1991)</p>
<p><b>Critical Race Theory (CRT):</b> CRT is an outgrowth of the ‘critical legal studies’ movement which originated in the mid-1970s in the writings of legal scholars Derrick Bell, Alan Freeman, Kimberle Crenshaw, Richard Delgado, Cheryl Harris, Charles Lawrence III, Mari Matsuda, and Patricia Williams (Ansell, 2008). CRT is a reworking of critical legal studies that gained prominence starting in the 1980s, but with a central focus on race (Cole, 2007). CRT is unified by two common themes: (1) white supremacy exists, and maintains privilege and power through culture, social institutions, politics, and law, and (2) racial liberation, increased power for oppressed groups, and the overthrow of ‘racist’ institutions, is possible</p> <p>In an article advocating for the integration of social justice ideology in the training of counseling psychologists and researchers, DeBlaere et al. (2019) argue that critical race theory should guide counseling psychology practice. Specifically, CRT is thought to be needed in order to assist counseling psychologists to identify ‘unconscious behaviors that uphold and recreate systems of oppression’ and ‘complicity in failing to dismantle oppressive systems’ (p. 946)</p>
<p><b>‘Whiteness Theory’ (WT):</b> Applied multicultural psychology is built on a coherent system of axioms rooted in ‘whiteness theory’ (hereafter abbreviated as WT; Hartmann et al., 2009) – which itself is an outgrowth of critical theory, generally, and critical race theory, specifically. The emotional foundation for WT, and the related theories, practices, and scholarship within applied psychology that flows from it, is built philosophically on an assertion attributed to novelist Richard Wright (1908-1960). As quoted in Lipsitz (1998), in response to a question about American race relations shortly after World War II, Wright responded “There isn’t any Negro problem, there is only a white problem”. Counseling psychologist Derald Wing Sue (2006) describes ‘Whiteness’ as follows:</p> <p><i>In our society, Whiteness is a default standard; the background of the figure-ground analogy from which all other groups of color are compared, contrasted, and made visible ... From this color standard, racial/ethnic minorities are evaluated, judged, and often found to be lacking, inferior, deviant, or abnormal. Because Whiteness is considered to be normative and ideal, it automatically confers dominance on fair-skinned people in our society</i></p>

(continued)

**Table 8.2** (continued)

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According to WT, whites are characterized as unwilling or unable to see themselves as complicit or implicated in the genesis or perpetuation of racial problems. This ‘blindness’ is based on the proposition that White Americans – because they live in a majority white country – have little to no racial awareness of, or consciousness about themselves as whites (McIntosh, 1989). Stated as an empirically testable proposition, whites attach less importance to their racial identity and culture compared to members of nonwhite minority groups. Second, White Americans are viewed by WT as unaware and uninformed of the structural advantages that are associated with, and accompany their racial status as being the dominant group in a predominantly white society (Hartmann et al., 2009). Here, whites’ structural advantages are intimately linked with the disadvantages of nonwhites (due to racism, discrimination, and prejudice; D’Andrea & Daniels, 2001). Stated succinctly, whites are unaware of their ‘white privilege’ (McIntosh, 1989). WT operationalizes this proposition as Whites being less likely to accept ‘structural’ or race-based explanations for racial inequalities and more likely to attribute explanations for racial inequality as residing in non-racial factors or factors that reside within individuals (Hartmann et al., 2009). Third, whites’ adherence and support of meritocratic (i.e., ‘persons should be evaluated for opportunities based on their individual merits, not skin color’) and colorblind (i.e., “people should be treated equally as individuals, rather than treated differently as a function of their skin color”) ideologies allows them to be blind to their own racism and camouflage self-awareness of their white privilege (Hartmann et al., 2009).

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Although overt signs of racism (e.g., cross burnings, lynchings, openly verbalized racial slurs, Jim Crow segregation) have receded to near extinction from American life, WT rests on the axiom that racism is nevertheless ‘alive and well’ and pervasive – and operates in more subtle, invisible, and implicit ways through a variety of venues in the form of ‘personally mediated racism’ (Baruth & Manning, 2016), ‘silent racism’ (Trepagnier, 2010), ‘color-blind racism’ (Bonilla-Silva, 2010), ‘aversive racism’ (Gaertner & Dovidio, 1986), ‘scientific racism’ (Byrd & Hughey, 2015), ‘academic racism’ (Chu, 2013), ‘symbolic racism’ (Sears & Henry, 2003), ‘modern racism’ (McConahay, 1986), ‘reasonable racism’ (Armour, 2000), ‘metaracism’ (Trepagnier, 2010), ‘cultural racism’ (Clauss-Ehlers, 2006), ‘institutional racism’ (Carmichael & Hamilton, 1967), and ‘environmental racism’ (Zimring, 2016). According to counseling psychologist Derald Wing Sue, whiteness allows individuals to harm non-Whites while at the same time maintaining their denial of such harm:

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*... Whiteness, White supremacy, and White privilege are three interlocking forces that disguise racism so it may allow White people to oppress and harm persons of color while maintaining their individual and collective advantage and innocence. (p. 15)*

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Thus, the issue for multiculturalism advocacy in applied psychology is not *if* racism exists, but *how* it exists in the thinking, attitudes, and behavior of white counselors and therapists. The mission of trainers of pre-service psychologists in applied psychology and education training programs is to educate and confront whites with the reality of their ‘white worldviews’ and unconscious racism (e.g., see Benson & Fiarman, 2019; Ponterotto & Austin, 2005; Pope-Davis et al., 2001) so that they (1) will not harm minority clients, and (2) help minority clients overcome the pernicious effects of racism in their lives.

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**Table 8.2** (continued)

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The concept of ‘White Fragility’ was popularized by Robin DiAngelo’s (2018) book *White Fragility: Why it’s so hard for White people to talk about racism*. WF is defined as an almost predictable range of defensive responses that Whites display in response to being confronted with racial issues, being challenged about their own racial worldview, being made aware of their own ‘whiteness’, or being accused of unconscious racism against persons of color. Such defensive reactions include, but are not limited to, defending oneself as free of racism, anger, sullen silence, accusing others of ‘playing the race card’, attempts to avoid certain conversations, physically leaving heated exchanges, and/or crying. In DiAngelo’s view, such displays are mistakenly characterized as displays of weakness or vulnerability. In her view, however, they function as ‘weapons’ that serve to protect the ego, defend a righteous self-image, and ultimately perpetuate their position at the top of a racial hierarchy that is unearned (DiAngelo, 2018). In a chapter authored with Özlem Sensoy, DiAngelo states (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2017):

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*Our analysis of social justice is based on a school of thought known as Critical Theory. Critical Theory refers to a body of scholarship that examines how society works, and is a tradition that emerged in the early part of the twentieth century from a group of scholars at the Institute for Social Research in Frankfurt, Germany (because of this, the body of scholarship is sometimes also called ‘the Frankfurt School’) ... Their scholarship is important because it is part of a body of knowledge that builds on other social scientists’ work: ... Karl Marx’s analyses of capitalism and social stratification, and Max Weber’s analyses of capitalism and ideology. (pp. 25–26)*

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**Cultural Marxism:** Cultural Marxism is a term used to refer to a school of thought that is an offshoot of ‘classical Marxism’. Whereas Karl Marx emphasized the role of economic factors in elucidating a dynamic of oppressor vs. oppressor groups, Cultural Marxism emphasizes the role of cultural factors (operationalized as race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation) in the oppression of people groups. Cultural Marxism was heavily influenced by the work of Antonio Gramsci, who argued that culture must be understood as a key context out of which political and social struggles operate (Hall, 1986). Cultural Marxism is influential in the genesis in the 1960s of the ‘cultural studies’ movement starting in the University of Birmingham, England (Turner, 2002), which subsequently spread to American universities within the fields of communication studies, education, sociology, and literature

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**The New Left:** *The New Left* is the name given (see Geary, 2009) to a wave of left-wing radicalism that attracted many young people and college students in the United States and Europe in the late 1960s. This movement was distinguished from *The Old Left* – referring to an earlier ideology of the 1930s which concentrated on unionization issues and the rights of workers during the era of the Great Depression in the United States. The philosopher Herbert Marcuse was celebrated in the popular media of the time as the ‘father of the New Left’ (Kellner, n.d.). The Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), and the Free Speech and anti-Vietnam war movements comprised the most vocal elements of the New Left. Disagreements between predominantly Jewish participation (particularly in southern civil rights and pro-Israel activism) and the rising ‘Black Power’ movement eventually splintered the New Left (McMillian & Buhle, 2003)

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**Table 8.2** (continued)

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**Standpoint Theory (ST):** ST (sometimes called ‘standpoint epistemology’) can be traced to the writings of Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770–1831), a German philosopher who studied the different ‘standpoints’ or ‘points of view’ of slaves versus their masters (Harding & Wood, 2019; Wood, 2008). ST holds that the validity of knowledge (epistemology) is rooted in an individual’s particular perspective. ST assumes that persons who occupy the same racial, gender, sexual orientation, or disability status have the same experiences of ‘dominance’ and ‘oppression’ and will interpret them in the same ways (Pluckrose & Lindsay, 2020). Here, one’s relative position within the sociopolitical power dynamic of a society necessarily dictates what one can and cannot truly know. It therefore follows that the point-of-view of oppressed persons represents a more authoritative, ‘authentic’, and fuller picture of reality. Here, the privileged position of the oppressor group blinds them to the realities of the oppressed group, while the lower position of the oppressed group gives them ‘double insight’ – meaning they have full knowledge of the world of the oppressors as well as the world of the oppressed

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In applied counseling psychology, non-White psychologists write books, book chapters, and journal articles that are taken as authoritative on the racial identity development and worldview of Whites (Helms, 1990, 2020; Helms & Cook, 1999), while at the same time claiming that Whites cannot possibly know or understand the worldviews of non-Whites. In order for Whites to obtain accurate and valid knowledge of non-Whites, they must uncritically and unilaterally accept the validity of the meaning attached to their ‘stories’ and experiences (Cokely, 2006). When Whites object to what they perceive to be inaccurate portrayals of their attitudes toward non-Whites, they are denigrated as being ‘blind’ to their inherent White privilege and hidden racism

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**Intersectionality:** Kimberly Crenshaw (born 1959) is an American lawyer, civil rights advocate, and scholar of critical race theory who developed the theory of ‘intersectionality’ in a 1989 paper written for the University of Chicago Legal Forum (Crenshaw, 1989). In its most popular usage, ‘intersectionality’ can be defined as “the interconnected nature of social categorizations such as race, class, and gender as they apply to a given individual or group, regarded as creating overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage” (Rogers, 2021, p. 1)

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#### **First Half of Twenty-first Century**

**Ethnic Gnosticism:** The term ‘gnosticism’ is translated from an ancient Greek word meaning ‘having knowledge’. Gnosticism refers to a collection of religious ideas and systems which originated in the late first century among Jewish and early Christian sects (Magris, 2005). The essence of Gnosticism within this context stresses the idea that the most effective route to salvation is not through knowledge of sacred texts, but in knowing divinity through special, mystical, and esoteric insight (knowledge) obtained by direct personal experience or perception. ‘*Ethnic Gnosticism*’ is a term coined by Baucham (2021) to refer to the belief that, due to a person’s direct experiences associated with their race/ethnicity, they have an unassailable authority to be able to accurately determine when someone or something is/is not ‘racist’. In the psychology arena, whenever a White scholar criticizes a concept that is dear to multicultural psychology (e.g., ‘microaggressions’), ethnic gnostics will dismiss such criticisms on the grounds that non-Whites have unassailable knowledge that Whites cannot possibly understand or empathize with (Sue et al., 2008; Williams, 2020a, b)

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**Table 8.2** (continued)**Applied Psychology/Social Justice Connection**

**Counseling Psychology.** Following numerous writings that advocate training in social justice for counseling psychologists (e.g., Toporek et al., 2006), Ratts (2009) argues that social justice be considered a ‘fifth force’ (following ‘first force’ psychodynamic perspective; ‘second force’ cognitive behavioral perspective; ‘third force’ existential-humanistic perspective; ‘fourth force’ multicultural perspective) paradigm in counseling psychology (see also Ratts & Pedersen, 2014)

In a 2020 Society of Counseling Psychology (Div. 17, American Psychological Association) presidential address, Singh (2020) reinforces the central themes of Classical Marxism, Cultural Marxism, Critical Race Theory, Ethnic Gnosticism, Whiteness Theory, Standpoint Theory, and Liberation Psychology in the following 10 points:

## 1. Decolonize and Re-Indigenize Counseling Psychology

*“Without critical theories such as critical race theory, firmly as the ground for counseling psychology, we are left with a history that has been largely written by white men – and then later white women” (p. 1114)*

*“... a key tenet of liberation psychology as articulated by Martín-Baró ... is ‘recovering historical memory.’ This tenet asks us to go deeper and to note the larger perspective of the oppressed in this history” (p. 1114)*

## 2. Center Black Liberation in Everything We Do in Counseling Psychology

*“Black people in our profession will continue to experience harm in the form of micro and macro-abuses” (p. 1115)*

*“Our job in building a counseling psychology of liberation is to believe the lived experiences of Black counseling psychologists, and to follow their leadership ... with educating us about our internalized whiteness” (p. 1116)*

## 3. Name, Interrogate, and Unlearn Internalized Whiteness in Counseling Psychology

*“In order to center Black liberation, we all have the job of breaking with white solidarity in counseling psychology. This means bringing our decolonization work into every counseling psychology syllabi, every counseling psychology practice room, and every counseling psychology research space” (p. 1116)*

*“... [W]hite counseling psychologists will resist with everything in them ... because in counseling psychology we have not adopted the practices ... noted in white racial identity development [and] ... haven’t applied these schemas to their everyday work in counseling psychology” (p. 1117)*

## 4. Uplift the Liberation of Black and Brown Trans Women and Nonbinary Communities in Counseling Psychology

*“[Black and Brown trans women] would ask me about what their experiences would be like in the counseling psychology program, and how well-trained the faculty, supervisors, and incoming students were to be affirming and liberatory toward trans and nonbinary people. I had to tell them ... our programs are not safe. Our training is not sufficient. You will experience harm” (p. 1119)*

## 5. Recognize That Patriarchy is Harmful and Has Lasting Effects

*“... [I]t is not just the white patriarchy we have internalized, it is also the BIPOC patriarchy that BIPOC matriarchs have to resist every day ... Building a counseling psychology of liberation means we look to womanism, feminism, and specifically Black feminist scholars and leaders who have been doing this work for years to guide us” (p. 1120).*

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**Table 8.2** (continued)

<p>6. Know Adulthood Is the Root of All Oppression, Including Within Counseling Psychology</p> <p><i>“Adulthood is the valuing of adult perspectives over all others – the power that adults have over young people ... we have not examined more deeply how patriarchy, anti-Black racism, racism in general, anti-trans, ableism, classism, and other oppressions have driven inequities ... within counseling psychology ... [A]dulthood creates the conditions where we are taught to accept all of the supremacies of dominance, from internalized whiteness, ableism, classism, fat-prejudice, and xenophobia to sexism, heterosexism and many more” (p. 1121)</i></p>
<p>7. Learn Our Migrant Stories as Counseling Psychologists to Heal From Historical Trauma</p> <p><i>“... [W]e learn that taking action on DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals), the injustices ICE (Immigrations and Customs Enforcement) perpetuates, and more xenophobic transgressions ... become an everyday experience of being a counseling psychologist, where we lean into the complexity involved in resisting and seeking to dismantle xenophobia and the enforcement of borders that are often on stolen, unceded indigenous land” (p. 1123)</i></p>
<p>8. Find Ways to Live in Our Bodies More as Counseling Psychologists</p> <p><i>“We ask each other each time (and we take the time we need), countering white supremacy notions of ‘there isn’t enough time to check in which our bodies,’ to name what our bodies are experiencing as we work to center Black liberation, uplift queer and trans experiences, examine our internalized ableism and classism, and more.” (p. 1123)</i></p>
<p>9. Plan for and Fund Generational Change to Create a Nexus of Liberation Leaders in Counseling Psychology</p> <p><i>“Because we haven’t yet dismantled white-body supremacy and other oppressive structures ... BIPOC, queer and trans people, people living with disabilities, and other folks on the margins will continue to experience oppression within our profession at every level” (p. 1124)</i></p> <p><i>When we create a nexus of liberation leaders across many lived identities and experiences of oppression, we begin to more meaningfully identify the exact work that each generation of counseling psychology has in the dismantling of all oppression to create a world where all people can experience more and more liberation” (p. 1124)</i></p>
<p>10. Know That Another World of Liberation is Possible and Then Build This World Within Counseling Psychology</p> <p><i>“... [I]n the work of building a counseling psychology of liberation, we actively develop accountability networks that help us remember we have a long way to go in unlearning our own oppression and participation in oppressive systems, which we have internalized ...” (p. 1125)</i></p> <p><i>“We don’t have to dismantle everything, but we do need to dismantle many things ... Injustice does not want to be questioned ... We can be in a liberation movement that will not be stopped. And as we do that liberation work, we can be brought into the fullness of our own humanity.” (p. 1126)</i></p>

Scholars of multicultural applied psychology may or may not be aware of the Marxist influences of their writings (Laine-Frigren, 2020). Some may strongly object to this observation, while others may be explicit in acknowledging Marxist influences (Pavón-Cuéllar, 2017). Regardless, Marxist-inspired principles are delineated explicitly in clinical writing dealing with race, as filtered through principles of ‘cultural Marxism’ (Elder, 2017; Pluckrose & Lindsay, 2020) and ‘race Marxism’ (Lindsay, 2022). For example, in a chapter within the textbook *Handbook of Multicultural Counseling Competencies* (Cornish et al., 2010) entitled *Becoming a Racially Competent Therapist* (Sanchez & Davis, 2010), the authors make numerous pronouncements about the importance of race in all forms of therapist/client relationships, in which it is argued that whites are oppressors and non-Whites are the oppressed. From this foundation, critics discern five specific ways in which Marxist and Cultural Marxist philosophy politicizes current thinking in applied psychology:

1. ***Race and Racial Differences are Viewed as ‘Primordial’.*** Weinrach and Thomas (2002) published a trenchant critique of the multicultural counseling competencies created by the Association for Multicultural Counseling and Development. Among the many conceptual problems, in their view, was the competencies’ characterization of race as ‘primordial’. This term is derived from the Latin words *primus* (meaning ‘first’) and *ordiri* (meaning ‘to begin’). Primordial means the state or quality of being ‘first’, ‘earliest’, ‘basic’, or ‘fundamental’. In the ‘racial competency’ literature for applied psychologists, the client’s racial group membership is portrayed as being the fundamental (or primordial) cause for explaining the root of client problems and conflicts with the broader society, and the mental health challenges that flow from these problems (e.g., Carter, 2005).

*Essentialism* is a philosophical term which holds that objects have a set of attributes that are necessary to their identity (Cartwright, 1968). *Race essentialism*, by extension, holds that there exists a ‘core’ quality of racial/ethnic groups that is inherent, eternal, and unalterable (Jarach, 2004). Many applied psychologists reflexively reject theories of *racial essentialism* (Bartlett & Harris, 1998; Morning, 2011) rooted in biological or genetic explanations as promoted by early nineteenth and twentieth century psychologists and anthropologists (e.g., see Grant, 1916; Winston, 2020). Ironically, however, racial essentialist writing is considered perfectly acceptable within contemporary applied psychology, as long as differences are attributed to psychological factors associated with ethnic and racial identity (Helms, 2020; Sullivan & Esmail, 2012; Umana-Taylor, 2011).

Whether its source originates from a place of racial/ethnic animus, or from a place of racial/ethnic advocacy, its message is the same: Simply knowing a person’s race/ethnicity is presumed to provide significant information about the person.

2. ***The Totality of An Individual’s Personal Identity is Viewed as Inextricably Tied to Their Racial Group Membership.*** Serious research in the psychological construct of personal identity involves numerous components in addition to one’s race or ethnicity. Vignoles et al. (2011) assert that in its essence, identity involves

persons' explicit or implicit responses to the question: "Who Are You?" (p. 2). The superficial simplicity of this question masks its inherent complexity, as the question can be understood as asking 'who one thinks one is' either individually or collectively as a group, or can be understood as asking 'who you act as being' within the context of interpersonal or intergroup interactions. The authors assert that merely having a skin color does not automatically give a person a 'one size fits all' identity, as the person must infuse his/her identity with their own personal and social meaning (which differs from person to person). Said differently, persons construct their identity from a variety of social self-perceptions (e.g., a person can think of himself simultaneously as a father, son, brother, grandparent, Republican, auto worker, soccer player, Vietnam veteran, senior citizen, musician, Muslim, graduate of Princeton, etc.).

The totality of a person's identity involves considerably more components than simply their racial or ethnic group membership (Leary & Tangney, 2012). Since this is the only component emphasized by racial identity researchers (which is not appropriately tempered by any discussion of the many additional variables that influence personal identity), such a view profoundly distorts how clients are characterized by multicultural psychology. Here, consumers of racial identity research are encouraged to see complex individuals not as multidimensional flesh-and-blood human beings with flawed character traits, unique personalities, and varied experiences (e.g., see Stuart, 2004) – but as little more than stock representatives of their racial/ethnic groups.

3. ***The Cornerstone of Racial/Ethnic Group Identity is 'Victimhood'***. The general psychology audience, and whites in particular, are encouraged by multicultural psychology to prioritize *victimhood* as the central feature of minority identity (Alvarez et al., 2016; Comas-Días et al., 2019; Frisby, 2013; McWhorter, 2000). Social justice ideology within counseling psychology explicitly delineates which groups are 'oppressors' and which groups are 'oppressed'. According to Ratts and Pedersen (2014), oppressor groups consist of whites, gender-conforming cis-gendered men and women, heterosexuals, the upper class, adults, the able-bodied, and Christians. Oppressed groups consist of people of color, transgender persons, gay males and lesbians, poor and working-class individuals, youth, persons with mental and physical disabilities, Jews, Muslims, Buddhists, and Mormons (pp. 42–43). In multicultural psychology, racism is the central driving force – as well as the central villain – in a variety of victimhood narratives that serve as the sine qua non of multicultural applied psychology (see Lowe et al., 2012; Pope, n.d.).

Since open and explicit forms of racism are difficult to identify in contemporary life, the overt racism of early nineteenth and twentieth century psychologists serves as 'proof texts' for charging racism in any contemporary research that draws from this early work (Gould, 1996; Guthrie, 2004; Valencia & Suzuki, 2001). Whenever a contemporary news item involving racial conflict receives national attention, it is prominently highlighted by psychology organizations as providing evidence that validates the perception that racism is an ongoing and significant problem in society (American Psychiatric Association, 2020;

American Psychological Association, 2020, 2021; Jones, 2013). Any disparities in psychological or psychiatric services between racial/ethnic groups are framed as ‘minorities lacking access’ to services due to ‘barriers to care’ (presumed to be caused by racism and/or discrimination; Centers for Disease Control, 2021; Lee, 2020; O’Keefe et al., 2021). Multicultural counseling textbooks continually marinate their readers in the idea that whites are guilty of continually inflicting overt discrimination (Russell, 2021) as well as subtler ‘microaggressions’ (Sue, 2010; Sue & Spanierman, 2020) on non-Whites – which in turn contributes to their ongoing oppression (Russell, 2021; Styx, 2021), marginalized status (Jagoo, 2021), mental and physical health-related stress (Muhlheim, 2021; Seide, 2021), and ‘racial trauma’ (see American Psychologist, Vol. 74, No.1; White, 2021).

Multicultural psychology has coined the term ‘racial trauma’ and has defined it as ‘a form of race-based stress’ in reaction to ‘dangerous events and real or perceived experiences of racial discrimination’ (Comas-Díaz et al., 2019, p. 1). According to these authors, exposure to racial microaggressions, vicarious trauma (i.e., observing other racial minorities being discriminated against), and the ‘invisibility of racial trauma’s historical roots’ are wounds that ‘occur ... on a continuing basis’ (p. 2) and can be ‘life threatening’ (p. 1). Gone et al. (2019) argue that one form of racial trauma experienced by indigenous people is ‘inter-generationally transmitted in ways that compromise descendent well-being’ (p. 20). In other words, no matter how far back in history that an original trauma has occurred, any person claiming membership in the traumatized group (even if s/he did not experience firsthand the trauma) shares in its historical victimhood.

In order for victimhood narratives to have their intended effects, past injustices to minority groups must be kept ‘front and center’ in the consciousness of pre- and in-service psychologists. Thus, Japanese-Americans are to be viewed as victims due to their forced internment in the 1940s due to Japan’s aggression at Pearl Harbor (Nagata et al., 2019). Latinx American groups are to be viewed as perpetual victims due to the government’s strict enforcement of policies intended to crack down on illegal immigration (Chavez-Dueñas et al., 2019). Current American Indians and Alaskan Natives suffer disproportionately higher rates of substance abuse, presumably due to “the devastating effects of [past] colonization” (Skewes & Blume, 2019, p. 89). According to Sue et al. (2019b), people of color endure an almost ‘constant onslaught’ of macro- and microaggressions that inflicts ‘immense harm’ (Sue et al., 2019b).

4. ***Elevating the Importance of Narratives.*** Much like a college football coach has to motivate his team in the halftime locker room, students in applied multicultural psychology training – as gleaned from recent textbooks – are inspired by the personal narratives of racial/ethnic minority leaders in the field (see Casas et al., 2016, Part II, pp. 51–174) and racial/ethnic minority clients (Sue et al., 2014).

Narratives are inspiring stories that weave together all of the themes promoted by multicultural psychology organizations, which give meaning to the field and minority psychologists’ role within it. Such stories contain first-person

recollections of growing up in difficult circumstances, having to navigate white racism, marginalization, and/or low expectations from broader society, being mentored and/or motivated by inspirational minority figures, then reaching pinnacles in academia or practice which would then allow them to serve and inspire their ethnic/racial communities (Romero & Chan, 2005).

5. ***The Received Wisdom that Explains Subgroup Differences in Undesirable Outcomes.*** The fact that, on average, certain racial/ethnic subgroups within America do not experience the same rates of cognitive test performance, school discipline rates, secondary and postsecondary academic achievements, social/occupational/economic accomplishments, or rates of receiving mental or physical health services are not matters under serious dispute (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2021; Fan et al., 2017; Fitts et al., 2019; Gopalan, 2019; Keyes et al., 2012; Kim et al., 2017; Losen, 2011; National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2017; Noël, 2018; Rushton & Jensen, 2005). However, what is under intense debate are the *reasons* that are advanced for explaining the causes of these discrepancies/disproportionalities (Herbert et al., 2008).

Many scholars point to the effects of mediating, moderating, and other factors correlated with race that work to influence disproportionalities in outcomes – yet these may have no significant correlation with differences in the quality of the relationship between clients and caregivers (Gottfredson, 2004; Klick & Satel, 2006). Nevertheless, influential articles, research reports, books, and book chapters in multicultural psychology go to great lengths to link disproportionalities to racism and discrimination in society, generally, and in the helping professions, specifically (Brondolo et al., 2009; Chadha et al., 2020; Churchwell et al., 2020; Vargas et al., 2020).

Disproportionality statistics are frequently cited to justify the need for cultural competency training in applied psychology programs (US Department of Health and Human Services, 2001; Williams et al., 2019) – where it is assumed, either implicitly or explicitly, that increased cultural competency training will contribute significantly to more equitable outcomes (Advocacy in Action, 2018; Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, 2014; Campos, 2020).

### ***Politics Within Professional Psychology Organizations***

Professional psychology organizations are often confronted with race/ethnicity-related conflicts or grievances that originate from both internal or external sources. In order to keep peace (as a defensive maneuver) or promote its values (as a proactive maneuver), psychology organizations respond to these conflicts and grievances in predictable ways. The select chronology of political issues involving race/ethnicity – with a particular focus on APA – are listed in Table 8.3.

**Table 8.3** Political Milestones in the American Psychological Association (APA) Since the Late 1960s

1968	At a meeting of the American Psychological Association (APA) in San Francisco, the Association of Black Psychologists presented a document (entitled ' <i>A Petition of Concerns</i> ') which demanded, among other things, that a moratorium be declared concerning the administration of intelligence tests to Black children 'until appropriate and culturally sensitive tests were developed' (Williams, Dotson, Don, & Williams, 1980, p. 264). The fourth of seven points stated: "That the American Psychological Association immediately establish a committee to study the misuse of standardized psychological instruments (which are used) to maintain and justify the practice of systematically denying economic opportunities to Black youth" (p. 264)
1969	In May, a group of Black psychiatrists, headed by Drs. Chester Pierce (Harvard University) and James Comer (Yale University) met to address their view that the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) and other federal agencies had failed to work effectively to eliminate racism in their programs and within the larger society (Jones & Austin-Dailey, 2009; Taylor, 1977)
	NIMH established the Center for Minority Group Mental Health (abbreviated as 'The Minority Center'; Jones & Austin-Dailey, 2009), and hired Dr. James Ralph, a black psychiatrist, as its first director
	At the annual presidential address of the annual APA convention, black students representing the Black Student Psychological Association (BSPA) took the stage to inform the audience that they would be presenting a list of demands to the APA Council of Representatives the following day. The next day, the regular order of business at the Council Meeting was suspended and the students presented their demands. These included five specific areas of concern which must be explored and developed if the APA is to deal meaningfully with 'the problems of society' (Simpkins & Raphael, 1970, p. xxi)
1970	In 1970, Edward Casavantes, a Mexican American (Chicano) psychologist founded the first professional organization of Hispanic psychologists – the <i>Association of Psychologists Por La Raza</i> . At first, there were only a handful of members and the organization struggled to get recognition from APA (Pickren & Tomes, 2002). By the end of the 1970s, the group re-formed as the <i>National Hispanic Psychological Association</i>
1971	Dr. Kenneth B. Clark served as first elected African American president of APA
1972	The <i>Asian American Psychological Association (AAPA)</i> was founded by a group of Asian American psychologists and other mental health professionals in the San Francisco Bay Area. The AAPA advocates on behalf of Asian Americans as well as advancing Asian American psychology (Pickren, 2004; Pickren & Nelson, 2007). In the 1980s, the AAPA pressed the U.S. Bureau of the Census to include Asian American subgroups in its census data, and fought against the English-only language movement in California
1974	The Minority Fellowship Program (MFP) was established as an outgrowth of the Minority Center, who decreed that university-based training mechanisms had not been successful in attracting, training, retaining, and graduating ethnic minority psychologists in significant numbers (Jones & Austin-Dailey, 2009). MFP appointed its first director, Dr. Dalmus Taylor, professor of psychology at the University of Maryland
	The American Psychological Association (APA) agrees to house MFP at its highest administrative levels; contribute financial support for MFP initiatives, and salaries of senior staff, administrative assistant, and a secretary. The APA board of directors was actively involved in the MFP and selection of its advisory committee members (Jones & Austin-Dailey, 2009)

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**Table 8.3** (continued)

1975	<p>In response to the call for a moratorium on testing black children issued by the Association of Black Psychologists, the APA's Board of Scientific Affairs appointed an ad hoc committee of leading experts in tests and testing practices in schools. The committee's 27-page report to the APA essentially upheld the validity of testing, and was published in January in the <i>American Psychologist</i> (Cleary et al., 1975)</p> <p>In a subsequent article published in <i>American Psychologist</i>, the chair of the Association of Black Psychologists rejected the Cleary et al. report (see previous entry) and calls for government intervention and strict legal sanctions prohibiting the use of IQ tests with black students (Jackson, 1975)</p> <p>The Network of Indian Psychologists and the American Indian Interest Group merged and changed their name to the Society of Indian Psychologists</p>
1984	Section I (The Psychology of Black Women) within APA Division 35 (Society for the Psychology of Women) is formed
1982	APA Division 17 (currently Society of Counseling Psychology) published a position paper that inaugurated the multicultural competency movement in counseling and psychotherapy (Sue et al., 1982)
1985	The Association for Non-White Concerns in Personnel and Guidance, a division of the American Association for Counseling and Development, was renamed the Association for Multicultural Counseling and Development (AMCD) in 1985
1986	Dr. Logan Wright becomes the first male of American Indian heritage to be elected president of the American Psychological Association
1996	In response to academic and public reaction to <i>The Bell Curve</i> (Herrnstein & Murray, 1994), the APA Science Directorate established a Task Force on Intelligence, the work from which resulted in the 1996 publication <i>Intelligence: Knowns and Unknowns</i> (Neisser et al., 1996) in the <i>American Psychologist</i>
1999	<p>Dr. Michael Suinn serves as first elected APA president of Asian descent</p> <p>APA divisions 17, 35, 45 hosted the first National Multicultural Conference and Summit in California. According to Sue et al. (1999), themes arising from the summit included the diversification of the United States; the facilitation of difficult dialogues on race, gender, and sexual orientation; spirituality as a basic dimension of the human condition; the invisibility of monoculturalism and Whiteness; and the teaching of multiculturalism and diversity</p> <p>The Society of Indian Psychologists approves a position statement on Retiring Native American Mascots (Society of Indian Psychologists, 1999) as the official symbols and mascots of universities, colleges or schools, and non-professional and professional athletic teams. The statement asserts that "the continued use of Indian symbols and mascots seriously compromises our ability to engage in ethical professional practice and service to the campus and community"</p>
2000	The National Center on Minority Health and Health Disparities (NCMHD) was established by the passage of the Minority Health and Health Disparities Research and Education Act of 2000, Public Law 106-525, signed by President Bill Clinton on November 22
2001	APA divisions 17, 35, 44, and 45 hosted the second biennial National Multicultural Conference and Summit (NMCS) was held in Santa Barbara, California. The conference theme was "The Psychology of Race, Gender, Sexual Orientation, and Disability: Intersection, Divergence, and Convergence". According to Bingham et al. (2002), the conference was designed to "move the field of psychology and the APA forward in a quest to make psychology and the organization itself more inclusive" (p. 76)

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**Table 8.3** (continued)

	APA (2000) publishes the <i>Guidelines for Research in Ethnic Minority Communities</i> , developed by the Council of National Psychological Associations for the Advancement of Ethnic Minority Interests
2003	<p>APA Council of Representatives published its APA Guidelines on Multicultural Education, Training, Research, Practice and Organizational Change for Psychologists (abbreviated as the “Multicultural Standards”; American Psychological Association, 2003)</p> <p>The Society of Latinx Womxn in Psychology was established as Section III of APA Division 35 (Society for the Psychology of Women)</p>
2004	The APA Board of Directors asked the Board for the Advancement of Psychology in the Public Interest to recommend a process for infusing and implementing the Multicultural Standards throughout APA (American Psychological Association, 2008). The Board requested that a task force be convened, composed of representatives from each of the association’s governance groups, the ultimate purpose of which would be to develop a “Diversity Implementation Plan” for boards, committees, and offices that are directly accountable to APA
2008	<p>The Report of the APA task force on the Implementation of the Multicultural Guidelines (hereafter referred to as the “Implementation Report”) recommended: (1) Psychologists accrue continuing education units that educate about cultural competence and issues related to multiculturalism, (2) APA serve as a source of grant funding for researchers to develop methods for measuring students’ cultural competence, (3) APA take action steps to make resources and materials available to assist faculty in becoming proficient in teaching from multicultural perspectives, (4) the APA Office of Ethnic Minority Affairs and the Education Directorate are urged to develop mentoring programs for faculty to assist them in gaining awareness and skills related to multicultural competence (American Psychological Association, 2008)</p> <p>Section 5 (Psychology of Asian Pacific American Women) within APA Division 35 (Society for the Psychology of Women) is formed</p>
2009	<i>Psychology Education and Training From Culture-Specific and Multiracial Perspectives</i> is authorized by several organizations that are part of the Council of National Psychological Associations for the Advancement of Ethnic Minority Interests, and published by the American Psychological Association (2009)
2010	Section 6 (Alaska Native/American Indian/Indigenous Women) of APA Division 35 (Society for the Psychology of Women) is formed
2011	Dr. Melba Vasquez was the 13th female, the first woman of color, and the first Latina to hold the position of APA President
2012	The APA Presidential Task Force on Preventing Discrimination and Promoting Diversity and the APA Public Interest Directorate publish <i>Dual Pathways to a Better America</i> (DualPathways_Final.indb (apa.org)), written to identify and promote interventions to counteract bias, prejudice, stereotyping, and discrimination in the United States
2013	Endorsed by the Asian American Psychological Association (AAPA), Lee (2013) published a commentary protesting two instances of Asian American stereotyping in the media. One involved media coverage of the book <i>Battle Hymn of the Tiger Mother</i> by Amy Chua, in which the AAPA felt that the depiction stereotyped all Asian Americans. The second involved the perceived exclusion of Asian Americans by the National Research Council in their rankings of the diversity of doctoral programs (Asian Americans were excluded in diversity rankings)

(continued)

**Table 8.3** (continued)

2015	The National Latina/o Psychological Association issues a position statement condemning “the disproportionate and sometimes deadly use of force by law enforcement against people of color ... and join our voices with those of the #BlackLivesMatter movement.” (National Latina/o Psychological Association, 2015)
2016	The National Latina/o Psychological Association sends a letter to the President of the United States saying “[w]e stand together with the National Taskforce to End Sexual and Domestic Violence Against Women in their call to stop the announced wave of deportations targeting Central American mothers and their children by Immigrations and Customs Enforcement” (ICE; National Latina/o Psychological Association, 2016)
2017	<p>Dr. Antonio E. Puente, a Cuban-born psychologist, serves as 126th elected president of APA</p> <p>APA issues a statement opposing the president’s executive orders proposing restrictions on refugees and other visitors from Muslim-majority nations (Trump administration orders pose harm to refugees, immigrants academic research, and international exchange, according to psychologists (apa.org); In a letter to the U.S. Secretary of Homeland Security, APA expressed concern about the proposal to separate undocumented families at the border (APA Letter to Department of Homeland Security Secretary John F. Kelly About Undocumented Families); APA issues a statement urging the President to protect the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program (APA calls on President to preserve "Dreamers" program), then issues a statement expressing concern when the president ends DACA (APA statement on President Trump’s decision to end DACA)</p> <p>APA has voiced its support for American Indian Tribes (as well as other groups) who are protesting the construction of an oil pipeline that could undermine the drinking water, sacred sites, and well-being of the Standing Rock Sioux Reservation in North Dakota. APA sent a letter to President Obama in 2016 (pipeline-letter.pdf (apa.org) and wrote a response to President Trump (urging the administration to safeguard Standing Rock Sioux) after signing an executive order to revive the pipeline in 2017 (APA urges Trump administration to safeguard Standing Rock Sioux in response to memorandum on Dakota Access Pipeline)</p> <p>The Society of Indian Psychologists (SIP) executive committee approves a position statement that opposes the U.S. President’s proposal to build a wall between the United States and Mexico. The statement states “Except for the Native North Americans and their descendants who dwell in the area, everyone is an immigrant. For children of immigrants ... to build a wall in order to discourage immigration is hypocrisy at its highest level ... SIP views the wall proposal for what it is at its very core, an act of symbolic racism toward particular people ... ” (Society of Indian Psychologists, 2017).</p>
2018	Dr. Jessica Henderson Daniel was the first African American Woman elected to serve as APA President
2019	<p>Dr. Rosie Phillips Bingham was elected and served 141st president of APA</p> <p>APA Council of Representatives approves and publishes the <i>APA Guidelines on Race and Ethnicity in Psychology: Promoting Responsiveness and Equity</i></p> <p>APA CEO and Executive Vice-president sent a letter to the president calling for an end to the policy of separating families at the border – citing research on psychological harm (immigration-letter-trump.pdf (apa.org)</p>

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**Table 8.3** (continued)

2020	<p>Following the Supreme Court’s decision to allow the administration to begin implementing a new ‘public charge’ rule that would limit the eligibility of low-income immigrants to access federal programs including health, housing, and nutrition programs, APA released a statement of concern from the APA President (Statement of APA President on Supreme Court ruling allowing implementation of ‘public charge’ rule)</p> <p>In response to a number of high-profile events resulting in the deaths of black citizens, the president of the American Psychological Association stated ‘we are living in a racism pandemic, which is taking a heavy psychological toll on our African American citizens. The health consequences are dire. Racism is associated with a host of psychological consequences, including depression, anxiety and other serious, sometimes debilitating conditions, including post-traumatic stress disorder and substance use disorders [as well as] the development of cardiovascular and other physical diseases’ (‘We are living in a racism pandemic,’ says APA President)</p> <p>In one article published online, the author states that “APA is addressing the issue (racism pandemic) ... by working to dismantle institutional racism over the long term, including within APA and the field of psychology” (APA calls for true systemic change in U.S. culture)</p> <p>The Asian American Psychological Association (AAPA) issues a statement reaffirming solidarity with Black Lives Matter during what was called the ‘Pandemic of Racism’ (AAPA Reaffirms Solidarity with Black Lives Matter during Pandemic of Racism – Asian American Psychological Association (aapaonline.org))</p> <p>APA Division 14 (Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology) publishes the <i>Statement of Support for Programs to Improve Organizational Diversity and Inclusion</i> in response to President Trump’s executive order curtailing workforce training – as well as activities related to diversity/anti-bias topics, approaches, and perspectives</p> <p>APA Division 17 (Society of Counseling Psychology) publishes an online document in support of the Black Lives Matter movement (Black Lives Matter – Society of Counseling Psychology, Division 17 (div17.org)) which states, in part: “We encourage our White colleagues to use this time to learn more, reflect more, and move forward in your understanding of systemic racism, White supremacy culture, and determine ways that we can take committed action to move toward a more just society. ‘We encourage all to engage in learning and unlearning that is Black-led, in-depth, and ongoing’”</p>
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**Table 8.3** (continued)

2021	<p>APA issues a resolution on Harnessing Psychology to Combat Racism: Adapting a Uniform Definition and Understanding (APA Resolution on Harnessing Psychology to Combat Racism: Adopting a Uniform Definition and Understanding)</p> <p>APA sends a letter of support to the lead sponsors of both the House (Dream Act 2021 House Letter (apa.org)) and Senate (Dream Act 2021 Senate Letter (apa.org)) versions of the Dream Act of 2021. In the letter, APA illustrated how psychological research supports this legislation, which would help alleviate stress experienced by immigrants through eliminating their fear of deportation</p> <p>Following the jury verdict that found Officer Derek Chauvin guilty of murdering George Floyd, the President of the APA issued a statement which read, in part: “The American Psychological Association believes the jury reached the correct decision. It is right that Derek Chauvin is being held accountable, as should every person and system in the nation that supports or reinforces racism” (APA reaction to Chauvin verdict)</p> <p>The Asian American Psychological Association (AAPA) executive committee submitted testimony condemning anti-Asian American hate to the U.S. House of Representatives on a special judicial hearing on Discrimination and Violence Against Asian Americans (AAPA Testimony to House Judiciary on 3.18.2021 (aapaonline.org))</p> <p>APA publishes an online article ‘<i>How bystanders can shut down microaggressions</i>’ (Abrams, 2021), which purports to help readers ‘effectively intervene when you see someone being targeted for an aspect of their identity’. One psychologist is quoted as saying “Well-intentioned bystanders can also learn to be allies and help stop the onslaught of bias that we are witnessing in our society”</p> <p>APA publishes an online article ‘<i>Raising anti-racist children</i>’ in which the tag line reads: “Psychologists are studying the processes by which young children learn about race – and how to prevent prejudice from taking root” (Weir, 2021)</p> <p>The National Academy of Human Resources (NAHR) and the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) joined Division 14 (Society of Industrial and Organizational Psychology) in co-sponsoring the 2021 Call for Anti-Racism Project Proposals</p>
2022	<p>Dr. Frank Worrell, a native of Trinidad and Tobago, will serve as the second Black male to be elected president of the American Psychological Association</p>

Common organizational behaviors that cater to these political sensitivities are discussed below.

### The Celebration of ‘Firsts’

Whenever any entity explicitly or implicitly values the triumvirate principles of ‘diversity’, ‘equity’, and ‘inclusion’ – it becomes of primary importance to aggressively celebrate occasions in which perceived ‘glass ceilings’ are broken. Whenever APA members representing under-represented groups are the first to be elected to, or hold a prominent position within, its internal leadership and governance structure, these occasions are aggressively celebrated to the outside world and to its constituents as evidence for its commitment to progressive values (for illustrations, see Table 8.3).

### **Promoting Social Justice in Published Organization Documents**

Professional psychology organizations will pre-empt potential criticism from internal or external pressure groups by the proactive promotion of ‘social justice’ advocacy in its various resolutions, published position papers, and guild resources (e.g., see Social Justice ([nasponline.org](http://nasponline.org))). As one among numerous examples, the most recent version of the American Psychological Association (APA) “Guidelines on Multicultural Education, Training, Research, Practice, and Organizational Change for Psychologists” (APA, 2003) directly encourages psychologists to view themselves as leaders in social justice. Specifically, Principle 5 of the guidelines begins by stating, “Psychologists are uniquely able to promote racial equity and social justice” (APA, 2003, p. 382) and Principle 6 concludes by stating, “Psychologists recognize that organizations can be gatekeepers or agents of the status quo, rather than leaders in a changing society with respect to multiculturalism” (APA, 2003, p. 382).

### **Issuing Symbolic Apologies to Appease and Mollify Pressure Groups**

Psychology organizations experience real or imagined political pressures in the wake of high-profile news events that promote the ‘racism-is-omnipresent’ narrative. When the notoriety from these events reaches a critical mass, organizations feel that they must ‘do something’ to soothe anxieties emanating from their membership, and demonstrate that the organization stands on the right side of virtue. One way that organizations feel that this can be accomplished is to issue public ‘apologies’ for the organizations’ role in showcasing what critics deem to be racially offensive research (Marks, 2020), giving a forum to scholars labeled by pressure groups as ‘racist’, or taking politically incorrect stances involving race in the organization’s history (Warner, 2021).

## **Conclusion**

Select political issues commonly identified within research psychology, applied psychology, and professional organizations that represent psychology, were surveyed only briefly in this chapter. These issues do not come without problems, however, some of which are quite serious in obscuring a clear understanding of the role of research (as well as how research results are interpreted) in multicultural settings. Part 2 of this chapter series takes a more critical look at these problems.

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# Chapter 9

## Multiculturalism in Contemporary American Psychology (Part 2)



Craig L. Frisby

### Problems Caused by the Politicization of Multiculturalism in Psychology

The politicization of multicultural research, applied psychology training and practice, and the activities of professional psychology organizations raises serious and troubling issues that are rarely discussed (at least openly) among students, researchers, instructors, administrators, officials in professional organizations, and practitioners.

On one hand, American society has made huge strides in the quality of racial/ethnic relations – as well as enforcing legal and social sanctions for overt discrimination and prejudice – that would have been unthinkable 75 years ago (Laurenzo, 2020). On the other hand, there exists persistent group differences in social and economic outcomes that persist despite these strides, and these differences cry out for ‘an explanation’ (Joint Economic Committee, 2020a, b; Murray, 2021; Thernstrom & Thernstrom, 2002).

### Political Problems in Research Psychology

The answers to this conundrum are complex, and this chapter should not be misconstrued as oversimplifying these issues. Politicization strikes at the heart of why multicultural psychology was invented in the first place. Here, fundamental conflicts polarize and crystallize into two opposing camps: (1) those who argue that persistent group differences in important societal outcomes are rooted in average group

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differences in important psychological traits (Gottfredson, 2002; Herrnstein & Murray, 1994; Murray, 2021; Rushton & Jensen, 2005), versus (2) those who argue that these differences are fundamentally attributable to white racism, prejudice, discrimination, culturally biased tests, or the inability to properly understand cultural differences (Franklin, 2007; Helms, 2010; Newitz, 2014; Noguera, 2008; Williams, 2020a, b).

For research psychologists, this debate ultimately reduces to a fundamental philosophical divide over the answer to the following question: *Should research on racial/ethnic group differences be forbidden* (Kourany, 2016; Meisenberg, 2019)? Debates over the answers to this question are heated – particularly within the context of race/IQ research. Most scholars who identify with, or are deeply sympathetic to, the foundational principles of multicultural psychology would answer with a resounding ‘YES’ (e.g., Rose, 2009). Their arguments (particularly as these relate to groups differences in average IQ) take the following form, most notably:

- Persons belonging to lower scoring groups (on a favored variable) will inevitably feel demeaned and disempowered (Kourany, 2016; Saini, 2019).
- Since the context within which group differences research is conducted has a history of racial conflict (i.e., within America), carrying out such research is dangerous (Kourany, 2016).
- Such research, if indeed it favored Whites, would provide ammunition to those who wish to discriminate against racial minorities (Sternberg, 2005).
- The study of group differences on socially important variables reflects underlying values that are morally repugnant (Garrod, 2006; Newitz, 2014; Saini, 2019; Sternberg, 2005; Williams, 2020b).
- Such research achieves no good outcomes, as well as no useful public policy implications (Sternberg, 2005).

On the other hand, supporters of group differences research (particularly on group differences in average IQ) offer the following rebuttals:

- Critics who fear that race/IQ research will damage the self-esteem of minorities assume implicitly that intelligence (as the most politically contentious variable) is more important than other variables (altruism, attractiveness, sports ability, financial assets, etc.). Although low self-esteem may be correlated with negative outcomes, there is no strong evidence that it *causes* such outcomes (Meisenberg, 2019).
- Prohibiting race/IQ research does not negate the reality that people are adept at detecting ability differences in the real world that actually exist (Jussim, 2012).
- “The opposite of knowledge is not ignorance, but false belief” (Meisenberg, 2019, p. 309). Prohibiting race/IQ research will lead to alternative (but unscientific and possibly false) explanations for social outcomes that have the potential to cause more harm than good.
- Those who favor the prohibition of race/IQ research will need to institutionalize, then enforce, draconian measures to prevent information about the race/IQ

connection to be exposed to the public – which risks a cascade of associated restrictions of civil liberties from efforts to enforce restrictions (Meisenberg, 2019).

The nature and arguments used by opposing sides in this debate are nicely illustrated in a 1990 talk show appearance by representatives of both sides (e.g., see (1) Phil Donahue and J. Philippe Rushton Scientific differences in race – Bing video). Disagreements between these two sides within research psychology generate rancor and politicization of multicultural issues that eventually seep into the applied and professional psychology literature (see Yakushko, Rindermann, and Woodley chapters, this text).

## Political Issues in Applied Psychology

### *The Construct of ‘Racism’ is Weaponized, and Its Supposed Influence Is Grossly Exaggerated*

Race, and the issues and conflicts associated with it, is a topic that has become so pervasive in contemporary society (at the time of this writing), and particularly within applied multicultural psychology, that many feel that this constitutes an ‘obsession’. Acevedo (2021) writes:

*America is obsessed with racism. A search on Amazon Books for “racism” turns up over 40,000 results, including over 2,000 new releases in the last 90 days and nearly 1,000 in the last 30 days. What used to be considered an offensive attitude of prejudice toward those of different races and ethnicities, one possessed by specific people and expressed through specific words and deeds, is now seen as an ever-present force in the ether, permeating every corner of the universe and affecting everyone all of the time.*

Consider the following expansive assertions copied verbatim from just one page of a book chapter on multicultural mental health counseling (D’Andrea & Daniels, 2001, p. 290):

- ‘We believe that White racism represents one of the most important moral problems our nation faces in the 21<sup>st</sup> century’
- ‘[White Racism] continues to be deeply embedded in our societal structures and perpetuated by many mental health professionals’
- ‘White racism continues to operate as a pervasive pathological force that oppresses large numbers of persons from diverse cultural and racial backgrounds in this country’

It is relatively easy to identify writers in less enlightened times whose ideas clearly communicated the notion that certain racial groups should be considered ‘superior’ or ‘inferior’ to other racial groups (Gould, 1978). However, it is extremely difficult, if not impossible, for any responsible scientist in modern times to publish such ideas in mainstream academic outlets. Yet, modern researchers of group differences – who are careful to couch their conclusions in respectful writing – are

routinely called ‘racist’ (or their research vilified as reflecting ‘racism’) by multicultural psychology and other social science disciplines (e.g., see Saini, 2019).

As one among many examples, the late Arthur Jensen has been routinely vilified for his research which acknowledged average group differences in cognitive abilities (see Gottfredson, 2005), as well as his research that introduces the role of genetics and heredity in IQ variation (Jensen, 1972). Arguably, no other scientist has been attacked so vociferously as a ‘racist’ by other scholars both within and outside psychology and ‘anti-racist’ organizations (e.g., see Pearson, 1991; Southern Poverty Law Center, n.d.). Yet, virtually ignored is his clear statements on the fallacy of conflating research on group averages with society’s responsibility for the fair treatment of individuals. In his 1973 book *Educability and Group Differences*, Jensen (1973) writes:

*... since, as far as we know, the full range of human talents is represented in all the major races of man and in all socioeconomic levels, it is unjust to allow the mere fact of an individual’s racial or social background to affect the treatment accorded to him. All persons rightfully must be regarded on the basis of their individual qualities and merits, and all social, educational, and economic institutions must have built into them the mechanisms for insuring and maximizing the treatment of persons according to their individual behavior. (p. 14)*

Rather than functioning as a useful term with clearly defined boundaries, the words ‘racist’ and ‘racism’ are instead often sloppily and recklessly used merely for their shock value and ability to generate alarm. Calling someone, an idea, or an event ‘racist’ is generally understood as connoting an ‘improper’ race consciousness (Levin, 2005, p. 153) that – in the opinion of the accuser, connotes pure evil. Levin (2005) writes:

*... [C]alling someone or something ‘racist’ automatically condemns him or it ... ‘racism’ is freely used of an enormous range of beliefs, attitudes and practices, many of which seem in no way grossly improper, or improper at all. That is why the word serves only to obscure ... because things [that are labeled] racist are bad by definition, it is tempting to try to force condemnation of an attitude or practice by labeling it ‘racist’, when in point of logic the attitude or practice in question must first be shown to be bad by some independent standard before it can be so labeled ... incessant denunciations of ‘racism’ has made the epithet unchallengeable ... (p. 153)*

As interpreted through the lens of multicultural psychology, scholars are vulnerable to being called racist if they engage in one or more of the following four behaviors: (a) believing in the scientific validity of racial groupings, (b) believing that racial differences exist on average in some measureable outcomes, (c) drawing attention to the existence of racial differences, or (e) researching the connection between racial differences and other social, economic, educational, or behavioral correlates (adapted from Levin, 2005, p. 153). When an accuser calls people, ideas, or actions ‘racist’, the accuser hopes that (Frisby, 2020):

- The accused will stop believing, saying, or writing things about race or racial group differences that cause others to feel embarrassed or uncomfortable.

- Society will be protected from ideas about race or racial group differences that the accuser believes have the potential to damage democracy, equality, or equal treatment under the law.
- The accused will be intimidated into silence and cease conducting research or making arguments about race or racial group differences against which the accuser has no rebuttal.
- Audiences will be predisposed to reject a priori any merits of an argument about race or racial group differences that the accuser does not like.
- The accuser will be viewed as morally superior or more virtuous than the [accused](#).

When psychological research is inextricably intertwined with cultural Marxist ideology (see previous chapter by Frisby, 2023, Table 2), any comparing or contrasting of racial/ethnic subgroups on any psychological trait constitutes evidence of ‘racist’ scientific practices – particularly if the results reflect poorly on one group compared to another (as in the case of IQ, criminality, or law abidingness; see Murray, 2021). Such comparisons must be caricatured as promoting ‘White supremacy/superiority’ or ‘non-White inferiority’. If racial differences in observable behaviors cannot be denied, then they must be *re-interpreted* as merely reflecting ‘cultural differences’, and not ‘deficits’ (Tucker & Herman, 2002). Comparing the behaviors of different groups (particularly for Blacks vs. Whites) cannot be evaluated according to a fixed, objective standard or reference point – for fear that comparisons will be labeled ‘culturally insensitive’ (Kauffman et al., 2008). In fact, a hallmark of militant multiculturalism ideology is that there are no such entities as purely objective cognitive measurement or common behavioral/philosophical standards to which all groups must adhere (Akbar, 1991; Helms, 1992). Any claim of objectivity must be dismissed as merely reflecting ‘White standards’ (Gray, 2019; Gulati-Partee & Potapchuk, 2014).

As one among many examples, successful performance and progress in schools requires following directions, getting right answers, and being able to regulate one’s behavior in classrooms in order for the learning of others in the class to proceed smoothly. The disproportionately higher rates of disruptive school and classroom behavior of black children in integrated settings are well documented (Kersten, 2017; MacDonald, 2012, 2018; Musu-Gillette, 2018; U.S. Department of Education, 2021a, b). However, multiculturalists espousing cultural relativism in their thinking reinterpret troublesome or nonacademic behavior by non-White children and youth in the classroom as merely a ‘cultural difference’ about which teachers need to be enlightened (Hale, 1986, 2016; Kunjufu, 2005; Shade, 1984). As interpreted from the writings of Kunjufu (1986), D’Souza (1995) summarizes these contrasts as follows:

*[Kunjufu] contrasts traditional learning styles, which he considers white, with relational learnings, which he maintains are black ... [W]hites favor rules, blacks favor freedom; whites prefer standardization, blacks prefer variation; whites seek regularity, blacks seek novelty; whites are orderly, blacks are flexible; whites would rather be normal, blacks would rather be unique; whites are precise, blacks approximate; whites are logical, blacks psychological; whites are cognitive, blacks are indirect; whites are linear, blacks are affective or emotional. (D’Souza, 1995, p. 366).*

In sum, it would be inaccurate to conclude that multicultural psychology unilaterally prevents scholars from simple comparisons of racial groups. Rather, the central issue concerns *how* groups are to be compared and results interpreted (under the implicit assumptions of multicultural psychology). There are invisible yet ironclad guardrails that forbid researchers from applying a *common standard of comparison* (and the resulting interpretations that logically flow from such comparisons). This is most evident whenever a White group is compared to a non-White racial or ethnic minority group that displays significantly discrepant mean scores from the White group (i.e., higher average scores on a negative trait or lower average scores on a positive trait; see Murray, 2021). According to the tenets of cultural relativism in multicultural psychology, comparisons must be premised on equally valued cultural differences (e.g., see Emdin, 2012). If comparisons inevitably result in one group judged as doing ‘better’ than another group, these differences must be interpreted as stemming from the ongoing effects of racial victimhood (e.g., see Gran-Ruaz et al., 2022; Woods-Jaeger et al., 2022). In other venues, multicultural psychology deflects attention away from disproportionate problems experienced by minority groups to an emphasis on their ‘cultural strengths’ (e.g., see Ai et al., 2017; Johnson & Carter, 2020).

### ***The Lack of Balance in Acknowledging Sources of Individual Differences.***

Multicultural psychology has forgotten a fundamental truth wisely articulated by Kluckhohn and Murray (1953) in their book *Personality in Nature, Society, and Culture*. In it, they assert that variation among individuals can generally be attributed to three sources of influence:

1. ***Traits That Each Individual Shares With Every Other Human Being.*** The first category (universally shared traits) is supported by research on human universals (Brown, 1991, 2000). Although there may exist relatively superficial differences in surface features, all people groups on the globe recognize distinctions among the same human emotions; similar patterns in gender roles and responsibilities; similar prohibitions against murder, stealing, and incest; the presence of art, play, and recreation; similar fears of snakes and death; and the existence of religious rituals – to name a few.

Human beings share a variety of universal negative traits irrespective of race, ethnicity, language, or country of origin. Human beings are tribalistic (Cavanagh, 2019; Chua, 2018; James, 2006), are susceptible to groupthink (Booker, 2020; Esser, 1998), and tend to favor ingroup members while misperceiving and/or being prone not to favor outgroup members (Balliet et al., 2014; Greenwald & Pettigrew, 2014; Riek et al., 2006; Rubin & Badaea, 2007).

In applied multicultural psychology, subgroup differences are viewed as more primordial and important than universal similarities shared by groups.

Acknowledging human universals cannot be politicized, and hence carries no political value in multicultural psychology advocacy. In addition, acknowledging universals is avoided because doing so exposes subgroups to comparison and evaluation on a common standard, the outcomes of which may be embarrassing for political advocacy groups. Thus, hardwired into multicultural psychology is the doctrine of *cultural relativism* (Encyclopedia of World Problems and Human Potential, 2017), the notion that standards of ‘right/wrong’, ‘ethical/nonethical’, ‘appropriate/not appropriate’, and ‘moral/immoral’ are *culture-specific* (i.e., not beholden to universal standards). This philosophy holds that no one has the right to judge another culture (particularly those who are not members of the cultures to be judged) as to their beliefs, practices, or attitudes. Once discussions involve politically sensitive racial or ethnic components, standards can be re-interpreted in order to protect and/or cast a positive light on the image of favored minority groups.

2. ***Traits That Each Individual Shares With Particular Subgroups of Human Beings.***

The second category acknowledges that all individuals belong to multiple subgroups, and that there are some aspects of an individual’s behavior, thinking, and attitudes that are shared by members of particular subgroups but are not shared by members of other subgroups. Subgroups can be subdivided according to a wide variety of categorization schemes, which include, but are not limited to: ethnicity/race/language (e.g., Blacks, Asians, Hispanics), gender (e.g., males vs. females); age/season of life (e.g., teenagers, young adults, senior citizens), region of the country (e.g., Southerners vs. Northerners), religious faith or lack thereof (e.g., Atheists, Jews, Christians), or political orientation (e.g., Conservatives, Progressives, Libertarians).

When attempting to prove an ideological point, multicultural counseling texts will often provide excerpts from anonymous students/clients by identifying them only by their group membership (e.g., ‘white male’, ‘black female’, ‘Hispanic lesbian female’; see Sue et al., 2009a, 2011, 2019). Multicultural psychology texts write as if race or ethnicity is the primary driving force that overrides all other subgroup identities for understanding clients. Berreby (2008) writes:

*A more fundamental flaw ... is [the] assumption that each of us belongs, at all times, to a single in-group. Each of us is simultaneously a member of many different human kinds, and each of us is capable of inventing new ones. You can be ... male, Japanese American, a parent, a Republican, and a Methodist; you can, with no trouble at all, decide tomorrow to join up with other people who happen to live in your neighborhood, or who happen to share your interest in antique cars or butterfly collecting ... Each of us places himself in whatever human kind feels relevant to the needs of the moment. (p. 212)*

To illustrate, the clinical behaviors or presenting problems that will be most salient to a child psychologist for a 5-year-old black female client may be more likely to be those associated with her age, not her race (e.g., bedwetting, inappropriately sucking her thumb, delayed language skills, etc.). Similarly, it is highly unlikely that a 95-year-old Hispanic cancer patient on hospice care will have, as his highest priority, an ongoing pre-occupation with the perceived racism of his caregivers. The point in these two examples is that factors associated with age – not

race – are more likely to be determinative of the most salient psychological issues and problems for any given individual.

3. ***Traits That are Unique to Each Individual.*** The third category recognizes that the sum total of any person's lived experiences are interpreted, processed, and lived out through the lens of whatever enables that person to be a unique individual different from any other individual. Said differently, two or more persons can both belong to the same subgroup (i.e., determined by gender, race, language, politics, religion, or ethnicity) – yet nevertheless differ (in many cases, significantly) in their personality makeup, mental/physical abilities, reactions to personal tragedies, what their identity means to them, and how to take advantage of the (natural or fortuitous) resources and opportunities that they are given in life.

Like human universals, individual uniqueness is also ignored or de-emphasized in the politicization of multiculturalism. All members of racial/ethnic minority groups are treated as if they think, behave, and experience discrimination (if at all) in identical ways. Here, individual differences are treated as unwanted noise to be ignored or kept offstage – particularly if it contradicts or undermines a favored tenet of multicultural psychology. Acknowledging individual differences undermines the illusion of within-group conformity and solidarity, which threatens (as well as weakens) political advocacy efforts.

### **The Nuances and Complexities Involved in Clinical Practice**

Two examples are provided in support of acknowledging complexities in clinical practice — one is an empirical study, and the other is an interview with a skilled therapist with many years of experience.

***Granello et al. (1998)*** Granello et al. (1998) interviewed three focus groups consisting of African American only, European American only, and a mixed-race group of state-agency rehabilitation counselors on the topic of multicultural competency skills, knowledge, and awareness. They averaged 9–13 years of experience with the agency. Among other findings, the following opinions were voiced:

- They felt that every human being is different from every other human being.
- Multiculturalism is not defined according to skin color. Multiculturalism included differences in where you were born, how you were raised, and what values and beliefs you have, or whether or not one comes from an urban vs. rural background.
- Some interviewees rejected the practice of lumping all whites together into a homogeneous group that lacks ethnic diversity.
- They felt that many persons who look white actually come from a wide variety of ethnicities that are not immediately visible to the naked eye.
- All groups felt that there are basic things that join people together as human beings.
- They had difficulty with the idea of there being culturally specific and mutually exclusive counseling skills or interventions that were tailored to a specific group.
- Good listening skills constituted the most important counseling competency for all cultural groups.

- They were skeptical about the usefulness of multicultural knowledge to counseling competency, particularly given its potential for stereotyping.

***Interview With an Experienced Therapist*** In order to illustrate the nuance and skill involved in integrating the Kluckhohn and Murray (1953) principles, the opinions of a skilled therapist on the topic of multicultural competence are provided in Table 9.1.

This interview described in Table 9.1 reflects the opinions of only one clinician, and may not represent the views of other clinicians (minority or non-minority) whose practice involves frequent contact with minority clients. Nevertheless, the opinions expressed by this interview – coupled with the opinions expressed by interviewees in the Granello et al. (1998) study – elicit three fundamental observations:

1. Therapists, being human, make mistakes and often nurture incorrect assumptions about clients during the course of therapy, specifically, and during the course of their careers, generally. Politicizing this common problem as being reflective of some deep seated form of racial evil (e.g., racism, microaggressions) is not helpful. The process of learning about clients requires occasional ‘on-the-job’ adjustments, and full knowledge of clients cannot be assumed to be gained in pre-service courses that can only provide general information about groups. Weinrach and Saunderson (2003) termed this principle ‘living with ambiguity’ (p. 33).
2. It cannot be assumed that just because a client belongs to an ethnic/racial minority group, that issues needing to be addressed in counseling/therapy are necessarily always intertwined with so-called ‘racial issues’. Needing to lose weight, being suicidal, having financial difficulties, dealing with the pain of broken relationships – are universal problems experienced by citizens of all human societies no matter who they are. Even if a particular therapist is not as astute as another therapist in matters of race/ethnicity, he or she can still significantly help to alleviate pain, discomfort, stress, or anxiety in minority clients. The burden of proof rests on cultural competence advocates to demonstrate how a lack of cultural competence can be unilaterally viewed as ‘harming’ minority clients.
3. Although knowledge of cultural issues may indeed be important for understanding and helping minority clients, it is not at all clear what knowledge is useful, or how useful knowledge is obtained, or what form the transmission of useful knowledge should take. Although university coursework in cultural competence is currently the most popularly promoted avenue for gaining knowledge, it is not at all clear how useful these mechanisms are. Current scholarship is beginning to acknowledge these difficult issues (e.g., see Mollen & Ridley, 2021; Ridley et al., 2021; Vandiver et al., 2021).

**Table 9.1** One Therapist's Opinion and Experience on the Topic of Cultural Competency with Black Clients

A psychotherapist was interviewed on the topic of cultural competency on a fairly recent podcast *Insights with Dick Goldberg*. Dick Goldberg is the host of a monthly podcast where academics, clinicians, and authors in psychology and sociology are interviewed on timely topics. On May 26, 2021, his topic was 'Whites Counseling Blacks'. A teaser for the podcast read:

Can a white psychotherapist effectively treat black clients? What are some common errors or even microaggressions that may happen from a lack of cultural awareness?

The featured guest was psychotherapist Donald Cooper from Madison Psychotherapy Associates in Wisconsin. Cooper is a black psychotherapist who is described by Goldberg as bringing 30 years of experience in marriage, couples, and family counseling to his practice. Goldberg asked Cooper if he has had black clients seek his counseling from a negative experience with a white therapist, to which Cooper replied:

*Actually, no ... I have black clients that come specifically to speak to a person of color, but not coming from a white therapist to me ... I really don't believe that a white therapist is any less effective than I might be as long as they follow the principles of therapy – which are: ... being a good listener, understanding what the issues are, validating the person, and also helping that person to seek solutions*

From his experience, Cooper acknowledges that black clients sometimes are distrustful of the medical professions and/or medications that may be prescribed, and may feel uncomfortable about owning a weakness and asking for help in acknowledging that they have problems over which they have little control. If they avoid white therapists, it is because felt experiences of racism may be more readily accepted and understood by therapists of color

Throughout the interview, Cooper argues that if white therapists model the basic principles of good therapy with black clients, therapy can go very far (where white therapists could be equally as effective as black therapists with black clients – as long as a therapeutic relationship is formed based on good therapy principles). Cooper argues that being a black therapist does not guarantee success with black clients if the therapist does not possess basic therapy competencies (e.g., being a good listener). In his view, however, black clients need assurance that white therapists 'get it' with respect to being empathetic and sympathetic toward legitimate experiences of racism

Goldberg then asks if it is possible for a white therapist to empathize ('get it') with blacks if s/he has grown up 'white and middle class' and has not personally experienced racism commensurate with what black clients might have experienced. According to Cooper, if the (white) therapist is a good listener, pays close attention, is well read, the therapist will be able to identify on some level with the experiences of the client. In his experience, the feeling of 'being understood' by a white therapist is just as rewarding to black clients as feeling understood by black therapists

Goldberg then asked Cooper about the kinds of mistakes White therapists make in counseling with black clients. In response, Cooper articulated the following points (paraphrased):

*Be aware of your assumptions. All people make assumptions, and these assumptions may be proven incorrect after you come to know the client*

Cooper opines that white therapists may mistakenly 'bend over backwards' to prove to black clients that they 'get it' (with respect to clients' experiences of racism). This happens when the therapist agrees with everything the client says, but does not probe or nudge them toward personal accountability (which must be done after trust has been established in the relationship). In his experience, Blacks love authenticity, and they hate phoniness. All clients love for therapists to show empathy for their problems. However, when empathy is shown in a self-centered way (e.g., 'my cousin married a black person'), or when therapists change the attention to their own stories in a sincere but misguided effort to 'ethnically relate' to black clients, then he opines that this has a tendency to turn black clients off

(continued)

**Table 9.1** (continued)

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Cooper feels that it is good if the white therapist gives the black client permission to correct him/her if the therapist fails to understand something in the black client's experience.

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There are times when the client believes that a therapy issue centers around racial discrimination, but the therapist (black or white) believes that invoking race is merely a ruse used by the client to avoid responsibility. If the therapist brings up the issue of personal responsibility too quickly in the therapy relationship, then s/he is not demonstrating to the client that they are interested in the client's story – which will be sensed by the client (possibly damaging the therapy relationship; e.g., see Brown & Pomerantz, 2011). In his experience, Cooper feels that (particularly white) therapists need to wait a while (in the therapeutic relationship) before broaching accountability issues

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Pursuant to the last point, Cooper opines that there needs to be a delicate balance between supporting black clients vs. holding black clients accountable for their problems. Therapists (of any color) need to hold clients (of any color) accountable for their difficulties. However, White therapists in particular need to be sensitive to their black clients as to when accountability issues are broached, as well as be sensitive to differences in how much accountability individual black clients can bear

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Cooper discusses tricky situations in therapy where cultural norms may clash with moral absolutes. In Cooper's opinion, all therapists need to walk a 'fine line' in handling behaviors presented by particularly lower class 'ghetto' black clients that are 'culturally appropriate' (in the client's worldview), vs. the same behaviors that are viewed as morally wrong by the (particularly white) therapist. In his experience, for example, there is a code of ethics in ghetto communities where kids don't want to be seen as 'snitches' when misbehavior occurs. When the therapist hears from clients behaviors that are morally wrong (shoplifting, beating up weaker peers), s/he must first suspend judgment in order to understand the client's reasons for doing wrong. In Cooper's view, getting the client to feel empathy for victims of wrongdoing takes both delicacy and diplomacy. Cooper recommends that the therapist in these situations ask clients to think about how they would feel, for example, if moral wrongdoings were to happen to family members – which is helpful for gauging whether or not clients can take a victim's perspective on moral issues

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Cooper encourages white therapists not to be fearful of bringing up issues of race in therapy, yet they should not feel obligated to bring up racial issues just because the client is black

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The interviewer then asks Cooper his thoughts on how cultural issues might affect couples counseling. Cooper seemed reluctant to give hard and fast principles, but nuanced his answer by saying that the salience of cultural concerns depends on what content/issues are being discussed (i.e., communication, household responsibilities, parenting)

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## Political Problems in Professional Psychology Organizations

### *Internal Politics Compromises Scientific Integrity in Public Pronouncements*

When a professional organization (representing academics) limits its mission to promoting the best scholarship within its narrow area of interest, it is not distracted by the need to please internal constituencies that may tempt the organization to compromise its central mission. In contrast, large organizations composed of numerous constituencies (which often have conflicting and contradictory missions)

must frequently compromise principles of best scholarship in order to ‘keep peace’ within the organization. Nothing illustrates this principle better than the American Psychological Association’s position paper on intelligence in reaction to publication of *The Bell Curve* (Herrnstein & Murray, 1994).

When Richard Herrnstein and Charles Murray’s *The Bell Curve* was published in 1994, it created a national firestorm of controversy, criticism, and debate within academia, generally, and psychology, specifically – as its conclusions on the topics of race, IQ, and society has broad implications for American life. In addition, much of the public responses from academics to the book tended to be overly negative and vitriolic (e.g., see Fraser, 1995; Jacoby & Glauberman, 1995; Murray, 1995). In response, The American Psychological Association Task Force on Intelligence was created by the APA Board of Scientific Affairs to craft an ‘official’ response to the book’s content. The task force issued its report in 1995 and published a revised version of the report in the February 1996 issue of *American Psychologist* (Neisser et al., 1996).

Being a document that needed to appease a wide variety of constituencies (Neisser et al., 1996), however, there were numerous places where this ‘authoritative report’ pulled its punches with statements that were less than entirely accurate. Four of the most egregious are reproduced verbatim as follows:

- “It is very difficult to compare concepts of intelligence across cultures” (p. 79)
- “ ... African Americans may not be motivated to work hard on tests that so clearly reflect White values ...” (p. 93–94)
- “When children are ordered to do their own work, arrive at their own individual answers, work only with their own materials, they are being sent cultural messages. When children come to believe that getting up and moving about the classroom is inappropriate, they are being sent powerful cultural messages. When children come to confine their ‘learning’ to consistently bracketed time periods, when they are consistently prompted to tell what they know and not how they feel, when they are led to believe that they are completely responsible for their own success and failure, when they are required to consistently put forth considerable effort for effort’s sake on tedious and personally irrelevant tasks ... then they are pervasively having cultural lessons imposed on them” (p. 95)
- “In short, no adequate explanation of the differential between the IQ means of Blacks and Whites is presently available” (p. 97)

**Difficulty of Cross-Cultural Comparisons?** As to the first statement, the APA document appears to give credence to the argument that, just because representatives of different cultural groups may define intelligence differently, or value certain skills differently within the context of their culture, then it follows that comparing concepts of intelligence across cultures is ‘difficult’. There are numerous logical errors in this argument, not the least of which is that the APA report provides no hard evidence of how a ‘cultural group’ is defined (e.g., Differences in countries? Different regions within countries? Different racial groups?). They provide no hard evidence on how a cultural entity, once defined, ‘defines’ the construct of intelligence.

Accepting at face value this argument that ‘cultural groups define intelligence differently’, there still exists a *serious* logical error in this argument (see discussion in Jensen, 1980, pp. 247–248). To illustrate, individuals may have different ways in which they may explain the causes of headaches. One person may argue that headaches are caused by invisible fairies in his/her head, another may argue that headaches are caused by eating bad pizza the night before, while another may argue that headaches are caused by muscle tension in the head caused by stress. Regardless of the variety of these explanations, aspirin (or any other vetted headache medication) will have the same ameliorative effects on the human body regardless of how headaches are conceptualized by different individuals. This is because the etiology of headaches involves the same biological/physiological factors regardless of where in the world headaches occur.

Mental tests’ loading on the *g* (general intelligence) factor has strong biological correlates (e.g., brain size, electrochemical activity in the brain, cerebral glucose metabolism, brain and peripheral nerve conduction velocity; Jensen, 1998). Since all human beings have a brain and nervous system, then the link between these biological functions and mental activity in response to cognitive tasks is relatively straightforward.

Second, there are mental assessment techniques that have wide applicability across cultural groups worldwide. To illustrate, Raven’s Progressive Matrices (RPM) is the most highly *g*-loaded mental test in existence (Jensen, 1998) and also has the distinction of being one of the most widely used measures of human intelligence cross-culturally. This contradicts the claim that human intelligence cannot be adequately compared across cultural groups (e.g., Abdel-Khalek, 2005; Berry, 1966; Brouwers et al., 2009; Jenkinson, 1989; MacArthur, 1968).

**African Americans Not Motivated to Work Hard on Tests?** The claim that African Americans achieve lower scores on cognitive tests relative to Whites due to low motivational factors (that in turn influence test performance) has been systematically studied, and the conclusions drawn have been published for more than a decade *before* the APA report was published. In his exhaustive review (at the time of his writing) of cognitive test bias, Jensen (1980) defined ‘external sources of test bias’ as:

*... those that do not involve the test per se but result from factors in the external testing situation that interact with individual or group differences to produce a systematic bias in the test scores of individuals or groups. (p. 589)*

After an exhaustive review of research that investigated a number of ‘external’ factors (e.g., self-esteem, impulsivity, test anxiety, examiner race, effects of test coaching, etc.) that included motivational variables, Jensen (1980) concluded:

*The evidence is wholly negative for every such variable on which empirical studies are reported in the literature. That is, no variables in the test situation, but extraneous to the tests, have been identified that contribute significantly to the observed average test score differences between social classes and racial groups. (p. 618)*

For further evaluation of the ‘blacks-have-lower-motivation-to-work-hard-on-tests’ hypothesis, see studies demonstrating the failure of ‘stereotype threat’ theory

(Steele & Aronson, 1995) to successfully replicate (Flore & Wicherts, 2015; Jussim, 2015; Sackett et al., 2004).

**Schoolchildren Receiving ‘Cultural Messages’?** The notion that normal classroom and school behavioral expectations of students from teachers represent an exclusively ‘cultural’ message (whatever this means) has no basis in empirical reality – nor serves as a reasonable explanation for racial/ethnic group differences in school achievement. All formal educational situations – in every classroom on every continent on earth – require students to quietly listen to their teachers, do homework assignments, and subdue off-task physical behaviors during group lessons (circumscribed by developmentally appropriate expectations). In short, there is nothing ‘cultural’ about these expectations that apply differentially to one cultural group relative to another, as well as no serious research within the educational psychology literature that argues for this viewpoint.

**‘No Adequate Explanation for IQ Differences’?** The report’s conclusion of no adequate explanation for mean IQ score differences between racial/socioeconomic subgroups is not accurate. Nearly all serious IQ researchers (as well as statements made in the APA report) acknowledge that variation in IQ scores stems from a combination of both genetic and environmental factors, although there is reasonable debate about their relative contributions (Carlier & Roubertoux, 2014; Herrnstein & Murray, 1994; Knopik et al., 2017). To date, there is no genetic study that can be ethically approved and provide definitive answers to these questions. However, neither genetic nor environment factors need to be invoked in order to conclude that differences are ‘real’.

In a nutshell, it is a well-established empirical fact that the magnitude of Black/White differences on mental tests varies as a direct function of the *g* loadings of the tests. That is to say, racial/ethnic group differences are smallest on homogeneous mental tests that load least on *g*, while differences are largest on homogeneous mental tests that load highest on *g* (Jensen, 1998). No other alternative hypothesis comes remotely close to explaining this phenomenon.

**If the APA Intelligence Report is So ‘Authoritative’, Then Why Does It Include These Less-Than-Accurate Statements?** The succinct answer, in a nutshell, is ‘politics’. APA is comprised of a wide variety of constituencies that differ considerably in anticipated reactions to the report’s conclusions. These constituencies range from those who are initially hostile to IQ tests, intelligence testing, and traditional interpretations of group differences research – to those who are supportive. Given the vitriol that was observed following publication of *The Bell Curve*, the APA report is vulnerable to the same reception if pre-emptive steps were not taken to anticipate and defuse pushback from potentially hostile constituencies.

To accomplish this, the APA task force is obligated to honor the principles of ‘diversity’ and ‘inclusion’, if only for public relations purposes. These principles, as applied to this specific context, mean that the committee must include scholars who hold a wide variety of views on intelligence and the cause of group differences, even

if some of these views are not nearly as empirically supportable compared to ‘traditional’ views. Given the social implications of *The Bell Curve* for its claims about racial group differences (as well as the hostility the book received from prominent minority spokespersons), the APA committee is obliged to include ethnic/racial minority scholars (some of whom are openly hostile to traditional intelligence research and its resulting conclusions about race differences). Committee members with diverse views can then be satisfied that their contributions have been represented in the report, even when their views cannot withstand empirical scrutiny. If the report is criticized by hostile constituencies, then APA can claim that the committee generating the report was ‘diverse’ and ‘inclusive’ – and therefore representative of a wide variety of viewpoints.

### *Science Becomes the Handmaiden To the Popular Press*

Politicization leads to a warped relationship between science and the popular press. Instead of press reports following scientific discoveries, initiatives promoted by professional scientific organizations instead follow popular press narratives.

APA advocacy articles complaining about the ‘epidemic’ of racism are sparked by high-profile media reports of the deaths of black citizens (e.g., Freddie Gray, Philando Castile, Michael Brown, George Floyd) typically from the hands of white police officers. These articles are often accompanied by images of urban riots or angry mobs wielding protest signs and fists in the air demanding ‘justice’ (e.g., APA calls for comprehensive policy changes to end the US racism pandemic (apaservices.org). All of these images reinforce the narrative of a vigilant and racially sensitive / progressive APA linking arms with, and feeling the pain of, the proletariat in ending racism.

Missing from this narrative is any detached and sober empirical analyses of these matters (primarily because it does not fit easy, emotion-fueled narratives). When this is done, researchers find no empirical evidence of racial bias in fatal police shootings when benchmarked against overall violent crime rates (Fachner & Carter, 2015; Fryer, 2018; MacDonald, 2016, 2020a, b). When arrest rates for violent crime (i.e., murder, rape, robbery, aggravated assaults, property crime ) in thirteen cities are subjected to proper statistical analyses, arrest rates for violent crimes committed by Blacks (against both Black and White victims) were usually 9–11 times the rates for Whites (Murray, 2021).

There is no healthy skepticism by psychological researchers (at least those highly promoted by APA) about the accuracy of the ‘epidemic-of-racism’ narrative in policing. To illustrate, Tony Timpa died in police custody caused in part by rough handling and physical restraints of police officers (which involved a policeman’s knee to his back for 13 min). Body cam footage revealed cops mocking him while restraining him (Carter & Alsup, 2019). That same year, a cop in Arizona unleashed a barrage of gunfire from his rifle at Daniel Shaver, a man in a motel room who had been reported as having a gun. In reality, Shaver was down on his hands and knees

in the motel hallway attempting to comply with the officer, all the while begging the officer not to shoot him. The man was shot anyway and subsequently died (Ortiz, 2017). Jeffery Tevis was a 50-year-old man who was fatally shot by an Alabama police officer for ‘holding a large metal spoon in a threatening manner’. The officer was wearing a body cam but it was not turned on (McCarthy, 2015). *All of these victims were white*, but no media frenzy accompanied these and other similar stories involving white victims (see Walsh, 2021), and it is not likely that the average American knows who they are.

Systematically compiled evidence documents the efforts of print and TV journalism to ignore or downplay the murders or victimization of whites by blacks for fear of being called ‘racist’ (Flaherty, 2013, 2015). Even when there is incontrovertible evidence of overt, anti-White animus on the part of Black perpetrators, there is no national frenzy of media coverage of these crimes. To illustrate, Frederick Scott, who is black, killed six whites over the course of several months since 2016. In 2014, Scott is on record as saying that he wanted to kill all white people (Lukitsch, 2021). Justin Tyran Roberts, who is Black, shot and wounded four whites in a shooting spree, including one victim who was shot in the back. When questioned by the public defender, Roberts complained about white males who had taken things from him all of his life (Chitwood, 2021). Charles Edward Turner, who is black, stabbed a white 12-year-old boy in the neck with a box cutter at a local MacDonald’s store. According to reports, Turner was overheard muttering about ‘white devils’ and using other anti-white slurs at the crime scene (Fairbanks, 2021).

These and countless other similar examples are absent in the ‘racism pandemic’ narratives of APA. Instead, APA appears to be following the strategy of Minnesota Attorney General Keith Ellison (who is black), articulated in an interview with Scott Pelley for 60 Minutes (The prosecution team in the Derek Chauvin murder trial speaks to 60 Minutes - Bing video). Ellison admitted “We don’t have any evidence that Derek Chauvin factored in George Floyd’s race as he did what he did,” Ellison told Pelley. Which is why Ellison explained that even though he couldn’t charge Chauvin with a hate crime, he could charge the entire system with racism in this specific case. Ellison states: “In order for us to stop and pay serious attention to this case and be outraged by it, it’s not necessary that Derek Chauvin had a specific racial intent to harm George Floyd. ... (P)eople of color, Black people, end up with harsh treatment from law enforcement. And other folks doing the exact same thing just don’t.” Reflecting on the commentary surrounding the death of George Floyd and the prosecution of the main police officer charged with his killing, Shapiro (2021) opines:

*Chauvin was convicted not of his individual criminal activity but of a charge that was never even brought against him: the charge of racism ... In the end, evidence for systemic racism is utterly unnecessary. Systemic racism requires no evidence of intent, either individual or systemic. It requires only evidence of disparate outcome by race ... But to ask for evidence of systemic racism beyond mere inequality of outcome is to be complicit in systemic racism, according to the circular logic of systemic racism. Any incident of white-cop-on-black-*

*suspect violence must be chalked up to the racist system; the evidence of the racist system is the presence of such violence in the first place; to deny that race lies at the root of such incidents makes you a cog in the racist system. The circular logic, protected by an enormous so-called Kafka trap – in which protestations of innocence are treated as proof of guilt – means that systemic racism is subject to no falsification. And that’s precisely the point.*

## **Final Thoughts on How Multicultural Politicization Corrupts Psychological Science**

On general principle, cross-cultural, cultural, and multicultural psychology are all desperately needed, in order to encourage research and data-collection on previously neglected and under-researched communities. There are administrative, political, and/or access issues that create real barriers to such research. Thus, efforts to break down these barriers are to be applauded. In order for new theories and concepts to be robust, they need to be replicated using numerous and diverse samples across different locations in order to inspire confidence in their explanatory power (e.g., Mezquita et al., 2019; Sorrel et al., 2021). Science must also be open to the discovery of novel observations or new constructs observed within insular cultural groups that have limited interaction with broader society (e.g., Brown-Rice, 2013). When researchers posit new psychological constructs that are derived from research conducted exclusively with specific subpopulation groups, they are still obligated to test competing theories using rigorous hypothesis-testing procedures and methods.

Unfortunately, when such research becomes politicized, then science simply becomes a cover for sociopolitical advocacy. Many graduate students who are interested in multicultural research couldn’t care less if sociopolitical ideology trumps the science, as their main focus is to do whatever is needed to secure a university degree that would open doors for lucrative jobs. But, for others who sincerely value scientific integrity, it is crucial to understand the myriad ways in how multicultural politicization corrupts psychological science. This chapter concludes with eight brief principles of these corrosive effects, described below.

### ***Politicization Causes Multicultural Psychology to Be Synonymous with Activist, Agenda-Driven Research***

Publications that chronicle the founding of multicultural psychology often converge in acknowledging that the subdiscipline was birthed in reaction against research that, in their opinion, depicts racial/ethnic minority groups as ‘inferior’, ‘deficient’, ‘deprived’, or ‘disadvantaged’ (Cokley, 2006; Hall, 2014; Leong, 2014; Pickren & Burchett, 2014).

Therefore, multicultural psychology is ultimately driven by the need for *impression management*. That is to say, the goals of multicultural psychology are to shape

the impressions that the wider psychological community has of minority groups by: (1) promoting victimization fundamentally (e.g., Comas-Díaz et al., 2019); (2) promoting ideas designed to question, attack, discourage, or forbid the use of measuring instruments which reveal average group differences that might be embarrassing to some (e.g., Benuto & Leany, 2015; Gopaul-McNicol & Armour-Thomas, 2002; Gould, 1996; Onwuegbuzie & Daley, 2001); (3) reframing the interpretation of behavioral standards to which persons from minority groups have disproportionately higher problems adhering (e.g., law abidingness, rule-following, restraint of impulses; thinking logically; Allen & Boykin, 1992; Boykin, 1978; Dunn et al., 1990); and/or (4) deflecting attention away from disproportionate problems experienced by minority groups to an emphasis on their ‘cultural strengths’ (e.g., see Ai et al., 2017; Johnson & Carter, 2020).

### ***Politicization Solidifies The Multiculturalism/ Marxism Connection***

There is nothing particularly new or even original about social justice or critical race theory, as these concepts are the modern-day grandchildren of Marxism – a philosophy that dates back to the mid-nineteenth century (see Table 2, Frisby, 2023, previous chapter in this text). Although it has consistently failed as an economic theory in every location in which it has been tried (Bovard, 2018; Kengor, 2020; Parquet, 2015), it nevertheless continues to attract devoted adherents seeking a coherent explanation for social conditions that they do not like. Applied psychology’s devotion to politicized multiculturalism has eerie similarities to totalitarian thought leading to the communist revolution in the Soviet Union in the 1920s. Ellis writes (1999):

*Unlike the obviously alien implantation that was Communism, what makes multiculturalism particularly insidious and difficult to combat is that it usurps the moral and intellectual infrastructure of the West. Although it claims to champion the deepest held beliefs of the West, it is in fact a perversion and systematic undermining of the very idea of the West. What we call “political correctness” actually dates back to the Soviet Union of the 1920s (politicheskaya pravil’nost’ in Russian), and was the extension of political control to education, psychiatry, ethics, and behavior. It was an essential component of the attempt to make sure all aspects of life were consistent with ideological orthodoxy – which is the distinctive feature of all totalitarianisms ... As Mao Tse-Tung, the Great Helmsman, put it, “Not to have a correct political orientation is like not having a soul.” Mao’s little red book is full of exhortations to follow the correct path of Communist thought, and by the late 1960s Maoist political correctness was well established in American universities. The final stage of development, which we are witnessing now, is the result of cross-fertilization with all the latest “isms:” anti-racism, feminism, structuralism, and post-modernism, which now dominate university curricula. The result is a new and virulent strain of totalitarianism, whose parallels to the Communist era are obvious. Today’s dogmas have led to rigid requirements of language, thought, and behavior; and violators are treated as if they were mentally unbalanced, just as Soviet dissidents were.*

Just like traditional Marxism subdivides and assigns human beings into the ‘bourgeois’ (‘oppressors’) and the ‘proletariat’ (‘the oppressed’), politicized applied multiculturalism assumes that ‘oppressed people’ all have the same experiences, defined by their identities (typically rooted in their racial group membership; Lindsay, 2022; Pluckrose & Lindsay, 2020, p. 193). Here, individuals are little more than representatives of their racial/ethnic groups. By extension, learning about groups is believed to necessarily inform psychologists about the behavior of individuals who are members of the group. If a client is white or a ‘person of color’, there are certain characteristics that are assumed to apply to individuals from these groups (Mullarkey, 2020). On this point, Hollis (2020) writes:

*During my lifetime, the national conversation about race has gradually moved from culpability for individual behavior to ... collective culpability without regard to behavior or ideology. This transition ... is dangerous ... there is plenty of modern precedent to show us what happens when a country incorporates a system of collective culpability purportedly to remediate oppression. The Reign of Terror during the French Revolution sent tens of thousands of innocent people to the guillotine. Tens of millions were killed during Russia’s and China’s revolutionary upheavals of the 20th century, condemned as “bourgeois” or “running-dog capitalists.” Even in tiny Cambodia, nearly 3 million people – a fifth of the population – were murdered by the communist Khmer Rouge regime, which condemned anyone who was educated as an “enemy of the poor ...” a system that blames classes of people for things they have not individually done also exonerates classes of people for things they have individually done ... [M]obs of violent individuals have used justifiable outrage and lawful protests [in America] as a cover for vandalism, arson, looting, theft, destruction, brutal assault, and even murder. And yet there are voices in our “national conversations” that would excuse this behavior as an understandable response by the oppressed in a system that is rigged against them.*

To illustrate, an APA Monitor online article entitled ‘Thwarting Modern Prejudice’ writes glowingly of the 2001 National Multicultural Conference and Summit II (DeAngelis, 2001), where APA Division leaders, practitioners, and students “shared their views on the nation’s progress – or lack thereof – in accepting those who aren’t white, male, heterosexual and able-bodied” (p. 26). The author goes on to write about how ‘multiple identities’ was a major grievance theme at the conference. That is, the field’s ignorance and/or lack of adequate recognition for those who possess multiple identities that combine race, gender, sexual orientation, and/or disability status was seen as an impediment to psychology being fully culturally competent. All of these sentiments promote the notion that individuals having multiple identities cannot be content, happy, or satisfied unless psychology changes to ‘include’ them in comparable recognition that is perceived to be afforded to other groups. This is a consistent theme in ‘critical pedagogy’, which holds that institutions must be torn down in order to be rebuilt for a just, equitable, and inclusive society (see Table 2, Frisby, 2023, previous chapter in this text).

This intergroup jealousy, envy, and resentment is what fuels Marxist-inspired activism in multicultural psychology – in addition to being used to justify all manner of mandated practices for psychology training programs (e.g., aggressive recruitment of minority applicants; mandating cultural competence training). All this is done in the name of promoting ‘equity in outcomes’, a condition which is considered to be both achievable (despite no evidence) and morally unassailable.

By hitching their ideological wagon to cultural Marxism, multicultural psychology paints a largely adversarial picture of modern race relations – where non-Whites are depicted as living under constant victimization (Neville et al., 2021; Sue et al., 2019), and Whites are in need of ‘waking up’ from their toxic Whiteness (Sue, 2005) and must adopt a guilty, apologetic stance toward non-whites (American Psychological Association, 2021a).

### ***The Presence of Racism Is Viewed as a Sufficient Condition that Explains the Totality of Minority Problems***

As previous discussions have shown, multicultural psychology depicts race as primordial, which leads to an obsession with ‘racism’ as the all-purpose explanation for understanding minority identity and problems in contemporary American society. In multicultural psychology, debates over racial issues boil down to a fundamental confusion over how to navigate answers to two fundamental questions:

Question #1: Does racism exist?

Question #2: Is racism an adequate and/or sufficient explanation for the problems that American minorities face?

Most reasonable persons having many years of life experience would have little problem answering a definitive ‘YES’ to the first question. However, it would be more difficult – as well as requiring a higher level of empirical and historical investigative expertise – to provide a definitive answer to the second question. Nevertheless, there are numerous social scientists and journalists who have tackled both questions using a variety of empirical tools at their disposal (D’Souza, 1995; Murray, 2021; Riley, 2017; Sowell, 2020; Steele, 1998, 2007; Williams, 2011). In addition to giving a definitive ‘YES’ to the first question, many critics of the politicization of contemporary race relations answer with an emphatic ‘NO’ to the second question. In contrast, contemporary multicultural psychology would provide an emphatic ‘YES’ to both questions.

Critics of the politicization of multiculturalism often argue that *there is no necessary relationship* between an affirmative answer to the first question and an affirmative answer to the second question. In contrast, multicultural psychology implicitly *assumes* that an affirmative answer to the first question *necessarily requires* an affirmative answer to the second question (Neville et al., 2021). This is why any national instance of a perceived racial incident against non-Whites is splashed across online APA newsletters as justification for new initiatives to ‘fight’, ‘dismantle’, or ‘disrupt’ racism (Andoh, 2021).

Ellis (1999) writes:

*“This, of course, is the beauty of “racism” and “sexism” for today’s culture attackers – sin can be extended far beyond individuals to include institutions, literature, language, history, laws, customs, entire civilizations. The charge of “institutional racism” is no different from declaring an entire economic class an enemy of the people. “Racism” and “sexism” are*

*multiculturalism's assault weapons, its Big Ideas, just as class warfare was for Communists, and the effects are the same. If a crime can be collectivized all can be guilty because they belong to the wrong group ... Even if [individual whites] have never oppressed anyone they "belong to the race that is guilty of everything."*

### ***Politicization Requires the Erection of Straw Men To Knock Down***

In order to justify the cultivation of a separatist ideology surrounding psychological research on minorities, multicultural psychology must rely on a narrative of past and current victimization and cultural misunderstanding on the part of 'white psychology'. In describing the history of psychology before the emergence of multicultural psychology, Hall (2014) writes:

*One way to prove [white] superiority and to keep minorities down was through intelligence testing ... Jensen ... postulated the existence of innate and hereditary differences in intelligence as fact and that Blacks were inherently less intelligent than Whites. Policies and programs directing the education and future of minorities were affected by this hypothesis. It has taken decades to prove his hypothesis incorrect and to reveal intelligence tests as culturally biased. (p. 4)*

Comments such as these are typical of the inflammatory and uninformed rhetoric of militant multicultural psychology, which serves only to erect straw men to knock down. First, comments such as these paint historical psychological research with an overly 'broad brush'. While one can easily identify clearly offensive attitudes from early psychologists writing in the nineteenth century (Gould, 1978, 1996), multicultural psychology cannot document any of these attitudes from psychologists (i.e., desires to 'keep minorities down') in recent or contemporary writing.

Second, multicultural psychology has no contemporary evidence that the purpose of intelligence testing is to 'keep minorities down'. As anyone who has worked with intelligence testing knows, the purpose of such testing is to assist with the identification and diagnosis of psychological and learning problems in applied settings (e.g., see Kranzler & Floyd, 2020).

Third, the existence of average differences in mean scores on intelligence tests is an established finding both domestically and internationally based on data gleaned from nearly every continent on earth (Jones, 2016; Lynn, 2015; Lynn & Vanhanen, 2012; Rindermann, 2018), and is not the assertion of only one 'crackpot' scientist (Gottfredson, 1997). Furthermore, the scientific study of the heritability of intelligence and numerous other psychological traits is a mainstream activity contributing to the study of *individual differences*, and not for supporting racial/ethnic animus.

Fourth, the claim that 'Blacks are inherently less intelligent than Whites' paints a distorted picture of how serious intelligence researchers communicate conclusions from their research. These researchers have clearly communicated that the full range of intellectual variation is found in all groups (Gottfredson, 1997; Jensen, 1973, 1998). Due to wide variation within all groups, it is erroneous and

irresponsible to ascribe generalizations to individuals (and comparisons between individuals) on the basis of their racial group membership (Jensen, 1973).

Fifth, there is not one scintilla of evidence or data which documents that ‘policies and programs directing the education and future of minorities were affected by this [racial intelligence inferiority] hypothesis’.

Sixth, and finally, the claim that “ It has taken decades to prove his hypothesis incorrect and to reveal intelligence tests as culturally biased” is a statement that is made up entirely of mist and vapor. The finding that racial/ethnic groups differ in mean intelligence test scores is not merely a hypothesis, but has been thoroughly validated to this day as a well-established finding (Rushton & Jensen, 2005). It is also an established finding that well-constructed intelligence tests are *not biased* when used with American-born English-speaking groups of any race or ethnicity (Jensen, 1980; Reynolds, 2000; Reynolds & Carson, 2005; Reynolds & Lowe, 2009; Reynolds & Suzuki, 2013).

These and other irresponsible statements within academic psychology serve only to maintain a useful political narrative of moral virtue in a constant struggle against moral evil.

### ***Multicultural Politicization Discredits Legitimate Opinions That Do Not Fit the Ideology***

Ongoing societal victimization, the omnipresence of racism, denying the existence of significant average subpopulation differences in important psychological traits, the dogged belief in the efficacy of valid culture x treatment interactions despite little to no evidence, and the impulse to reframe objective behavioral standards as culturally relative – are all pillars of multicultural psychology that must be believed and fiercely protected in order for the ideology to maintain its credibility among supporters. That is why the appearance of any article, conference presentation, or book that challenges these prevailing orthodoxies is followed by immediate condemnation that is both swift and severe. Illustrative examples are not difficult to find.

*The Bell Curve* (Herrnstein & Murray, 1994) was a 1994 book which acknowledged, then explained in mind-numbing statistical detail, the societal implications of racial group differences in average IQ scores. Immediately following its publication, the book was ferociously attacked in academic journals, books, and the popular press as ‘bad science’, ‘the flimsiest kind of pseudo-science’, ‘designed to promote a radical political agenda’, ‘scientific racism’, ‘ugly’, ‘a racist screed’, ‘methodologically pathetic’, and ‘the work of neo-nazis’ (Fischer et al., 1995; Fraser, 1995; Graves & Johnson, 1995; Jacoby & Glauber, 1995; Murray, 1995).

Haidt and Jussim (2016) wrote a Wall Street Journal article (*‘Hard Truths About Race on Campus’*) questioning the value (or at least pointing out the negative unintended consequences) of diversity and affirmative action programs on college campuses. This was followed almost immediately (six days later) with the publication

of an online rebuttal, mockingly titled ‘*Half Truths About Race on Campus*’ (Carter, 2016). The article charged Haidt and Jussim with using ‘slanted representations of broad psychological theory’ that caters to the fears and anxieties of Whites. Haidt and Jussim’s suggestion to organize campus policies to de-emphasize the importance of race was ridiculed in the Carter article as supporting ‘colorblindness ideology’, which in Carter’s view makes problems worse. She further ridicules the observation that colleges often lower admission standards to increase diversity, referencing debunked stereotype threat research (e.g., see Jussim, 2015; Sackett et al., 2004; Wax, 2009) as an alternative explanation for lower admissions scores of Black students.

Microaggressions theory is valuable to multicultural psychology for nourishing perceptions of ongoing racial victimization in American society (Sue et al., 2019; Sue & Spanierman, 2020). Following the publication of articles that were critical of microaggressions theory and research (e.g., Lilienfeld, 2017; Thomas, 2008), its advocates responded with accusations that (particularly white) critics are motivated by feelings of anger, defensiveness, and guilt over their privileged status. Criticisms of microaggression theory were framed as reflecting little more than white peoples’ need to dismiss, negate, and minimize the experiential realities of persons of color. More pointedly, criticism of microaggressions theory was belittled as a ‘line of defense that prevents (white critics) from exploring their own biases and prejudices’ (Sue et al., 2008, p. 277).

Williams (2020a) published a rebuttal to the Lilienfeld (2017) microaggressions critique that claims to provide “more than enough empirical evidence to conclude that microaggressions are real, harmful, and demand action” (p. 22). Based on this claim, she proposes eleven suggestions that scholars should adopt – one of which states: “Acknowledge your unearned power and privilege in your perspective, research, and writings” (p. 21). This assumes implicitly that those who criticize microaggressions theory are White (and that criticism of microaggressions theory cannot be based on any valid objections other than belonging to the ‘wrong’ racial group). She then criticizes proposals to end microaggressions training on college campuses and discourage usage of the term (based on the research of critics of microaggressions theory) as ‘racist’ (p. 19).

### ***Politicization Leads to the Construction of Narratives that Are Unfalsifiable***

Karl Popper, the eminent scientific philosopher, argued that a necessary (although not sufficient) condition for a theory to be characterized as ‘scientific’ is that it must put forth specific criteria that would enable it to be *falsified* (or refuted) as well as supported (Popper, 1959).

In militant multicultural psychology, ‘Whiteness’ is the all-purpose construct frequently used to guard against the obligation to provide criteria for scientific

falsifiability. That is, any criticism of multicultural psychology is assumed to be associated with ‘Whiteness’, which by definition invalidates the criticism (according to cultural Marxist theory). In some (thankfully rare) instances, whites are physically barred from participating in discussions about racial issues (Harding, 2016; Randall, 2017). Even when such barriers do not exist, many Whites feel that being silent during race discussions will be the safest strategy to protect them from getting into trouble. Unfortunately, cultural Marxists have invented the ‘Silence in Violence’ mantra to shame whites even when nothing is said that could even remotely be construed as showing racial animus (Jackson, 2020; Turley, 2020). When timid whites do muster enough courage to speak, the dictates of microaggressions theory dissects every jot and tittle of what is uttered for signs of covert racism (Sue, 2010; Sue & Spanierman, 2020). If a white person is brave enough to publicly disagree with accusations of unconscious racism or White privilege, they are accused of being ‘fragile racists’ under White Fragility theory (DiAngelo, 2018). If a White person goes so far as to assertively point out the flaws of multicultural psychology, this is interpreted as pitiable White blindness, at minimum, or full-blown racism, at worst (Sue et al., 2008; Williams, 2020a). Criticism by non-White scholars is also rendered invalid by fiat. Non-Whites who in any way disagree with one or more tenets of militant multiculturalism can be easily dismissed as suffering from ‘internalized racism’ (David et al., 2019; Nittle, 2021; Pyke, 2010).

### ***Politicization of Multicultural Psychology Encourages Intellectual Laziness***

The celebration of intellectual laziness is arguably the worst and most destructive consequence of politicization in multicultural psychology. Science is expected to be constantly moving forward, in the sense that it is expected to generate new knowledge and strengthen existing knowledge. This enterprise involves the interaction of two processes: one that involves the generation and empirical testing of new theories to better explain phenomena, and another that is energized by scientific skepticism. Scientific skepticism involves the cultivation of an attitude that questions the veracity of claims until such claims can be empirically tested and replicated. Whenever new ideas suddenly appear on the scene which appear to originate from outside of mainstream science, the good scientist looks for clear criteria that would inform the field as to how such ideas can be falsified using the standard tools of science.

In contrast to this is an opposing attitude within science that celebrates the subordination of scientific principles in favor of social movements that promise a better and more utopian society. In the late nineteenth century/early twentieth century, Sir Frances Galton argued that general impressions are not to be trusted within the context of scientific communities. He opined that there is an attitude of a hatred and horror for statistical methods, because such impressions can be subjected to ‘cold-blooded

verification’ (see Pearson, 1914, p. 297). As far back as seven decades ago, Hoffer (1951) coined the term ‘true believer’ to refer to emotionally vulnerable persons who are willing to blindly follow mass movements (or at least to follow them on the flimsiest of pretenses), despite overwhelming evidence that refutes the inflated claims of these movements. One author, writing a forward for a book on ‘science vs. pseudoscience’ in clinical psychology (Lilienfeld et al., 2015), identifies unreliable assessment methods, the lack of empirical testing for clinical assumptions, confirmation bias, the absence of falsifiability criteria, and the temptations of fame, notoriety, and money that accrues to those who gain a reputation for being an expert in an exotic subject – as factors which influence non-scientific writing (p. x). There are special temptations for intellectual laziness that have become intimately associated with politicized multicultural psychology. These include, but are not limited to:

**Failure to Appreciate Heterogeneity Within Groups** In its zeal to represent the sociopolitical force that ‘smashes’ prejudice, discrimination, and racism; multicultural psychology falls into the easy trap of treating ethnic/racial/language groups as if they are cultural monoliths (Cepeda, 2017; Ray, 2020; Woods, 2003) – all of whom are supposedly united in their opposition against white oppression. In contrast, persons of African descent are incredibly diverse in their countries of origin (e.g., native-born vs. immigrants from Africa, West Indies, or South America; Worrell, 2005), cultural traditions (e.g., traditions of northerners vs. southerners), social class (those who are part of the poor/‘underclass’ vs. those who are middle to upper class), age/generation (e.g., current citizens who have lived through the civil rights era of the 1960s vs. those who did not), and degree of interracial admixture (NBC News, 2022). American Hispanics are extremely diverse in their abilities to speak Spanish, physical features (e.g., white Spaniards, Afro-Cubans), immigration status (e.g., native born vs. recency of immigration), political orientations (liberal vs. conservative), or countries of origin (e.g., Latin America, Spain, Puerto Rico; Lopez et al., 2005). There are over 300 Native American tribal groups who differ in language, customs, and traditions (Michaelis, 1997).

Associated with such diversity are wide differences in individuals’ attitudes/opinions toward, or responses to racism, discrimination, and prejudice – and the extent to which these constructs have any significance in their day-to-day lives (e.g., see Bruce, 2018; Model, 2011). Appreciating these nuances requires attention to detail, caution, and humility – all of which argue against simplistic racial narratives and morality plays.

**Failure to Define Key Terms** In multicultural psychology, terms such as ‘white privilege’, ‘systemic racism’, ‘implicit/unconscious bias’, ‘oppression’, or ‘inequality’ are not clearly defined, or they are so sloppily defined as to encompass almost everything that multicultural psychologists do not like – thereby exaggerating their influence in society (see O’Donohue, 2023, this volume).

As one among numerous examples, American minority groups are often described by academics as ‘oppressed’ (Prilleltensky, 2003; Suzuki et al., 2019). Frisby (2018c) argues that the use of the word ‘oppression’ for describing the

circumstances of racial/ethnic minority groups in modern America bears little to no relationship to the actual oppression of people groups around the world. He writes:

*Is oppression as used here comparable to the oppression experienced by the “untouchable” Dalit peoples of India, who are treated as practically subhuman, having their marriage and occupational choices rigidly dictated by their caste membership ... , who are regularly denied access to basic healthcare and nutritional services, or whose children are not allowed to touch the meals of children from other castes in the state schools in some regions ...? Is oppression as used here also comparable to how women are treated some Muslim countries, which observe strict rules related to what women wear, their social relationships with men, how they are to act in public, and how far they can advance occupationally ...? (p. 63)*

In the economic sphere, there is factual evidence that would cause reasonable persons to question the characterization of Blacks as an ‘oppressed’ people group in America. According to the Current Population Survey Annual Social and Economic Supplement (CPS ASEC), for example, Black Americans showed a poverty rate of 18.8 percent in 2019. Although any degree of poverty is unwelcome, this figure was the lowest rate observed since poverty estimates were first produced for this group in 1959 (where Black poverty rates were estimated at over 50 percent; Creamer, 2020).

According to Wright (2020), nearly 50 million American Blacks spend more than 1 trillion dollars a year on a wide variety of consumer products. Wright (2020) opines that the buying power of African Americans is ‘on par with many countries’ gross domestic products. Related to this point, one Black writer stated in 2008 that if Black America were its own country, it would be the 16th wealthiest nation in the world (Elder, 2008) – a figure which has been disputed and lowered to 44th in the world by Tsang (2014). According to the most recent statistics at the time of this writing (Lynkova, 2021; Statista Research Department, 2013), approximately 8 percent of American millionaires are Black (compared to 7 percent for Hispanics and 76 percent for Whites). Of the 614 billionaires in the United States, seven are Black (Rogers, 2020).

Facts gleaned from the political sphere also undermine the perception of American Blacks as living in a state of perpetual oppression. Since the late nineteenth century, Black Americans have served in all levels of Congress (as Congresspersons, Senators, and as Subcommittee Chairpersons; US Government Printing Office, 2021). Since the latter half of the twentieth century, Black Americans have held high government leadership positions as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Supreme Court Justice, Ambassador to the United Nations, National Security Advisor, Secretary of State, Secretary of Housing and Urban Development, Attorney General, Vice President, and President. Since the 1970s, blacks have had high visibility in the roles of big city mayors, state governors, big city police chiefs, and big city school superintendents (Coleman, 2020; Hove, 2020; Rivas, 2013; Zitner, 2020).

In popular culture, Black American men and women are beloved figures both nationally and internationally in the areas of sports, music, and entertainment (e.g., Western, 2021a). Many have earned billions in income from their athletic/acting talents, business acumen, and commercial endorsements (e.g., Celebrity Net Worth, 2020; Sportskeeda, 2021; Western, 2021b).

As reported in one 2020 article, 4 of the last 5 men named People Magazine's 'Sexiest Man Alive' have been Black (NewsOne, 2020). At the time of this writing, advertisers are making a concerted effort to use interracial couples to advertise their products on television – partly as a means to attract certain segments of the buying community, and partly to aggressively reflect pro-diversity values (Block, 2021; Golden, 2018).

A newly arrived Martian observing these facts would reasonably be quite perplexed after being immersed in multicultural psychology's characterization of American minorities (and particularly Blacks) as suffering perpetual oppression under a 'pandemic of racism' (Evans et al., 2020; Likewise, 2020; Mills, 2020). This concept is discussed next.

**'Racism': The Shape-shifting Chameleon** The concept of 'racism' functions as a gelatinous shape-shifting entity that is so pliable as to fit whatever features are required in order to make an ideological argument (Frisby, 2020). *This makes objective analyses nearly impossible.* Said another way, it is literally impossible for an archery competition to decide which competitor is deserving of a gold, silver, or bronze medal if the target continually and unpredictably shifts its spatial position from competitor to competitor. In some contexts, multicultural psychology characterizes racism as incorrect thoughts (Sue, 2014). In other contexts, multicultural psychology characterizes racism as incorrect attitudes (Edwards, 2017; Neville et al., 2001). In still other contexts, multicultural psychology characterizes racism as incorrect words or phrases (Sue, 2010). In some contexts, multicultural psychology characterizes racism as incorrect actions (Ridley, 2005). Defining racism as an uncharitable unspoken attitude or feeling toward other groups literally condemns the entire human race throughout all time (including multicultural psychologists themselves).

The word 'racism' is most useful for multicultural psychology primarily for its shock value. At the time of this writing, the consequences for anyone or anything that is publicly accused of 'racism' in America (whether such accusations are deserved or not) are swift, severe, and often times utterly devastating for one's livelihood, reputation, or even one's physical safety (e.g., see Clark, 2021; Gstalter, 2021; Hibberd, 2021; Sharp, 2021; Soave, 2021; Stunson, 2021).

'Racism' is a favorite word used by multicultural psychology advocacy to describe whatever social, economic, or political conditions that advocates do not like. Since the mere utterance of the word 'racism' connotes evil, then audiences' emotions are easily whipped up to such a frenzy as to mobilize support for eradicating whatever unwanted conditions that are deemed 'racist' (Abrams, 2021). As one among numerous examples, an online article in the APA Monitor is promoted as a 'special report' entitled *Psychology's Urgent Need to Dismantle Racism* (Andoh, 2021). In the article, 'racism' is in play whenever psychologists make generalizations about human behavior from standardization samples that are composed disproportionately of Western, educated, industrialized, rich, and democratic (WEIRD) societies. They promote as an example to emulate a paper by Buchanan et al. (2021) entitled *Upending Racism in Psychological Science: Strategies to Change How Our*

*Science is Conducted, Reported, Reviewed, & Disseminated*. Buchanan et al. propose a 'diversity accountability index' that can be used to rate journal articles (the criteria for which would include, but is not limited to, the racial/ethnic makeup of samples; the use of inclusive, culturally sensitive language; and if there exist explicit commitments to 'non-racist' principles in journal mission statements) (PsyArXiv Preprints | Upending Racism in Psychological Science: Strategies to Change How Our Science is Conducted, Reported, Reviewed & Disseminated).

According to Andoh (2021), racism in psychology is also implied from an analysis of psychologist demographics and supply/demand projections for racial/ethnic minority psychologists in future years (demand-racial-groups.pdf (apa.org)). The unspoken implication made by Andoh (2021) is that racial/ethnic minority populations can only be adequately served by racial/ethnic minority psychologists, and that failure to provide adequate numbers of racial/ethnic minority psychologists by training programs is a form of 'white supremacy'.

The article invokes neuropsychological and implicit bias studies (which use computerized reaction-time methodologies) that presumably document the presence of racism in psychology research samples. Ignored are numerous studies, analyses, and reviews that have offered plausible counter-explanations (at least), or have empirically debunked such assumptions and interpretations (at best; Arkes & Tetlock, 2004; Blanton et al., 2009; Mitchell & Tetlock, 2017; Nagai, 2017; Satel & Lilienfeld, 2015; Singal, 2017).

In many spots throughout the article, 'racism' simply means a lack of diversity. Andoh (2021) quotes one psychologist who argues that if psychology is to be anti-racist, "at the most basic level you have to make the discipline more diverse". This means that if editors, associate editors, and editorial boards lack diversity, then this must be rectified in order that 'people of color actually have a say in how the journals [are] run'.

In other spots in the article, whites fight racism by getting to the place where they think like multiculturalists want them to think. In order for whites in psychology to dismantle their racism (that they are assumed to possess simply because they are white), they must engage in the 'uncomfortable work' of striving for 'awareness of their own positionality in relation to ethnicity and race', gain 'an understanding of one's place in the racial and sociocultural hierarchy', and shed their 'past obliviousness about systemic racism'. If these processes are not done correctly, according to Andoh (2021), this leads to 'a sense of complicity in upholding White supremacy and benefitting from a racist system', in addition to experiencing 'feelings of White fragility, grief, and loss as their racial awareness increases'.

Andoh (2021) also argues that 'racist norms' exist in psychology research, which can only be 'disrupted' by organizing and training faculty to disrupt 'systemic inequalities in peer review' by training faculty to provide 'constructive, culturally aware feedback to minoritized trainees'. Finally, 'upending racism' also requires white psychologists to unilaterally believe any stories minority colleagues share about experiences with racism, as well as 'engage in the process of institutional transformation in solidarity with their professional colleagues of color'.

**Dazzled by ‘Big Names’** Multicultural psychology, generally, and multicultural counseling psychology, specifically, are dominated by prolific scholarship from a relatively small handful of big name ‘superstars’. These individuals cultivate stellar reputations as prolific textbook authors, invited keynote speakers at national conventions, presidents of APA or its divisions, and leaders of blue ribbon task forces on multicultural competencies and ethical/professional standards.

However, consider the following opinion statements (all of which are copied verbatim from publications written by recognized ‘superstars’ in counseling psychology). The citations to these statements are not provided in order to protect anonymity:

- ‘we believe that white racism represents one of the most important moral problems of the 21st century’
- ‘given the immense harm inflicted on individuals and groups of color via prejudice and discrimination, it becomes imperative for our nation to begin the process of disrupting, dismantling and disarming the constant onslaught of micro- and macroaggressions’
- ‘racism is what people do, regardless of what they think or feel’

These opinion statements do not represent verifiable facts. Nevertheless, these opinions achieve the dubious status as unassailable principles within multicultural counseling psychology, simply because of the scholarly reputation of the person who utters them. These opinions are rarely, if ever seriously challenged by peers within the field. If they are challenged, such challenges rarely achieve publication status by mainstream journals within the field. If by chance such challenges are published, authors are forced to endure tremendous critical headwinds from hostile reviewers and journal editors before publication (e.g., see Gottfredson, 1994; Warne & Frisby Chaps. 15, 16, & 17, this text). And, once contrarian articles are published, they are rarely cited or taken seriously by students and scholars in the field (see comments from Interviewee #7 in Frisby, 2018a, p. 191). Since students are rarely, if ever, exposed to any contrarian opinions, they come to believe that any opinion uttered by academic superstars constitutes their field’s ‘truth’.

**Tone-Deafness and Lack of Self-Awareness** Multicultural Psychology is blind to its own tribalism, stereotyping, and groupthink – and how the basic rules of evidence-based- practice have been suspended for multiculturalism ideology. Newby (2020) defines ‘tribal thinking’ or ‘group thinking’ as:

*... the manner of thinking, behaving or responding in accordance to one’s social or political group’s dogma. It is the echoing of tribal pronouncements and sentiments by loyalists without analytical or rational consideration. (p. 7)*

Berreby (2008) writes:

*When you use a category, you treat different individuals as if they were all the same – interchangeable instances of at least one trait they all share. (p. 64)*

At another place, Berreby (2008) writes:

*... many people act as if ethnicity is always relevant in all situations, no matter what you do or say ... [in contrast], people whose access to markets, politics, education, religion, and culture do not depend on ethnic human kinds, ethnicity can feel like nothing special – just one of many categories for people. A native-born American may feel Chinese in one conversation, female in another, and Bostonian in a third. Meanwhile, a newly arrived immigrant, without English and without American connections, may find his whole life organized by his Chineseness, and so feel differently. (pp. 87–88)*

Emboldened by a sense of their newfound power and influence, multicultural psychology advocates will often imply that the lack of wholesale agreement with, or ‘buy-in’ to, cultural competence theory constitutes unethical behavior (Brown & Pomerantz, 2011; Cummings & O’Donohue, 2018).

All of these factors foster an attitude of intellectual laziness among pre-service students within many branches of applied psychology (as this relates to multicultural issues). By intellectual laziness, this means that students accept uncritically anything they are told by their university instructors or professional psychology organizations – particularly if what they are told aligns with current fashionable movements (e.g., social justice, critical race theory, anti-racism). Since students are easily intimidated by the prospect of challenging assumptions heavily promoted by their professional organizations, they have little to no motivation to test popular assumptions with empirical evidence. They experience no positive reinforcement for publishing such work, particularly within a professional environment that would cause the field to be embarrassed. Students marinated in such academic environments have little to no exposure or awareness of alternative viewpoints, in addition to having little to no motivation to familiarize themselves with alternative viewpoints that are socially unpopular. As one example, it is fashionable for social justice advocates to argue that ‘blacks cannot be racist’ (Battle, 2017; Samuels, 2020) – a statement that is based solely on philosophical arguments rooted in critical race theory (see previous chapter by Frisby, 2023, this text). However, this assertion – like any other assertion – can be subjected to empirical testing (e.g., see Yancey, 2005).

### ***Politicization Leads to Setting Utopian Visions and Unattainable Goals, Which Guarantees Perpetual Politicking***

Multicultural psychology, generally, and applied multicultural psychology, specifically, are on a mission to heal human beings from the effects of the world’s besetting sins (i.e., its “isms”; Carter et al., 2020; Singh, 2020). According to Sue (2014), healing human suffering requires psychologists in training to unlearn their ‘ethnocentric monoculturalism’ in order to be prepared to function in a pluralistic society. This requires psychologists to jettison from their thinking any notion that one group’s cultural values are ‘better’ than another group. This is operationalized as pretending not to notice the underdeveloped/developed or primitive/civilized continuum that characterizes cultural artifacts worldwide. Thus, a grass hut is no less of

an accomplishment than a metal and concrete skyscraper. Impulsive mob justice is thus no better than the long history of jurisprudence and due process carried out in courts of law.

According to Sue (2014), no culture (particularly those perceived to be more powerful) must impose their standards on a group perceived as less powerful. Behind this assertion is the implicit assumption that ‘forced imposition’ is the mechanism for cultural transmission from one group to another group. The fact that a group may willingly adopt a cultural practice from other groups in order to make their lives better (e.g., see Sowell, 1999) has no place in the Sue universe.

Readers will note that multicultural psychology’s explanations for why individuals may hold ‘racist’, ‘stereotyped’, or noncharitable thoughts about other groups almost never include the role played by the *actual behaviors* of so-called persecuted groups (Jussim, 2012). Said differently, multicultural psychology almost never holds minority groups responsible for improving the negative behaviors observed, or the perceptions held, by majority groups to justify so-called ‘racist’ attitudes or perceptions. The only possible intervention that could significantly reduce racism (as defined by multicultural psychologists) is if all Whites experience a radical epiphany and become dedicated life-long ‘anti-racists’ (Kendi, 2019).

Suppose that, in the blink of an eye, all non-Whites would instantly become model citizens. If such a thing were to actually happen, then multicultural psychology would be on surer footing in accusing Whites of actual ‘racism’ (if indeed they still harbored negative perceptions of outgroups who behave perfectly). In the current politicized climate within psychology, however, even this imaginary scenario would be ineffective – as groups considered to be ‘model minorities’ are still depicted by multicultural psychology as perpetual victims of racism (Abrams, 2021; Hartlep, 2013).

Defining the ‘fight against racism’ as eliminating unwanted disparities – particularly when groups are not equivalent in the prerequisites necessary for equal outcomes (Gottfredson, 2000; Sowell, 2020) – guarantees continual failure (see Murray, 2021; Reilly, 2021). Efforts to lower or redefine standards (Stabile, 2021), or intentionally discriminating against high-performing groups in order to give a ‘leg up’ to members of underperforming groups, makes problems much worse (Sowell, 1989, 2004; Xu, 2021).

Some claim that when properly and effectively facilitated, ‘racial dialogues’ have been shown to reduce prejudice, increase compassion, dispel stereotypes, and promote mutual respect and understanding (Willow, 2008; Sue et al., 2009a, b; Young, 2003). This is a gross overstatement, to say the least. There is no credible, replicable evidence that so-called difficult race dialogues can be universally mastered, let alone accomplish any of these outcomes to any long-term or significant degree outside of the classroom (al-Gharbi, 2020; Cooley et al., 2019; Dobbin & Kalev, 2016; Paluck & Green, 2009; Plaut et al., 2009; Weissberg, 2008; Wilton et al., 2019).

**Is a Radical Behaviorism the Answer?** Applied multicultural psychology then pushes a *radical behaviorism* to ‘fight’ the evil of racism. Readers will recall that

behaviorism was the dominant school of psychology roughly between the 1920s to the mid-1950s. Behaviorism was one of many movements in psychology in the twentieth century that attracted a flurry of scientific attention during its time, only to be eclipsed by other movements once its significant shortcomings were exposed (Ludden, 2021; Ratts, 2012; Schnaitter, 1999). Militant behaviorism teaches that human behavior can be explained in terms of environmental conditioning, without appealing to internal thoughts or feelings. Therefore, psychological disorders were thought to be best treated by efforts directed at altering outward behavior patterns. Unwanted negative behaviors can be extinguished by either not positively reinforcing them or by punishing them. Conversely, the frequency of positive behaviors can be increased by consistently rewarding them.

In the microaggressions movement, racism is presumed to be significantly reduced if psychologists could only force themselves and others not to utter them (Sue, 2010; Sue et al., 2019). In other words, a radical program of social peer pressure and punishment of microaggressions will presumably fight racism and enable the lives of minorities to be more pleasant – in addition to curing the internal pathology of unenlightened whites. This thinking is conceptually equivalent to thinking that a therapist can fix the psychological disorder of a serial male rapist – so long as he can be consistently punished for, or prevented from, saying bad things about women. For these reasons, microaggressions theory is doomed to failure for the same reasons that militant behaviorism fails as the panacea for social problems.

## Conclusion

Cultural, cross-cultural, and multicultural psychology can reflect either science or pseudoscience. Pseudoscience consists of a set of propositions that are wrapped in the cloak of science (i.e., journal articles, books, conference presentations), but in reality these have not been properly subjected to scientific scrutiny (i.e., careful definition of terms, drawing careful distinctions among similar but distinct concepts, framing theories as testable hypotheses, generating multiple hypotheses to explain datasets, providing data that supports specific hypotheses, and providing clear criteria that would falsify specific hypotheses). Pseudoscience consists of manufactured propositions that support predetermined agendas (see Frisby, 2013, p. 519), where there is no incentive or inclination among supporters of pseudoscientific ideas to conduct the necessary research to arrive at objective truth (Kumar, 2021) – because the very concept of truth is viewed as relative to one's group membership (Rihani, 2008).

Efforts to resist such trends, in order to increase the scientific mindset of the various subdisciplines within psychology, are needed now more than ever. Not only will this require a greater level of self-reflection and criticism within multicultural psychology, but it will also require an openness to voices within all branches of applied, research, and professional psychology (see Duarte et al., 2015; in addition to published commentaries in *Brain and Behavioral Sciences*, Volume 38). Given the

highly contentious nature of debates involving race and ethnicity, many are pessimistic that politicization within psychology will correct itself.

This is why many groups of psychologists, fed up with the perceived drift of their disciplines away from rigorous and objective scientific principles, elect to disconnect from mainstream psychology journals and organizations to inaugurate their own journals and organizations (that permit greater freedom for researchers to pursue research questions deemed ‘off limits’ by a culture of censorship in mainstream psychology; see Cautin, 2009a, b; Heterodox Academy, 2021; National Association of Scholars, 2022; ReasonTV, 2017). Quite naturally, self-reflection and self-correction must also extend to university coursework, grant reviewing, accreditation standards, and book publishing.

In the edited text *Psychological Science Under Scrutiny: Recent Challenges and Proposed Solutions*, Lilienfeld and Waldman (2017) begin their text with a succinct opening salvo:

*The essence of science, including psychological science, is ruthless and relentless self-criticism. At its best, psychological science subjects cherished claims to searching scrutiny. Conclusions that survive close examination are provisionally retained; those that do not are modified or jettisoned. In this way, psychological science, like other sciences, is ultimately self-correcting and progressive. (p. x)*

Readers must ask themselves: Does this apply as well to multicultural psychology? If the answer is yes, then we have barely begun in this journey.

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## Chapter 10

# “Many of Their Beliefs Are Also Cruel”: Religious Bias in the Study of Psychology



George Yancey

A sizable body of research has demonstrated an anti-conservative and/or anti-Christian perspective among academics (Elaine Howard Ecklund, 2010; Gunn & Zenner, 1996; Hyers, 2008; Rothman & Lichter, 2009; Tobin & Weinberg, 2007; G. Yancey, 2011). Professors in universities and colleges perceive political conservatives negatively, and religious conservatives—particularly conservative Protestants like evangelicals and fundamentalists—even more negatively. For example, Tobin and Weinberg’s (2007) survey of 1200 college professors found that 53% admitted negative feelings about evangelicals. Yancey (2011) found that about 40% of professors surveyed said that they would be less likely to hire a prospective employee for their department if that candidate were an evangelical, and about 50% would be less likely to hire a prospective employee if that candidate were a fundamentalist. This negative bias has important ramifications. One study indicates that conservative Protestant students claim everyday experiences of discrimination in academia similar to the levels of discrimination reported by traditionally targeted groups like women and blacks (Hyers, 2008). Research also shows that this antipathy affects hiring decisions (G. Yancey, 2011) and graduate school admission (Gunn & Zenner, 1996).

Smith (2014, p. 150) argues that sociologists have a “sacred” project that includes, among other elements, the desire to remove traditional institutional religious authority. It is reasonable to expect that academics participating in this sacred project would be generally less sympathetic to conservative Protestants and possibly create an uncomfortable social atmosphere for them. Psychologists may also have a sacred project to challenge religious authority. Religious figures can be seen as competitors to psychologists in determining a vision of human well-being and development. In the United States, this would likely manifest itself in hostility

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toward Christianity, which is the numerically dominant religion in this nation (Center, 2015). While there are organizations of Christian psychologists (i.e., Christian Association for Psychological Studies) the general field of psychology may exhibit an overall anti-Christian bias. Indeed, such organizations may have developed in response to a need of Christian psychologists to find support in a hostile environment.

The purpose of this chapter is twofold. First, empirical data is explored to assess if there is a significant level of anti-Christian bias among academic psychologists. Academia is where the values and norms expected of professional psychologists are imparted. Previous work has indicated that the social sciences in general exhibit some degree of anti-religion hostility (Ladd Jr & Lipset, 1975; G. Yancey, 2011). As such, it is valuable to assert whether the discipline of psychology falls in line with the other social sciences or perhaps the presence of Christian psychological organizations mitigates some of the anti-religious pressures found in other social sciences. My research suggests that the former condition of anti-Christian bias is the best way to understand the attitudes of psychologists.

This leads to the second purpose of this chapter, which is a qualitative assessment of that bias. This chapter will do more than document the potential religious bias of psychologists. The chapter will explore possible reasons why they possess those preferences. Rich interview data that will allow for a nuanced exploration of the attitudes of academic psychologists. While there is no comprehensive examination of the motivation of academic psychologists, there is enough info to gain some ideas into those attitudes toward religious groups.

## Potential Targets of Religious Bias

If religious bias is a problem among academic psychologists, then it is worth asking which religious groups are most likely to be the victims of such bias. Evidence of Anti-Semitism (Herf, 2013; J. B. Lee, 2006; Pargament et al., 2007) and Islamophobia (Herf, 2013; Ogan et al., 2013; Saeed, 2007; Zine, 2004) has been well documented in the United States. Yet academics, almost by definition, are well-educated and education has generally been shown to be related to lower levels of prejudice. If academics are generally unwilling to have bias against religious outgroups, then it may be due to the potential liberalizing effects of education.

Yet it is plausible that those with higher levels of education have their own targets of religious bias. Yancey and Williamson (2014) show that education is directly related to Christianophobia, which is a hostile attitude toward Christians. They argue that in the United States this tends to manifest itself against conservative Christians.<sup>1</sup> It is particularly the case that highly educated progressives envision

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<sup>1</sup>It is plausible to define conservatism in Christianity along a variety of dimensions (theologically, politically, denominationally). My preference is to look at a theological definition as theological distinctions are more innate to religious traditions than political differences and denominational

themselves in a war against conservative Christians. Many believe that they are fighting to maintain a society based on rationality and to stop movement toward a Christian theocracy (G. Yancey & Williamson, 2012). Given the context of the larger science/religion debate that has been a part of Western culture (Gould, 1997; Stark, 1963; White, 2017), some historians of science now question this conflict thesis (Brooke, 1991; Harrison, 2015). It is entirely plausible that resentment among academics against religious conservatives exists. Due to the large number of Christians in society, it is reasonable for scholars to identify Christianity as the religion most likely to promote an anti-science agenda. Therefore, among religious conservatives, it is Christians, or ideas that may have been inspired by their faith, who are most likely to be rejected by academics.

Often, intergroup contact operates to lessen tensions between groups. However, Christians are underrepresented in academia (Gross & Simmons, 2009) and this is particularly the case as it concerns conservative Christians (Elaine H. Ecklund & Scheitle, 2007; Tobin & Weinberg, 2007). Even though they are a numerical majority (among other religious groups) within the larger society, conservative Christians tend to be underrepresented in academia. Their absence may also factor into why they are the religious group most likely to face bias from academics. With fewer conservative Christians around them, it becomes easier for academics to believe unflattering stereotypes, particularly stereotypes about Christians being anti-science or unable to think critically (Davidson et al., 2017; Romanowski, 1998; G. Yancey et al., 2015), as they do not have relationships with Christians who disprove those stereotypes. Furthermore, given the relative dearth of conservative Christians within academia, those who are there may find it difficult to identify as such. Doing so may make them a target for unfair treatment. Scholars perceive even fewer Christians around them than actually are present within academic circles, which may reinforce the beliefs of some academics that conservative Christians are anti-intellectual and not fit to work in scientific fields (G. Yancey et al., 2015).

While some scholars may have general animosity toward almost all religions, and thus all Christians, there is reason to believe that the level of hostility toward mainline or progressive Christianity will be a great deal less than against conservative Christians. Progressive Christianity is associated with attempts to promote a modernity based in reason and tolerance (Dorrien, 2001; Edles, 2013; Wellman, 2008). These are the types of values respected by cultural progressives and thus

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effects within the Christian tradition has waned over the past few decades (Wuthnow, 1989). To this end, it is worth considering the famous Bebbington Quadrilateral which bases traditional Christianity on theological beliefs surrounding proselytization, beliefs about the Bible and the atonement provided by Christ (Larsen & Treier, 2007). A good deal of recent research has differentiated conservative Christians from other Christians by theological measures such as belief the Bible as the inerrant word of God (Freeman & Houston, 2011; Hunter, 1983; Sherkat & Darnell, 1999; Sherkat et al., 2011). Furthermore, academics have shown more hostility toward conservative Christians than political conservatives (G. Yancey, 2011), and thus it is likely the theological, rather than political components of conservative Christians that trigger such antipathy. To this end, as I talk about conservative Christians I am defining such individuals with conservative theological beliefs such as Biblical inerrancy, particularism, and acceptance of moral absolutes.

progressive Christians should be less threatening to academics than conservative Christians. Indeed, previous work (G. Yancey, 2011) has shown that in academia progressive and mainline Christians are given greater levels of respect than their more conservative peers.

If conservative Christians face more bias among academics in general, then it is possible that they also face more bias from academic and research psychologists. There is yet to be research specifically exploring the potential religious prejudices of psychologists against conservative Christians; however, it has been argued that psychologists have a bias against theism (Slife & Reber, 2009). Among Christians, theological conservatives are more likely to emphasize the notion of God as an all-powerful deity (Barna Research, 2002; P. J. Smith & Tuttle, 2011). Given that Christianity is both the more numerous religion in the United States and a religion built upon theism, this argument comports well a potential bias against conservative Christians. Thus for the balance of this chapter, the potential for bias against conservative Christians (as the measure of potential religious bias of academic psychologists) will be discussed. Given the theoretical reasons why conservative Christians are the religious group most likely to face bias from academics, if psychologists do not possess bias against conservative Christians to any appreciable degree, then it seems unlikely that religious bias is a serious problem among academic psychologists.<sup>2</sup>

## Previous Efforts at Documenting Academic Bias

Whether individuals in conservative and religious groups have been victims of bias in academia is a debated question (Ames et al., 2005; Gross & Fosse, 2012; Daniel B Klein & Stern, 2006; Larregue, 2018; G. Yancey, 2011, 2018; Zipp & Fenwick, 2006). Anecdotal observations from conservatives (Goldberg, 2008; Horowitz, 2013) have often been put forth as evidence of bias within academia. However, there is a natural tendency for individuals to interpret the actions of others in a light most favorable to their social group. This provides incentive for political and religious conservatives to exaggerate perceived slights in an effort to gain sympathy for their groups. Furthermore, legitimate criticisms or arguments against aspects within one's in-group can be reinterpreted to indicate unfair bias against members of the

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<sup>2</sup>It may be argued that I should not dismiss potential Islamophobia since Muslims have also been seen as anti-intellectual and intolerant. Yet as I pointed out, Christians are the group with the numbers of adherents to politically threaten the potentially progressive aims of academics. Furthermore, research has indicated that education is negatively correlated with animosity toward Muslims (Ciftci, 2012; G. Yancey & Williamson, 2014). Given that I am looking at a very highly educated population, it seems unlikely that animosity toward Muslims would be higher than toward conservative Christians. This is not to say that Islamophobia does not exist in academia, but merely that hostility among scholars toward Muslims is not likely to be higher than animosity toward conservative Christians. Thus documentation of a significant level of anti-Christian animosity would serve to legitimate future inquiries about the level of anti-Muslim hostility within academia.

groups. Finally, this anecdotal evidence tends to focus on how courses are taught and not whether individuals from certain social out-groups face additional barriers to possess hostility toward others. A person may favor a certain point of view in teaching and yet be unbiased in their treatment of others in academia who have dissenting points of view.

It might be argued that evidence of bias can be found in the disproportionate number of progressives and irreligious academics (Daniel B. Klein et al., 2005; Daniel B. Klein & Western, 2005). This assertion has been countered by the contention that academia does not attract political conservatives and the highly religious (Ames et al., 2005; J. B. Lee, 2006) or that political and religious conservatives do not have the aptitude to do academic work (Ames et al., 2005). This assertion is buttressed by research suggesting that relatively few individuals in academia perceive religious bias as a problem (Rothman & Lichter, 2009; B. L. R. Smith et al., 2010), indicating that it is not bias that keeps Christians out of academia, but rather they may self-select themselves out of this occupation. Gross and Fosse (2012) support the idea of self-selection by arguing that just as certain types of individuals are attracted to specific types of occupations, progressives are more likely to be attracted to academic pursuits. The infusion of progressives into academia creates the image of academics being liberal (and by implication irreligious) and this image serves to further attract progressives, while it discourages conservatives from going into academia. This may apply in examining religious bias as it is possible that religious Christians are not impacted by bias but merely seek out the occupational “type” with which they are most comfortable. There are other arguments for self-selection thesis that focus on the greater desire of political conservatives to acquire money (Jacoby, 2005) or their lack of appreciation for academic pursuits (Zipp & Fenwick, 2006) as the reason why they choose not to go into academia. These arguments may apply to Christians as well, although to date there does not appear to be any research that supports them having a higher-than-normal desire for financial success. However, scholars (Baker, 1986; Haas, 1994; Nel, 2016) have argued that there is an anti-intellectual culture within Christianity. That anti-intellectual culture may discourage Christians from entering academia.

A powerful argument for the existence of academic bias can be made if similarly qualified religious academics fail to obtain academic positions as their more irreligious peers. Rothman and Lichter (2009) find that while political conservatives (compared to progressives) in general obtain similar status academic positions, relative to their scholarly achievements, that this is not the case for social conservatives. Even after their scholarly achievements and demographic characteristics have been controlled, social conservatives are more likely to find themselves in lower status academic positions. This finding is of particular interest since the political conservatism of American Christians tends to be focused more on social conservatism than economic or foreign policy conservatism.<sup>3</sup> There is little reason to believe that

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<sup>3</sup>One can define social conservatism as a focus on maintaining a traditional society. It is generally manifested in “moral” issues such as abortion and homosexuality. Foreign policy conservatism concerns a more muscular use of the military and an aggressive foreign policy. Economic conser-

equally qualified socially conservative academics would willingly select themselves into lower status academic positions.

There is empirical work designed to identify possible bias among academic psychologists. Inbar and Lammers (2012) conducted a survey with 800 academics in social and personality psychology. They found that only 6% of them classified themselves as political conservatives. They asked the respondents whether they would discriminate against political conservatives in hiring, paper review, grant reviews, and symposium invitations. They discovered a distinct willingness of psychologists to discriminate against political conservatives with political liberalism positively related to willingness to discriminate. Redding (2001) focuses on the lack of political diversity which has resulted in articles favoring politically progressive positions, impedes the ability of psychologists to serve political conservative clients, and may result in discrimination against political conservatives.

These studies do not directly impact the current research question as the focus is on political discrimination instead of religious bias; however, the explicit willingness of academics to state that they would discriminate cannot be taken lightly. Furthermore, there are indicators that the problem of bias among psychologists includes religious, as well as political dimensions. Slife and Reber (2009) point out that the nationalistic assumptions built into psychology influence psychologists to attempt to correct worldviews based on theism. Such attempts can lead to anti-theistic prejudice as seen in the history of psychology, explanations psychologists have for religion and interpretations of scholars as it concerns religion. Furthermore, it has been noted that the culture war has also been a source of hostility for psychological organizations and psychologists (O'Donohue, 2009). Halstead (2005) remarks that school psychologists need to acquire more cultural competence about their religious students which includes knowledge, respect for religious behaviors, and an acknowledgement of one's own religious beliefs and values.

These biases have practical relevance in how applied psychologists work with, and possibly influence religious individuals. Yarhouse (2009) provides several illustrations of the effects of this anti-religious bias among psychologists with a focus on issues of sexuality. He argues that psychologists have ignored religious perspectives, as well as provide counseling that promotes cohabitation and abortion. These are two actions that violate the sensibilities of the traditionally religious, as well as contribute to creating an intolerant training climate for religious students. Yarhouse discusses the case of Sandra Bruff, a licensed professional counselor who asked for accommodation in counseling a lesbian client on her same-sex relationship. This situation led to a court case that Bruff won but was overturned on appeal. However in another case Julea Ward was also expelled from the counseling program at Eastern Michigan University for failing to validate homosexuality but unlike Bruff, she eventually won a settlement on her case (Wood, 2012). To date, there is no

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vatism is based on notions of a smaller government and the promotion of free market capitalism. It is plausible that social conservatism, with its focus on issues of morality, is more threatening to the domains in the social sciences than issues of foreign policy and the economy. If this is true then the higher evidence of bias against social conservatives would reflect such a threat.

consistency in how cases of anti-Christian discrimination will be handled in court system.

Finally, research indicates that Christianity has been the main target of psychologists’ anti-religious animosity (Cummings & Cummings, 2009). Despite these observations and studies, there has been a lack of systematic work on the possibility of anti-religious bias among psychologists. Such research evidence is the topic of the next section.

## Compromising Scholarship

In 2011, research on academic bias was published in a book titled *Compromising Scholarship* (G. Yancey, 2011). This research was based on a questionnaire labeled for addressing issues of collegiality to academics in nine disciplines. In that survey, there was a question (Fig. 10.1) that asked whether a job candidate coming from a given social group would make it more or less likely for the respondent to support the job applicant. The question listed 27 groups<sup>4</sup> for the scholars to assess on a seven-point Likert scale. Higher numbers on the scale indicate that membership in a given social group enhances the desirability of a hypothetical candidate while lower numbers indicate that membership damages the desirability of a hypothetical candidate. If belonging to a social group neither enhances nor damages a candidate’s desirability, then the respondent was allowed to respond with a “4.” The question can be seen in Fig. 10.1. Only academics currently working in the United States were chosen, since findings with international cultural differences wouldn’t be confounded. Different social groups would have different meanings to scholars in other countries than they do for sociologists in the United States. For this reason, all academics working at colleges and universities outside of the United States were eliminated from further analyses.<sup>5</sup>

In addition to this author’s own discipline (sociology), three additional disciplines were selected from the social sciences, three were selected from the physical sciences, and two were selected from the humanities. The easier availability of

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<sup>4</sup>The groups were chosen to assess possible political (Democrats, Republicans, Green Party, Libertarians, Communist Party, ACLU, and NRA), sexuality (Heterosexual, Homosexual, Bisexual, and Transgendered), religious (Atheist, Mormon, Fundamentalist, Evangelical, Mainline Protestant, Catholic, Muslim, and Jewish), lifestyle (Vegetarian and Hunter), family status (Married, Divorced, Cohabiting, and Single with Children), and age (Under 30, Over 50) dimensions of bias.

<sup>5</sup>Those who were socialized in the United States but worked at a college or university outside of the United States were excluded by this method. However, I suspect that this excluded relatively few academics. I did include those scholars socialized in other countries but currently working in the United States. I suspect that this is not an insignificant number. However, these individuals have likely been in the United States long enough to have picked up on social cues as to which social groups are acceptable, and thus their answers should reflect the values of the larger discipline.

Assume that your faculty is hiring a new professor. Below is a list of possible characteristics of this new hire. Many of them are characteristics that you can not directly inquire of prospective candidates. However if you were able to learn of these characteristics about a candidate would that make you more or less likely to support their hire? Please rate your attitude on a scale in which 1 indicates that the characteristic greatly damages your support to hire a candidate, 4 is that the characteristic does not make a difference, and 7 indicates that the characteristic greatly enhances your support to hire the candidate. If you do not understand the characteristic then please indicate such with "n/a."

**Fig. 10.1** Question from *Compromising Scholarship*. Assume that your faculty is hiring a new professor. Below is a list of possible characteristics of this new hire. Many of them are characteristics that you cannot directly inquire of prospective candidates. However, if you were able to learn of these characteristics about a candidate would that make you more or less likely to support their hire? Please rate your attitude on a scale in which 1 indicates that the characteristic greatly damages your support to hire a candidate, 4 is that the characteristic does not make a difference, and 7 indicates that the characteristic greatly enhances your support to hire the candidate. If you do not understand the characteristic then please indicate such with "n/a"

securing a listing of directories from a given discipline was the major factor that influenced the choice of disciplines. The disciplines studied in this research are sociology, political science, anthropology, history, physics, chemistry, experimental biology, philosophy, and language. For each of these disciplines (with the exception of sociology), links were sent to 750 individuals in the discipline. Sociologists were oversampled, since that was the discipline of most interest. Links were sent to 1500 sociologists. As much as possible, selection criteria were standardized by choosing individuals located in the United States and by attempting to avoid selecting graduate students who were teaching at the university where they obtained their terminal degree.

Directories<sup>6</sup> were used to find the academics, and random numbers were used to locate potential respondents. After sending out e-mails, some went to accounts that were no longer operative. In that case, e-mail addresses were checked for correct recording. The college or university where persons worked was determined, and then that educational institution's department website was located. Sometimes the e-mail address in the directory was different than the address on the website, and so

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<sup>6</sup>The directories used were American Sociological Association (ASA) 2007 Directory of Members, American Anthropological Association 2008–2009 Guide, American Chemical Society Directory of Graduate Research, Directory of American Philosophers 2008–2009, Directory of History Departments, Historical Organizations and Historians, Directory of Physics, Astronomy and Geophysics Staff, Directory of Political Science Faculty and Programs 2007–2008, Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology Directory of Members 2008–2009 and Publications of the Modern Language Associations of America Directory.

these were replaced by the address on the website. Every reasonable attempt was made to ensure that the originally selected respondent was used. But if all of these efforts failed, then the random number generator was used to locate a replacement. I then sent out the survey.<sup>7</sup>

Unfortunately, the field of psychology was not included. However, these disciplines do break down into three important categories: social sciences, hard or physical sciences, and the humanities. That comparison is relevant since clearly psychology is a social science. Preliminary findings in comparing the results from the social sciences to other disciplines gave initial insight about the possibility of psychologists to engage in bias against Christians, particularly conservative Christians. That will be the reference point that will be used in the second study which does contain academics in psychology.

Seven of the groups were asked about in the sample. Those groups are fundamentalists, evangelicals, Muslims, Jews, atheists,<sup>8</sup> Republicans, and NRA members. The first five groups address the question of whether conservative Christians (fundamentalists and evangelicals) face unfavorable bias in comparison to other religious groups. The latter two groups allow for an assessment and comparison of those Christian groups to conservative political groups. I contend that fundamentalists are generally seen as more extreme than evangelicals and may experience the greater degree of bias. Likewise, NRA members may be perceived as more extreme than Republicans in general.

Consistently those in the social sciences were more likely to state that membership in the religiously or politically conservative group would damage the chances of a candidate to be hired in comparison to those in the hard or physical sciences.<sup>9</sup> In comparison to those in the humanities, their willingness to use membership in

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<sup>7</sup>The response rates ranged from 27.9% among philosophers to 13% among physicists. However, the responses rates were low, and so I took measures to deal with potential nonresponse bias. Low response rates do not necessarily indicate nonresponse bias (Groves, 2006; Keeter et al., 2000). Groves's (2006) methods of assessing nonresponse bias include comparisons to similar estimates in other sources and matching the sample to the external database. However, I did not have access to accurate demographic measures for each discipline. So instead I decided to see if there ever were significant demographic differences that may have shaped my results. Did the results vary by gender, age, race etc. I found no relevant differences in the shaping of attitudes by such variables. Neither did it matter whether the respondent worked in a higher status program (determined by the level of degree conferred by the program). The only factor that was constantly a significant predictor of attitudes toward Christian groups was whether the respondent worked in the social sciences, hard sciences, or humanities.

<sup>8</sup>It can be argued that it is inappropriate to discuss atheists as a religious group. After all they are defined by their unwillingness to embrace religion. However, like adherents of religion, they too have certain beliefs about non-material reality, in that this reality is a myth, and thus they can be grouped with other systems of belief about that reality.

<sup>9</sup>Using the seven-point Likert scale with lower numbers indicating lower willingness to hire a candidate those in the social sciences were significantly less willing to hire Republicans (3.606 vs. 3.888;  $p < 0.001$ ), Christian fundamentalists (3.121 vs. 3.354;  $p < 0.05$ ), and evangelicals (3.355 vs. 3.581), but were not significantly less willing to hire NRA members (3.425 vs. 3.572).

those groups to damage a candidate’s potential hire was quite similar.<sup>10</sup> For the balance of this project, the results of the hard sciences or humanities will not be the focus of concern. Focus is instead on the respondents in the social sciences (i.e., sociology, anthropology, political science, and history) to gain perspective on potential religious bias. Furthermore, since the focus is on academics, those in the sample who did not work in an academic setting will be eliminated.

In Table 10.1, the propensity of those in the social sciences to use membership in the five religious and two political groups to damage the hiring possibilities of the hypothetical candidate was examined. Of first interest was the question of whether membership in the group would damage the candidate to any degree. Fundamentalists are the group where the damage is most likely. Over half of the respondents stated that they would be less likely to hire someone if they find out that they are a fundamentalist. Next, the percentage of the respondents stating that it would greatly damage their willingness to hire a candidate for a social group was examined. Once again for those in the social sciences, it is the fundamentalists, the most extreme conservative Christian group who had the highest percentage of social science academics, slightly more than one in ten, who stated that being a Christian fundamentalist<sup>11</sup> would extremely damage any chance of hire.

What about evangelicals, who clearly are conservative Christians but may not be seen as extreme as fundamentalist? It turns out that in comparison to the NRA, conceivably seen as an extremist politically conservative group, that evangelicals are

**Table 10.1** Comparison of damaging chances of hire by religious and conservative political groups

	Christian fundamentalist (n = 620) (%)	Evangelical (n = 619) (%)	Muslim (n = 619) (%)	Jew (n = 620) (%)	Atheist (n = 620) (%)	Republican (n = 617) (%)	NRA Member (n = 617) (%)
Damages chance of hire	51.8	40.9	4.2	1.9	4.4	27.1	38.6
Extremely damages chance of hire	10.6	7.3	1.0	1.1	1.6	4.4	6.8

<sup>10</sup>The willingness of social scientists to hire Republicans (3.606 vs. 3.695), NRA members (3.425 vs. 3.454), and evangelicals (3.355 vs. 3.435), but were more likely to be willing to hire Christian fundamentalists (3.121 vs. 2.946;  $p < 0.05$ ) than academics in the humanities.

<sup>11</sup>In the survey I used the term fundamentalist instead of Christian fundamentalist. The meaning of fundamentalist is historically rooted in American Protestantism but most academics do not know this and may confuse this term with a general religious extremist. But since the religious extremist they are most likely to associate with being a fundamentalist is Muslim and Muslim is one of the groups asked about in this survey, it is reasonable to argue that they were not confusing fundamentalism with Muslim or a general religious fundamentalism but rather conceptualized the group they knew best which were Christian fundamentalists.

about as likely to face some degree of damage to their occupational prospects (40.9% vs. 38.6%) and to have individuals state that the damage is extreme (7.3% vs. 6.8%). While the percentages were higher for evangelicals, the differences are not statistically significant. It does indicate that there may be as great cost in belonging to a conservative non-extreme religious group as a potentially extreme political group. Coupled with the strong findings concerning Christian fundamentalists, it becomes clear that religious bias is more powerful than political bias among social scientists.

Comparisons with the non-Christian religious groups corroborated previous expectations about hostility aimed at conservative Christians instead of against all religious groups. Only 4.2% of the social science academics stated that finding out that a candidate was Muslim would damage his/her chance at hire, and only 1.9% of them indicate such for Jews. This is in comparison to the 51.8% of the respondents who are willing to negatively factor in the religion of a Christian fundamentalists and 40.9% who do the same for evangelicals. There is not an overall anti-religious bias but rather there is a bias against conservative Christians that limits their potential opportunities for religious academics.

While this research does not directly measure the attitudes of academic psychologists, there are two major lessons to be drawn in exploring the answers given by other social scientists. First, bias against religious conservatives is stronger than bias against political conservatives. Second, the bias is directed at conservative Christians more than any other religious group. These results indicate that among social groups, it is conservative Christians that are most likely to be rejected. Of course, it is possible, and even likely, that there are other groups that are rejected more than even Christian fundamentalists. One would suspect that groups such as the KKK and the Nazis would face even higher degrees of rejection. But those groups are largely rejected by the greater society.<sup>12</sup> Looking over the 26 groups included in the assessment suggests a wide variety of groups that may be rejected by significant segments of society (such as the transgendered) but are not as likely to be rejected by almost all segments of society such as the KKK. As such, it is difficult to think of a group that is not heavily stigmatized by nearly all segments of society and also likely to be rejected more than conservative Christians.

Having established the patterns of social scientists as it concerns potential religious bias, it is now important to focus on academic psychologists. To accomplish this, I want to turn to more recent research. That research, conducted with Sam Reimer and Jake O’Connell, will allow me to first assess whether psychologists differ from their social science peers. After I have documented the similarity of academic psychologists to other social sciences, this work will then help me to qualitatively explore reasons these scholars provide for their attitudes toward conservative Christians.

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<sup>12</sup> Both groups are known for their racism and according to data from the xxx, when asked which group an individuals liked the least, racist groups, among all groups, had the highest percentage of detractors (27.2%) with radical Muslims a distant second (16.6%).

## How Academics View Conservative Protestants

In 2015, an article based on an online survey was sent to 4500 teachers at colleges and universities (G. Yancey et al., 2015) was published. A key advantage of this study is that the survey was not concentrated on nine disciplines, but it was conducted with those in almost all academic disciplines. While 598 academics<sup>13</sup> started the survey, we gathered 464 completed surveys with an adjusted response rate of 10.79%.

The same issues of response rate were found here as in the earlier study. However, since we were looking at academics in general, we had the advantage of comparing our sample to the general demographics of academics. Thus we first compared the demographics of our sample to a previous study of academics conducted by Tobin and Weinberg (2007) that utilized similar dependent variables. The demographic population within the two studies is quite similar.<sup>14</sup> We then compared our final sample to the list provided to us by the marketing company on selected variables in the original list. Our sample did not significantly differ from the original list by percent male (56.3 vs. 56.0: ns), percent living in the West (21.2 vs. 24.9: ns), and percent living in the North Central region of the United States (23.1 vs. 19.5: ns). There was a significant difference between the two groups in the percentage living in the South (51.0 vs. 45.9:  $p < 0.05$ ) and living in the Northeast (4.8 vs. 9.7:  $p < 0.001$ ), yet neither variable was found to be a significant predictor of the ratings of evangelicals in our regression models. There was a significant difference in percent married between our sample and the list (66.8 vs. 52.6:  $p < 0.001$ ). We weighted the sample to account for this difference but found that the two samples did not significantly vary in thermometer assessment of any religious groups. Thus, while our response rate is low, we do not have evidence of significant nonresponse bias.

On the questionnaire, we included nine open-ended questions about mainline, evangelical, and fundamentalist Protestants. For each group, we asked the respondents to rate their level of favorability toward the group with a 0–100 thermometer scale.<sup>15</sup> We also included questions that gathered demographic and social network

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<sup>13</sup>The survey started out with our thermometer measures and thus we received the highest number of responses in response to those questions.

<sup>14</sup>First, we have the same order of rankings as Tobin and Weinberg (2007) as academics in their sample ranked evangelicals lower than Mormons whom they ranked lower than atheists. Second, the religious composition of our sample is similar to theirs as we have similar percentages of Evangelicals (13% vs. 11%), Mainline or non-Evangelical Protestants (22% vs. 25%), Catholics (12% vs. 18%), and Jews (5% vs. 5%). Third, the makeup of our sample was also very similar to data in a national probability post-secondary faculty sample (Cataldi et al., 2005) in sex (56% male vs. 57% male) and race (90% white vs. 85% white). Differing measures assessing age and marital status made comparisons in these categories untenable. The only big difference was in percentage of respondents with a doctorate degree (81% vs. 41%) indicating that Cataldi, Fahimi, and Bradburn's sample included a higher percentage of community college and/or four-year college instructors.

<sup>15</sup>The exact question was: "We'd like to get your feelings about some religious groups in American society. We'd like you to rate each group with what we call a feeling thermometer. Ratings between

information as well as data on the respondent’s scientific discipline and academic position. But we also asked the respondents why they ranked each group as they did, followed by a response box for each Protestant tradition. We then asked how they would define each of the three groups. The final three questions asked the respondent to explain the main differences between fundamentalism, evangelical Protestantism, and mainline Protestantism. The nine qualitative questions used can be seen in Fig. 10.2. Those questions provide us with rich qualitative data that allows us to better assess the justifications academics provide for their attitudes toward conservative Christians.

Once we collected the responses, we engaged in a process of open-ended coding for all the qualitative responses, including definitions, explanations for rankings, and comparisons between Protestant traditions. All three authors looked through the data to see which concepts emerged. We decided on a set of codes for each type (rating explanation, definition, and differences) of question, then one of us coded all of the respondents while a graduate student also coded 100 respondents. From those

1. Why did you give fundamentalist Protestants the rating you provided?
2. Why did you give evangelical Protestants the rating you provided?
3. Why did you give mainline Protestants the rating you provided?
4. How would you define fundamentalist Protestantism?
5. How would you define evangelical Protestantism?
6. How would you define mainline Protestantism?
7. What is the main difference between fundamentalism and evangelical Protestantism?
8. What is the main difference between evangelical and mainline Protestantism?
9. What is the main difference between fundamentalism and mainline Protestantism?

**Fig. 10.2** Open ended questions for how academics view conservative Protestants1. Why did you give fundamentalist Protestants the rating you provided?2. Why did you give evangelical Protestants the rating you provided?3. Why did you give mainline Protestants the rating you provided?4. How would you define fundamentalist Protestantism?5. How would you define evangelical Protestantism?6. How would you define mainline Protestantism?7. What is the main difference between fundamentalism and evangelical Protestantism?8. What is the main difference between evangelical and mainline Protestantism?9. What is the main difference between fundamentalism and mainline Protestantism?

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50 degrees and 100 degrees mean that you feel favorably or warm toward the group; ratings between 0 and 50 degrees mean that you don’t feel favorably towards the group and that you don’t care too much for that group. If you don’t feel particularly warm or cold toward a group you would rate them at 50 degrees. If you do not know anything about a group then please leave the box blank. Otherwise please place a number from 0 to 100 in each box to indicate your rating for each group.”

two scores, we calculated interrater reliability scores for each code. The scores ranged from 87 to 100 with an average of 97.82 (SD = 2.32).

The first question to answer with this data is whether academic psychologists greatly differed from other social scientists. To do this, we first looked toward the thermometer scores for Christian fundamentalists, Evangelicals, Muslims, Jews, and atheists. In Table 10.2, we compare the scores of academic psychologists to other social scientists. There is not a statistically significant difference between the two groups. Part of this may be due to the low number of academic psychologists ( $n = 26$ ) in the sample. Christian fundamentalists and evangelicals, the two conservative Protestant groups were ranked lower by academic psychologists than by other social scientists. Chances are that academic psychologists are more biased toward conservative Christians than other social scientists are. The comparison of psychologists to other social scientists does not indicate that psychologists are inherently more tolerant toward out-group religions.

The next vital question is why this type of bias may occur among academic psychologists. One possibility is that they are less likely to have contact with conservative Christians than other academics. We asked our respondents about their social networks and religious identity. Among all respondents, the ranking of Christian fundamentalists was positively correlated to the percentage of conservative Protestants in their social network at 15 ( $r = 0.303$ ), their current social network ( $r = 0.328$ ), and whether they were conservative Protestant themselves ( $r = 0.401$ ). The same was found for evangelicals as it concerned conservative Protestants in their social network at 15 ( $r = 0.35$ ), current social network ( $r = 0.449$ ), and whether they were a conservative Protestant themselves ( $r = 0.458$ ). Thus, religious social networks and identity may impact the attitudes of academics in general.<sup>16</sup>

In a similar manner, academic psychologists do not greatly differ in their social networks or religious identity than other academics. They basically have the same propensity to have conservative Protestants in their social network at 15 (19.35% vs. 24.65%: ns) or their current social network (18.62% vs. 18.5%: ns). They also do not differ in their propensity to be a conservative Protestant from other academics

**Table 10.2** Comparison of thermometer ranking of different religious groups

	Christian fundamentalist	Evangelical	Muslim	Jew	Atheist
Psychologists ( $n = 26$ )	35.85	39.92	55.81	73.5	65.38
Other social scientists ( $n = 76$ )	39.87	44.92	61.72	71.14	68.41

<sup>16</sup>It should be noted that it is possible that the direction can be reversed. Other forces may have impacted academics to reject conservative Protestants and because of that rejection academics are less likely to have conservative Protestants as friends and less likely to identify as one. I do not discount this possibility. However it should be noted that this would not easily explain the relationship of conservative Protestants in an academic's social network at 15 and their current attitudes about fundamentalists or evangelicals as their social networks at 15 may have been as much about the actions of their parents as much as their own actions.

(15.4% vs. 16.2%: ns). The religious patterns of academic psychologists do not greatly differ from other academics. Nor do they greatly differ from social scientists. In comparison to other social scientists, academic psychologists have similar levels of conservative Protestants in their social networks at 15 (19.35% vs. 24.61%: ns) and currently (18.62% vs. 15.345%: ns). They also do not significantly differ from them as it concerns being a conservative Protestant (15.4% vs. 9.2%: ns). It is worth noting that with a sample size of 22 academic psychologists that it is possible that the last two findings are due to a lack of statistical power. If that is the case, then academic psychologists may have a slightly greater chance to have conservative Protestants in their current social network and to be a conservative Protestant themselves. However, as seen in Table 10.2, these potential differences do not result in a significantly higher support for conservative Protestants among these psychologists. If the propensity of academic psychologists to show bias toward conservative Protestants was the result of their religious social networks and religious identity, then one would expect them to have fewer conservative Protestants in their social networks and less likely to be conservative Protestants than other social scientists. These results suggest that such an outcome is not likely.

However, there may be something innate within the attitudes of academic psychologists that may lead to more bias against conservative Christians. To investigate this possibility, the qualitative element of this study was examined. The questions we asked the respondents allowed us to see if academic psychologists have different perspectives about Christian fundamentalists or evangelicals than their peers. Given the similarity of their attitudes to other social scientists, focus is placed on the comparison of them to social scientists in this analysis.

By and large the statements of the academic psychologists were similar to the statements of other social scientists. However, there were a couple of deviations worth some attention. First, there was slightly more concern about issues of inequality among the psychologists in comparison to other social scientists. This can be seen in some of their attempts to define conservative Protestants:

Many of their beliefs are also cruel – anti gay, etc. Jesus would never have taught this. (Male, age 66–75)

They are social conservatives; most do not believe in human rights regarding birth control, or in social equality (regarding marriage and sexual orientation). (Female, age 36–45)

Fundamental values (women should be in the home) ... pick Bible passages to maintain patriarchal society. (Male, age 36–45)

The attention of the psychologists seems particularly focused on issues of sex and sexual preference. This is in contrast to a dearth of comments concerning issues of race and class. Perhaps this is due to the prevalence of sex and sexual preference in issues concerning counseling or simply because those issues are of more interest to academic psychologists. However, it is also possible that these issues reflect the beliefs of psychologists about how religious conservatives are unfair. Future work may explore which of these explanations best explains their attitudes toward conservative Protestants.

A second way in which academic psychologists differ from other social scientists is seen in their comparison of conservative Protestants to mainline Protestants. They were more likely to envision conservative Protestants as extremists. A couple of examples of this tendency:

A matter of degree: Mainline is somewhat less extreme than fundamentalist/evangelical Protestantism in its tolerance of diversity and strictness of Biblical interpretation. (Male, age 36–45)

Evangelicals are more extreme in their practice of religion than mainline Protestants and more outspoken in talking to others. (Female, age 36–45)

Such an approach suggests that the psychologists are not necessarily opposing religious beliefs, but are hostile to extreme or radical applications of such beliefs. Religion that is not “outspoken” or “strict” may be seen as tolerable. This implies that some academic psychologists want religion to be kept away from science. A little religion can be seen as acceptable. Too much religion can be seen as dysfunctional. This may explain their aversion to conservative Christians in that conservative Christians are seen as bringing too much religion into an academic space.

These two distinctions from other social scientists, fear of conservative Christians opposing equality for sexual minorities and women and that they are extremists, may be related to each other. If psychologists envision their occupation as one that promotes equality as a moral value, then they naturally would react against the intrusion of conservative Christians, a group they perceive as opposing equality, into their field and perhaps even into society itself. The fact that they envision those Christians as extremists would make them even more dangerous to the ideological goals of academic psychologists. As the information in Table 10.2 indicates, there is no reason to think that there are ideological distinctions that enable psychologists to reject conservative Christians more or less than other social scientists. But it may help to explain a somewhat unique path to that rejection for academic psychologists.

One can speculate why academic psychologists may prioritize the image of conservative Protestants as promoters of inequality over other negative stereotypes (ignorance, biblical literalists, proselytizers, etc.) are often attached to them. Indeed, since psychologists, like others in academia, are more likely to be political progressives than the general population, there is value in exploring the Moral Foundations theory popularized by Jonathan Haidt (2012). This theory explores the differing moral foundations between progressives and conservatives. According to this theory, progressives build their moral foundations by focusing on the moral values of care and fairness. Conservatives value care and fairness, but they also tend to value loyalty, authority, and sanctity. Thus the focus on issues of care, and particularly fairness, for conservatives is not going to be as strong as it is for progressives according to Haidt’s theory. Since fairness is seen as making sure nobody is able to cheat and that we render justice to produce equality, political progressives likely emphasize issues of equality more than political conservatives. Under such a theory,

academic psychologists would naturally be concerned about equality – as such concerns would fit their general political orientation.

But other academics also tend to be politically progressive, and one can ask why they are not as focused on inequality as psychologists. This may be due to interpersonal relationships that naturally emerge in psychological work. Other social science disciplines, such as history, political science, and sociology, tend to focus on studying institutions or large groups of people. Psychology often has a focus on individuals or family systems. This microlevel focus may bring psychologists more into contact with individuals who have been victimized by certain types of social inequalities and may make them more sympathetic toward the plight of such individuals. It also may make them more distrustful of what they see as one of the sources of that inequality in conservative Christianity.

It is noteworthy that racial issues were not included in the discussion of inequality. Perhaps this is because all major Christian denominations have denounced racism for quite some time (Kelsey, 1965). This does not mean that Christian institutions cannot participate in the institutional racism which is commonly an issue in modern society. Indeed, there is research documenting some of the ways Christians support institutional forms of racism (Bracey & Moore, 2017; Emerson & Smith, 2001; G. A. Yancey, 2010). However, overt forms of racism are generally denounced by mainstream Christians. The same may not be said in issues of sexism and homophobia. Indeed, many Christian denominations (i.e., Southern Baptists, Evangelical Free) still do not allow women pastors and condemn homosexuality (Ammerman, 2005; Fuist et al., 2012). On those issues, academic psychologists may be more likely to envision Christians as individuals blocking progress toward equality. Couple this perception with one of conservative Christians as extremists, then it is simple to acknowledge the possibility that conservative Christians are one of the most dangerous groups inhibiting the moral desires of academic psychologists.

However, merely because there may be more of an emphasis on issues of inequality does not mean that other stereotypes about conservative Christians fail to come into play as academic psychologists evaluate conservative Christians. For example, there is previous writing on the manner in which cultural progressives formulate the type of social identity they utilize in their struggles with religious conservatives (G. Yancey & Williamson, 2012). That identity is focused on the creation of an enlightened society based on reason rather than superstition. Academic psychologists may envision themselves playing a role in that creation and may desire to use their training to confront the inequalities they perceive are supported by conservative Christians. They may accept the idea that Christianity and religious faith cannot coexist with each other, but choose to challenge Christians on ideas of fairness rather than reason due to the unique challenges offered by their profession. In this sense academic psychologists may inhabit a particular place in the larger subculture of cultural progressives and play an acknowledged role in furthering the vision of that subculture. It may be in the playing of that role that they develop the religious biases documented in this chapter.

## Conclusion and Implications

As a non-psychologist my understanding of the implications of religious bias within psychology is limited. However, as an academic I can appreciate at least some of the ramifications of this bias. Bias against political and religious conservatives has been found in other academic disciplines (Gunn & Zenner, 1996; Langbert, 2016; Peters, 2018; G. Yancey, 2011), and the effects of this bias in those disciplines should not greatly vary among psychologists. Many costs associated with bias in these disciplines should also apply to the cost of bias among academic psychologists. In other words, there is a set of costs due to academic bias that apply regardless of the discipline where we find that bias. It may be useful to start with those biases before speculating about costs that may be unique to the field of psychology.

For example, academic bias can make it more difficult for a social group, in this case conservative Christians, to feel like they have a place in higher education. This makes it more challenging for conservative Christians to obtain education credentials and to participate in scientific endeavors. Indeed, recent research (Rios et al., 2015) has linked the rejection Christians perceive in academia and their lower performance in higher education.<sup>17</sup> Likewise, we would expect that bias among psychologists would make it more difficult for conservative Christians to participate in higher education. While training for higher education may never be completely comfortable, bias against a social group likely creates a higher level of discomfort than is necessary. Of course, there can be other reasons for the lack of representation of Christians in graduate psychological programs and it would be unwise to attribute the entire difference to bias. But given the reality documented in this research, it is not surprising that conservative Christians would be underrepresented in Psychological doctorate programs.

This leads to a second cost for religious-based academic bias. As conservative Christians feel left out by their interaction with academic psychologists, it becomes possible that they will develop a mistrust for any research done in that field. They also may be less supportive of the field of psychology and this may have important political ramifications, particularly as it concerns the funding of research. Evidence indicates that trust in higher education has decreased over the past few years, particularly among political conservatives (Fain, 2017). While there is not yet information about the mistrust of higher education among conservative Christians, given the relationship of conservative political ideology and conservative Christian religiosity (Schäfer, 2011; Wilcox, 2018; Williams, 2012), it is reasonable to assume that this mistrust is also prevalent among conservative Christians. In a society with limited resources, it becomes more difficult to obtain those resources when a significant voting population (as conservative Christians are roughly one-fourth of all voters

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<sup>17</sup>The perception of rejection has developed in spite of the fact that research indicates that religiosity is correlated with success in secondary education (Antrop-González et al., 2007; Jeynes, 2002; Muller & Ellison, 2001) and higher education (Bowman et al., 2014; S. M. Lee et al., 2007; Mooney, 2010).

during presidential elections) sees little or no value in your work. The bias against conservative Christians among academic psychologists, particularly when there is a Republican administration, is going to make it harder to find public funding for research.

Another cost of academic bias is the difficulty of gaining acceptance for the findings of that work in the larger society. To be specific, groups that feel rejected by academics are unlikely to place much trust in the findings of those academics. Technically, it should not matter if scholars are biased against a certain group as long as the research is sound. However, we do not merely use logic in deciding whether we can believe certain information, but we also rely on our emotions as we attempt to take in knowledge (Loewenstein & Lerner, 2003; Pfister & Böhm, 2008; Schwarz, 2000). A potentially powerful blocker to new information is having a distaste for those providing us that information. And there are few ways more likely to create distaste for individuals than to treat them with bias.

Conservative Christians' mistrust of academics is not entirely without merit. The evidence of bias against them denotes the possibility that academics do not have their best interest at heart. Phenomenon such as the misuse of right-wing authoritarianism in books such as *Conservatives without Conscience* (Dean, 2006) reinforces their fears that researchers seek to supply comfort to their enemies and to make their lives more difficult. As such, there is a skepticism of science and the products of that science among conservative Christians. Given that the field of psychology is uniquely suited to serve the general population, this may be problematic if large segments of the population have motivations to reject the insights gained from psychologists.

This general public doubt is related to yet another issue relevant to the costs of bias. The mistrust of those facing bias can be warranted simply because that bias can have an impact on the type of research that is performed and the results coming from that research. Ideally, science is done in a community and thus scholars are able to catch errors made by individuals in their respective fields. However, if there is a general bias within a discipline then certain presuppositions become taken for granted. Errors that fit into those presuppositions are less likely to be discovered. Regardless of whether the concerns of conservative Christians are valid, academic bias can result in a distortion of the reality a scholar is attempting to study.

Lee Jussim (2012) has shown such a tendency within social psychology as it concerns stereotype accuracy. The prevailing trend has been to challenge the accuracy of stereotypes, especially when those stereotypes may impact women, people of color, and sexual minorities. Yet Jussim (Jussim et al., 2009; Jussim et al., 2015) has shown that such stereotypes tend to be generally accurate. The bias within the discipline to be protective toward traditionally defined marginalized groups accounts for the failure of psychologists to document the accuracy of stereotypes.

But academic bias against conservative Christians tends to be negative instead of positive. There is a general stereotype of conservative Christians being intolerant and bigoted. Abundant research has been produced to shore up these stereotypes (Burlein, 2002; Fulton et al., 1999; Herman, 2007; Hunsberger, 1996; Jelen & Wilcox, 1991; Tsang & Rowatt, 2007). The stereotypes may be accurate. However,

at least some of the methods used to justify negative stereotypes of conservative Christians have been found to have serious methodological flaws. Furthermore, even if the stereotypes are accurate, the emphasis on them is much greater than any emphasis given to accurate stereotypes about marginalized groups. Thus academics present a distorted image of reality by playing up the negative stereotypes of conservative Christians while playing down negative stereotypes of other groups. If the discipline of psychology is going to be one that serves all individuals, then at the very least it must present as accurate picture of reality as possible.

There are unique challenges religious bias has in the discipline of psychology. Religion is often conceptualized as beliefs about the supernatural. However, it can also be seen as how individuals address questions of meaning (Emmons, 2005; Park, 2005; Tillich, 2001).<sup>18</sup> As such, the religious beliefs used by individuals make up key core beliefs. These beliefs are used to maximize pleasure and minimize pain as they construct their own social and personal ideology (Epstein, 1998, 2003). Individuals have a powerful interest in maintaining those beliefs, even if those beliefs are rejected by the academic community. There is too much at stake for them to surrender their core religious beliefs. To the degree that academic bias against conservative Christians produces a desire among academics to disabuse those Christians of their religious beliefs, then such a bias will further tensions between the Christian community and those in academia. No matter what conservative Christians have done to further that divide, there is a responsibility by academics not to make that divide worse. Not recognizing and dealing with bias against conservative Christians is a failure of psychologists to live up to that responsibility.

As discussed earlier, Yarhouse (2009) pointed out a couple of court cases where Christian students (Sandra Bruff and Julea Ward) were pressured to walk back some of their faith beliefs. Another personal illustration of how bias among psychologists can impact individuals of faith can be seen in the case of Andrew Cash. Let's look at this situation with a little depth. He was in the master counseling program at Missouri State University. In 2014 he tried to complete his internship at a Christian-based counseling agency. When assigned to do a class presentation he talked to the class about Christian relationship counseling. One student asked whether the agency would counsel same-sex couples and were told no. Cash's internship coordinator then met with Cash who told him that his religion did not permit him to work with same-sex couples. His internship was disallowed due to "ethical concerns" and Cash was removed from the master program. His lawsuit was settled out of court for \$25,000. It is not unusual for counselors to work with agencies that target a certain population (i.e., blacks, LGBT). However, this option appears to not be available for religious students such as Cash. Given the research indicating the bias expressed

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<sup>18</sup>While the focus of this paper is upon religion in a traditional sense, it should also be stated that individuals may attempt to answer questions of meaning with materialistic ideologies. It is plausible that meaning can come from humanistic concerns (i.e., Marxism, environmentalism) without any reliance on otherworldly beliefs. In such situations one would expect a similar level of ideological and moral commitment as those who rely on otherworldly beliefs to construct answers to meaning.

against religious individuals, selective application of this option is driven to some extent by this bias. In Cash’s situation, it was his willingness to work for a Christian counseling agency that exposed him to expulsion. Such actions indicate that for some in psychology schools, any attempt to respect the religious origins of conservative Christians and the groups they serve can be used to deny them credentials. To the degree that such actions drive religious individuals out of psychology and counseling programs, we can expect fewer psychology professionals who have the requisite sympathy to serve religious populations.

Because psychology is a discipline that deals with important personal struggles, it can aid and touch individuals across the demographic and social spectrum. But it can only do this by respecting core beliefs of those within those groups. Individual psychologists may well emphasize religious beliefs in their personal practices, but they should not be unfairly disparaged. However, as a discipline, psychology has problems of bias and these problems can produce a distorted perception of social and psychological reality. To maximize the ability of psychologists to serve the relatively large population of conservative Christians in the United States, and to avoid feeding into Christianophobic stereotypes, it is important to take deliberate steps at addressing this bias.

What steps can address the problem of religious bias? My suggestion is that we should look at similar steps taken to deal with bias toward other groups. Education about the prevalence and effect of bias against conservative Christians can be included in continuing education curriculum as well as within diversity courses in graduate school.<sup>19</sup> Altering informal social norms is also a valuable way to tackle this issue as those norms help to downplay the importance of anti-Christian bias. There is also value in helping academics to scrutinize their syllabi and lesson plans with an eye on discovering if there is hidden bias in the way they present the material to their students. Conservative Christians do not have a right to a positive presentation of their group and an attempt to ignore the flaws that can arise from conservative Christianity. But they do have a right to be treated respectfully, as it is needed for other religious and secular groups.

Beyond all of these efforts, academics may consider looking at bias from a more holistic perspective than what we have previously seen. Ultimately less concern should be applied to specific reforms aimed at Christianophobia, compared to reforms that involve the development of a program that helps individuals to deal with their bias regardless of who is the target group. Psychologists can be challenged to think about how to generate global attitudes of tolerance rather than tolerance toward specific groups. If only specific groups are seen as needing protection from bias and prejudice, some individuals will face greater challenges than others. An individual with a social network with several sexual minority friends, but few

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<sup>19</sup> It is often assumed that understanding a group with a numerical majority, such as Christians, is not important in a diversity course. I disagree as it is plausible that many individuals in the courses may not have had much exposure to conservative Christians. This is particularly possible if individuals come from regions of the country, such as the Northwest and New England area, where conservative Christians are underrepresented and from secular families in those regions.

conservative Christian friends, is not likely to be challenged by an educational program focusing on the end of homophobia. The individual with few sexual minority friends and many conservative Christian friends will be challenged. Yet the level of bigotry that each individual possesses may be similar, just directed at different social groups. Programs that instruct individuals how to engage in self-introspection can help both individuals to develop more tolerant social attitudes.

The research in this chapter suggests that such programs are likely to impact the anti-Christian attitudes of academics in psychology as opposed to homophobia or Islamophobia. But they can challenge us no matter what group we have bias toward. To that end, we can look forward to the time where our diversity programs are geared toward dealing with our general propensity to have prejudice against our out-groups rather than protect only certain specific groups. And the best individuals equipped for developing such programs are those who better understand how we develop our personal mechanisms justifying our behaviors and how our mind operates. Sociology is not be in the best position to conduct such work, but psychology may be the best discipline for this.

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**Part III**  
**Biased Processes in Professional  
Psychology, Education, and Publishing**

# Chapter 11

## Ideological Bias in American Psychological Association Communications: Another Threat to the Credibility of Professional Psychology



Nina Silander and Anthony Tarescavage

As with any professional organization, the American Psychological Association (APA) is the public representation for a broad base of psychologists both nationally and internationally. Accordingly, the APA concerns itself with not only development and promotion of ethical guidelines and standards for professional psychologists but also public relations. Over recent years, multiple threats to the profession's credibility have arisen (e.g., Nosek et al., 2015; Redding, 2001), and APA leadership has diligently worked to mitigate these threats. In this chapter, we review these threats and assert that the APA will also need to contend with the increasing concern for ideological bias and lack of ideological diversity in psychology, especially during an ever-polarizing political climate. We argue that APA's politicization of professional activities undermines the quality of psychological research, which in turn jeopardizes the credibility of psychology in various societal spheres (e.g., congressional lobbying efforts, involvement in the judiciary, etc.). Furthermore, this politicization potentially alienates consumers of psychological research and services.

### Historic Threats to Professional Psychology's Credibility

Before describing ideological bias as a threat to the profession's credibility, we first note the several particularly pertinent historic threats. In this section, we review psychology's replication crisis, publication bias, and allegiance effects. In addition

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to these threats, others have included the failure to better distinguish pop psychology from psychological research, “overreliance on mechanistic models of human behavior” with insufficient translation to the general public, and limited transparency are several public perception problems facing the social sciences and scientific psychology (Ferguson, 2015, p. 527; Lilienfeld, 2012; Nosek et al., 2012; Ioannidis, 2005).

### ***The Replication Crisis***

The replication crisis is a particularly salient current concern for psychological scientists and one that elicits considerable attention on public media platforms (e.g., NPR, Chawla, 2019; Lombrozo, 2014). Many historic studies have recently been called into question due to difficulty or failure in replicating their findings in follow-up studies examining similar phenomena. These have included studies investigating the relationship between delayed gratification and later life success as demonstrated by the marshmallow experiment (which involved children choosing between eating one marshmallow immediately and waiting to be able to eat two; Watts et al., 2018), the utility of power-posing (striking powerful poses to increase confidence and assertion; Raney et al., 2015; Simmons & Simonsohn, 2016), and the validity of the ego-depletion concept (which pertains to the notion that willpower is a finite resource; Carter et al., 2015).

Even landmark research studies that have informed decades of additional research and psychology curricula have been walked back due to the revelation of important details that undermine their validity and relevance. Noteworthy examples include the Stanford Prison experiment (thought to expose the corrupting influence of power among experiment participants assigned to prison guard roles; Le Texier, 2019); the Robbers Cave study (featuring campground groups of boys pitted against one another in a near *Lord of the Flies* scenario; Perry, 2018); the Milgram experiment (allegedly exposing the willingness of participants to deliver painful electric shocks in an effort to comply with authority; Perry, 2013); and Rosenhan’s Sane in Insane Places study (in which experiment confederates feigned mental illness and supposedly were retained in psychiatric hospitals when eventually behaving normally; Cahalan, 2019). Moreover, there are indications that there was false reporting of details surrounding the Kitty Genovese murder, which is an infamous example used to illustrate the bystander effect (or reticence of witnesses to aid another in distress due to the perceived inaction of others; Morgenstern, 2016). Systematic efforts to re-evaluate earlier research studies have yielded low replication rates (Allen & Mehler, 2018). Indeed, a study orchestrated by Nosek et al. (2015) reviewed 100 studies and found that statistically significant findings replicated in approximately one-third of the studies. Moreover, the replication studies had an average effect size that was half of the magnitude reported in the original studies.

A range of methodological and statistical “questionable research practices” (QRPs) have been identified as major contributors to the recurrent failures to replicate. These practices are often not reported in publication; they include manipulation of outliers, a priori hypothesizing (developing hypotheses *after* review of results), “*p*-hacking” (intentionally or unintentionally attempting multiple strategies to achieve statistically significant results, particularly post-initial data analysis), and “*p*-diligence” (over-analyzing data to avoid all potential flaws and to the point of creating systematic errors; Lombrozo, 2014).

Other examples include researcher-specific variables like personal confirmation bias, motivated reasoning, and even so far as fabrication of data (Johnson, 2014; Koehler, 1993; MacCoun, 1998; Shea, 2011). There are strategies to combat these QRPs. Two efforts to continue replicating findings have included the Psychological Science Accelerator ([psysciacc.org](http://psysciacc.org)), in essence, an international network of research laboratories dedicated to replication studies, and improvement of peer review via pre-registration of research study proposals, a process in which researchers commit to their hypotheses and analyses prior to data collection so as to preempt the opportunity to manipulate analytical processes for obtaining positive findings (Lombrozo, 2014; Nosek et al., 2015; Tackett et al., 2017). However, a considerable obstacle is the incentive to publish statistically significant analyses in original studies, which are more likely to secure grant funding. This also disincentivizes closely replicating other studies (Nosek et al., 2012). Similarly, journal publishers are likely to have a preference for novelty over replication.

### ***Publication Bias***

Publication bias (the preference of research scientists and journals to publish only positive findings) is a related threat to professional credibility in research (Dickersin, 1990; Ferguson & Heene, 2012; Francis, 2012; Ioannidis, 2005; Nosek et al., 2012). This threat is also compounded by institutional pressures to obtain grants and publish (“or perish”; Tackett et al., 2017). This lack of non-significant findings published in the research literature presents an incomplete picture of the available knowledge base. Within clinical practice, publication bias has affected decisions regarding the relative effectiveness of placebos vs. psychotropic medication (Greenberg, 2016; Turner et al., 2008), outcomes of clinical trials (Dickersin et al., 1987), and even potentially the efficacy of widely accepted cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT; see O’Donohue, Snipes, and Soto) and other psychotherapy treatments for adults with depression (Driessen et al., 2015; Cuijpers et al., 2010). Fortunately, a couple journals, *The International Journal of Negative and Null Results* and *Journal of Articles in Support of the Null Hypothesis*, though not specific to psychology, are dedicated to featuring experimental results that would likely not otherwise be published.

## *Allegiance Effects*

Allegiance effects refer to a researcher's inclination to promote treatments consistent with their school of thought, theoretical orientation (i.e., typically as a result of their clinical training), or developed program/intervention model (Boccaccini et al., 2017; Leykin & DeRubeis, 2009). One systematic study of randomized clinical trials of psychotherapy, for example, detected allegiance effects across all psychotherapeutic modalities (with exception of CBT). The effects were particularly salient for studies in which the experimenter was both the developer of the target treatment and the supervisor/trainer of the study's therapists (Dragiotti et al., 2015). Allegiance effects are compounded by publication bias, as the standard by which interventions earn evidence-based treatment (EBT) status requires positive findings from only two independent outcome studies, regardless of how many yielded negative results (Tackett et al., 2017). For this reason, clinical practitioners may overestimate the effectiveness of EBTs. Furthermore, allegiance bias has been observed in forensic science, pharmaceutical interventions, and even surgical trials (Boccaccini et al., 2017).

## **Schism Over Science: The APA Versus the APS**

Since its founding in 1892, the APA sought to promote the field of psychology as a science and was the recognized home of scientific psychology (West, 2008), at times to the neglect of practitioners (Cautin, 2009b). However, friction between practitioner and scientist groups within its membership began developing during the early twentieth century and intensified in the wake of World War II, at which time the APA saw an exponential increase of practitioners joining the organization (Cautin, 2009b). As an organization that once favored scientists, it now began struggling to meet competing needs among diverse members. Academics/scientists disliked the complexity of newly forming governmental structures of the APA and the corresponding shift in power from scientists to applied psychologists post-World War II (West, 2008).

The tensions peaked further during the 1970s. Paralleling the growing "professionalization" of psychology, increased organizational dues and fees were perceived to fund expenses geared for the needs of the expanding practitioner member body—to the negation of those belonging to scientists (Cautin, 2009b). Most importantly, scientists perceived that the APA was beginning to undervalue science and scientific standards, thus threatening "the integrity of the discipline" as a whole (Cautin, 2009b, p. 225). By 1987, two additional developments were perceived to distance scientists even more from meeting their needs within the organization: the APA Council members voted down the Bardón Plan (a reorganization proposal), and a practitioner (who opposed the plan) was elected as APA president (Cautin, 2009a).

In 1987 and after many failed efforts to remedy concerns, the Assembly for Scientific and Applied Psychology (ASAP), which became the Association for

Psychological Science (APS) in 2006, broke from the APA. Nonetheless, tensions persisted after the break. Reportedly, the APA's desire was to be the "go-to" on psychology as a discipline. As such, the APS was regarded as a major threat with both seeking recognition and attention from legislators (Cautin, 2009b). Since this period, and in light of many of the criticisms summarized here, it appears the APS legitimately concerned itself with the APA's regard for scientific integrity.

## **Ideological Threats to the Credibility of Professional Psychology**

We have reviewed some of the more serious methodological concerns in psychological research and verifiable researcher bias. We turn now to a discussion of how ideological positions might evoke similar allegiance and confirmation biases, particularly given the highly personal nature of ideological values as well as the tribalistic tendencies that drive political and ideological behavior (Clark & Winegard, 2020). Fortunately, as we will expand on later in this chapter, there are precautions that appear to mitigate researcher allegiance effects (Munder et al., 2011). We contend that closely attending to conceptual and methodological processes might reduce the influence of ideological bias in clinical research (and likely in practice as well).

A well-documented left-leaning political bias has developed within the social and psychological sciences (e.g., Duarte et al., 2015, Inbar & Lammers, 2012; Woessner et al., 2016). The lack of ideological diversity has contributed to discrimination on ideological grounds (e.g., Duarte et al., 2015, Inbar & Lammers, 2012; Wright & Cummings, 2005), hostile climates, and self-censorship (e.g., one-third of college professors do not disclose right-of-center values until tenured; Flaherty, 2016). This lack of ideological diversity also has implications for the practice of clinical psychology (Silander et al., 2020). Ratios of liberals to conservatives across social and psychological sciences range from as low as 11.6:1 to as high as 76:1 depending on the particular group (sociology, academic psychology, or social psychology) or variable examined (e.g., presidential voting record in 2012; Buss & Von Hippel, 2018; Cardiff & Klein, 2005; Gross & Simmons, 2007; Inbar & Lammers, 2012). These ratios do not reflect the more moderate political topography of the general population.

The monolithic ideological makeup of social and psychological scientists and practitioners can result in the endorsement and promotion of ideas, constructs, and positions that do not have sufficient empirical support. This leads to a virtual "black-out" of unacknowledged criticisms pertaining to conceptual strength and empirical validity of numerous theories and concepts, as well as competing alternative explanatory models. These have included the widespread promotion of constructs such as but not limited to social justice (Lillis et al., 2005); symbolic racism (Mitchell & Tetlock, 2017; Redding, 2001; Sniderman & Tetlock, 1986); mythology of meritocracy; microaggressions (Lilienfeld, 2017); implicit bias (and the IAT; Blanton et al., 2015; Garmines et al., 2011; Oswald et al., 2013); right-wing authoritarianism

(RWA; Conway et al., 2017; Mullen et al., 2003); system justification theory (Mitchell & Tetlock, 2009); inaccuracy of stereotypes (Duarte et al., 2015); (the extent of) social constructivism of gender/sexuality (Eagly, 2018; Lippa, 2010; Ritchie et al., 2018; Schmitt et al., 2017); and “toxic masculinity” (Ferguson, 2019). Simultaneously, substantiated but unpopular or politically incorrect research topics are often denounced or disregarded (e.g., see Lilienfeld, 2010; Redding, 2013). Those who explore these topics are subject to negative social and professional consequences. Notable examples include the suppression of intelligence research (Gottfredson, 2005), concerns about affirmative treatments for gender dysphoria in youth (Biggs, 2019; Cohen & Barnes, 2019 and responses; Hopper, 2017), effects of same-sex parenting (Marks, 2012; Redding, 2013), double standards of adolescent competence (Redding, 2001), and disadvantages to daycare (Rhoads & Lukas, 2020).

### ***Consequences of the Threat of Ideological Bias in Professional Psychology***

The general public may be unaware of the aforementioned problems and controversies within psychological science. Yet a pervasive stream of negative news coverage and critical feedback from science journalists, policymakers, judges, and scientists in other fields contributes to psychological science’s tarred reputation among the general public. Redding (2001), for instance, summarized multiple concerns expressed by those in Congress and the judiciary about the integrity of professional psychology’s research due to predictable findings based on ideological and political affiliations. Ritchie (2020) discouraged lay consumers from trusting psychologists who ironically misapply cognitive biases research to their interpretation of divergent responses to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The pervasion of ideological bias is likely to influence higher education. According to Pew Research, approximately 50% of the American population expressed the belief that suppression of unpopular or politically incorrect views (as well as professors promoting personal sociopolitical views) is interfering with appropriate educational goals within higher education (Brown, 2018). Given that academic psychology was rated the 5th most liberal of 27 academic disciplines in 1991 (Center, 1991), and the proportion of liberals to conservatives in social psychology has since increased exponentially (Duarte et al., 2015), it is reasonable to assume that, on average, academic psychology is far more left-of-center in at the time of this writing.

A more conservative general population (relative to that of psychology) may be mistrustful of not only the conduct of research psychologists but also the way in which clients are treated in psychotherapy (Silander et al., 2020). Gartner (1990) found that ideological mismatches between psychologist and client influenced psychologist empathy for the client, such that psychologists felt less empathy for clients who differed from them. This concern became more apparent in response to the

APA's Guidelines on Clinical Practice with Boys and Men (2019). Notably, the APA did not consistently respond in a congruent manner to the weighty and valid criticisms made of these Guidelines (e.g., Ferguson, 2019; French, 2019; Gurian, 2019; Peterson, 2019), which had elicited responses not only from journalists but also scholars in other fields (Quillette Magazine, 2019).

During a webinar presentation shortly after the publication of the Guidelines, one of its authors, Rabinowitz (2019), presented a number of very practical and helpful ways for psychologists to go about engaging men in therapy and even expressed the importance of tolerating political differences with clients. Nonetheless, when asked about critical responses to the Guidelines, he commented that the critics "have nothing better to do." (This dismissive response was similar to that of one of the Implicit Association Test developer's regarding constructive critics of the test; Singal, 2017). These critical responses focused on how the Guidelines highlighted some of boys' and mens' needs but simultaneously attributed them as holders of privilege despite evidence to the contrary: their falling behind in education (Fortin et al., 2015; Gurian, 2017); educational models, resources, and policies favoring girls and women (Hoff Sommers, 2000); and open discrimination against men such as in the case of Cornell and Tulane Universities (see Reynolds (2019) for original sources).

Overall, we believe that overemphasis on postmodern and feminist theories (which skew Left) result in underdeveloped and off-the-mark responses to this and other psychological and social problems (e.g., disregard of biology in the nature/nurture interplay, attributing male-specific struggles to inherent group characteristics). This position is in stark contrast to the Guidelines on Clinical Practice with Girls and Women (2007), in which problems facing girls and women are largely caused by men and masculinity. As summarized by Tarescavage (2020), far Left and inadequately substantiated postmodern concepts "are major components of the most recent multicultural guidelines (APA, 2017; Guidelines 1 and 5) as well as the guidelines for practice with boys and men (APA, 2018a; Guidelines 1, 2, 3, and 10)" (p. 2). Tarescavage (2020) also asserts that inadequately tested postmodern concepts are now prominent in the most recent version of the APA style guide. He notes, "for example, gender is formally defined as a *social* [emphasis original] construct and biological sex is described as having a sociocultural influence because chromosome findings are 'interpreted within a sociocultural context' (for this reason, it is problematic to use the term 'birth sex')" (p. 2).

Uncritical adoption of postmodern and feminist theories and ineffective peer review within the humanities, as well as psychology, have permitted a second "hoax" paralleling that of Sokal (1996). Lindsay et al. (2018), all of whom identify as liberal academics, submitted journal articles on wholly fabricated topics. These fabricated submissions presented with sufficient face validity and theoretical consistency with the ideological proclivities of the journals so that multiple journals accepted seven for publication. The clinical psychology journal *The Journal of Poetry Therapy* accepted one article entitled "Moon Meetings and the Meaning of Sisterhood: A Poetic Portrayal of Lived Feminist Spirituality." This satirical paper used a "teenage angst poetry generator" from the Internet to fabricate a monologue

from a divorced feminist. Yet another paper reconfigured excerpts of Hitler's *Mein Kampf*, according to intersectional feminism (e.g., exchanging "jew(s)" for "white people(s)"). Instead of professional peer review identifying poor academic scholarship, these publications caught the attention of a Twitter account called "Real Peer Review," and proponents of these so-called grievance studies were viewed by many as disreputable. We suspect that the misapplication of these postmodern and feminist theories in psychology will delegitimize the profession's reputation.

Ideological bias also affects individuals in the field of psychology. Jonathan Haidt (2011) collected correspondence received from many self-identified conservatives in the social sciences who expressed frustration over the hostile climate, animosity from colleagues, and pressure to self-censor their political affiliations, values, beliefs, and points of view on personal (as well as professional) topics. Recurrent castigation and other forms of differential treatment prompted some to change careers. Some students noted frequent and open mocking of conservatives/Republicans within psychology departments, begging the question about the extent to which such unfiltered attitudes impact professional research projects. Within clinical psychology's graduate courses and clinical training, this chapter's authors have observed that curricula (e.g., courses, seminars/didactics) frequently presented some complex research topics in a singular direction congruent with a liberal ideology (e.g., right-wing authoritarianism, symbolic racism, microaggressions). From conversations with numerous peers, many instances of bias rooted in political ideology included the following: patterns of partisan ideological promotion; jokes at the expense of conservatives/Republicans; application of poorly supported psychological concepts to clinical practice; and assumption of political unanimity among professional peers in clinical settings (e.g., VA hospitals, university counseling clinics, academic medical centers). Consistent with these observations, Inbar and Lammers (2012) found in a survey of social and personality psychologists that conservatives reported experiencing a far more hostile climate to their political beliefs than liberals ( $M_{diff} = 2.8$  on a 7-point scale). Moreover, over one-third of psychologists indicated that they were at least somewhat likely to discriminate against conservatives in paper reviews, grant reviews, and hiring decisions. The perceived likelihood of discriminating against conservatives was also significantly, positively associated with liberal beliefs.

## **Threat of Ideological Bias in the American Psychological Association (APA)**

The American Psychological Association (APA) has had a demonstrably long history committed to politically left-leaning policy interests, even shortly following its naissance (Kazenoff, 2019). From writing amicus briefs on controversial Supreme Court cases only loosely related to psychology (e.g., abortion, affirmative action, nuclear energy) to receiving research grant funding from multiple known left-wing organizations, the APA's historical activities have consistently and predictably

adopted left-of-center leanings. For example, the APA's third largest expense in 2016 was \$2.5 million in federal donations toward social justice education and public policy efforts. The organization has maintained such positions and endeavors while presuming unanimous ideological support among its members. While certainly many of the APA members disagree with its ideological positions, their voices remain unheard. Nonetheless, we can presume that the APA likely represents the values of most professional and research psychologists. As such, ideological biases taking root in APA inevitably manifest within the field.

To serve as a point of contrast, the divergence between the APA and the Association for Psychological Science (APS) may reflect shifts in the APA's mission and procedures, as described earlier. These include perceptions that APA not only catered more to practitioners than research scientists but also that it contributed to over-regulation of professional psychology, fell short of optimal scientific standards in research, and became increasingly influenced by political motivations (Cautin, 2009a; Levenson, 2011; O'Donohue & Dyslin, 2005). For example, one past APA president, 30 years ago, called on psychologists to "explicitly blend our data and values in order to make strong arguments for the kinds of [radical] change we think is necessary" (Fox, 1991, p. 165).

Historically, APA's public policy positions have been found to predictably and unflatteringly lean left (Redding, 2001; Fox, 1993), despite entirely reasonable alternative positions (see Lillis et al., 2005) and with a tacit assumption of unanimous agreement among its members. According to Ferguson (2015), for example, during the 1990s, the APA's positions on welfare reform, abortion, and violence in media exemplified this bias. Ferguson claimed that the organization had broached into the domain of morality and misused/misreported research, which alienated large segments of the population in the process. The sheer number of APA policy positions was also deemed questionable relative to the number of public policy statements issued by other scientific organizations. Comparatively, sociopolitical topics appear absent from advocacy issues the APS pursues ([https://www.psychologicalscience.org/advocacy/advocacy\\_issues.cfm](https://www.psychologicalscience.org/advocacy/advocacy_issues.cfm)).

## **APA Public Statements: An Updated Analysis**

For a more current review, we conducted an analysis of APA's press releases since 2000. Official correspondence from these press releases is intended to promote the positions of APA by way of media. They are the organization's overt attempts to promote information that they believe is most important. They also function as the most direct influencers of public perception since APA statements are intended to reflect the positions of the profession.

We reviewed 1437 press releases from APA since January 1, 2000, which is the earliest date available for review on the APA website (<https://www.apa.org/news/press/releases/>). Of these 1437 press releases, we identified 220 (15.3%) that directly commented on political issues. Specifically, these 220 press releases directly

responded to a political figure's actions, a bill in Congress, or a judicial case. Of note, there were several hundred other press releases that indirectly commented on social/political issues, such as climate change, discrimination, gun violence, etc. However, in order to improve the reliability of the review, we focused only on the 220 statements that were explicitly political.

The second author, a self-identified conservative libertarian, coded the 220 statements in terms of political stance (Left, Neutral, or Right). Statements were coded as *Left* if they criticized a Republican, a bill in Congress that was primarily introduced by Republicans, or a judicial decision by a Republican judge or Supreme Court Justices appointed by a Republican president. Similarly, statements were coded as *Left* if they praised a Democrat, a commonly ascribed liberal position (e.g., same-sex marriage), a bill in Congress that was primarily introduced by Democrats, or a judicial decision by a Democratic judge or Supreme Court Justices appointed by a Democratic president. The reverse of these principles was used to code a statement as *Right*. A rating of *Neutral* was assigned if (1) the statement praised or criticized either a bipartisan bill or bipartisan government officials' actions; (2) the statement provided basic information (e.g., that APA would be involved with a stakeholder meeting with government officials); or (3) the statement both praised and criticized the same political person, bill, or judgment (i.e., had a balanced view of the political issue). The second author also coded whether or not psychological research was mentioned or cited in the statement. The citations could be in links from the release (e.g., to an amicus brief). To investigate inter-rater reliability, a randomly selected subset of 22 releases (i.e., 10% of the political releases) were cross-coded by a self-identified liberal psychologist and a self-identified libertarian psychologist. We calculated intraclass correlation coefficients (ICC; one-way random, single rater) on these ratings. According to Koo and Li (2016), values less than 0.50, between 0.50 and 0.75, between 0.75 and 0.90, and greater than 0.90 are indicative of poor, moderate, good, and excellent reliability, respectively. Considered in this context, inter-rater reliability for all three variables was adequate (ICC 0.53 for political stance, 0.54 for research mentioned, and 0.63 for research cited).

## ***Limitations***

Before providing the results of this review, it is important to note an important limitation. As this is a descriptive analysis, there is no way to definitively conclude that there is a liberal bias in the statements of the APA. In order to infer liberal bias, one would need to demonstrate that the APA *systematically* and *incorrectly* criticizes conservative positions (or promotes liberal positions). This is not possible, for two reasons. First, in some cases, it is difficult or impossible to reliably determine the strength of the research evidence supporting conservative positions because these positions are not equitably represented or investigated in the psychological literature (e.g., negative influence of gay/transgender identity on military unit cohesion, negative influence of illegal immigration, psychologist participation in

interrogations to improve national security, etc.). Second, liberal positions are more commonly investigated (perhaps owing to a higher base rate of liberal attitudes among psychologists). Third, despite adequate inter-rater reliability, coding the political slant of press releases is an inherently subjective task. Thus, this review cannot directly point to liberal bias. However, as described next, the delta in these descriptive analyses is so large that it will be obvious to any reasonable person who sets aside their ideology that liberal bias in the APA’s official press releases is a very serious consideration. Hypothetically, even if there was no liberal bias, the considerable underrepresentation of conservative ideology no doubt contributes to the public perception that the organization is heavily slanted liberal (particularly in light of the findings that most in the general population do not characterize their political beliefs as liberal; Saad, 2019).

### Findings

In Fig. 11.1, we present the number of press releases released by the APA from 2000 through April 2020. Three trends emerge. First, the overall number of press releases has greatly increased. From 2000 through 2002, the APA made 144 press releases. From 2017 through 2019, the APA made 297 press releases (a 106% increase). Second, the APA is now more likely to make press releases that are explicitly

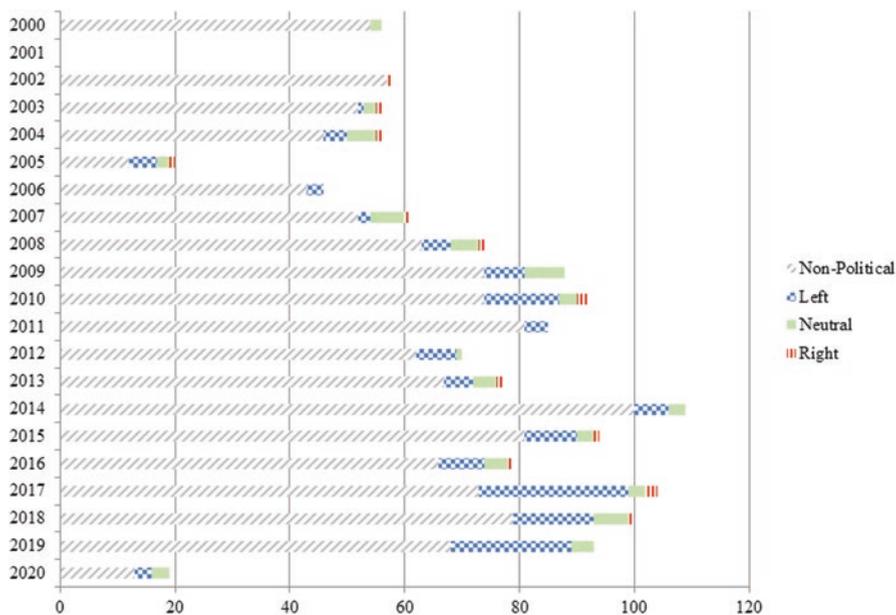


Fig. 11.1 All American Psychological Association press releases (2000 through April 2020)

political. From 2000 through 2002, only 6 out of 144 press releases (4.1%) directly commented on political topics. In stark contrast, from 2017 through 2019, 77 out of 297 press releases (25.9%) were political (a 532% increase). Finally, the ideology of APA’s positions in press releases has undergone substantial change. From 2000 through 2002, zero out of the six political press releases slanted Left and one slanted Right. From 2017 through 2019, 61 of 77 political press releases slanted Left (79.2%), whereas only 3 slanted Right (3.9%). In this same period, only 13 press releases (16.8%) slanted Neutral. The ideological imbalance is clearer in Fig. 11.2, which includes only the 220 press releases that were explicitly political. As can be seen, there is a drastic increase in Left slanted press releases, particularly over the past 4 years. Table 11.1 lists the titles of press releases from 2017 with Left or Right slants, along with the themes of the statements. The reader can review the entire list of political press releases since 2000 (including those with Neutral positions) at the following website: [https://drive.google.com/open?id=15CnjW5ZpZqBX7OJ8qCq\\_3cR8Mghfg-D\\_](https://drive.google.com/open?id=15CnjW5ZpZqBX7OJ8qCq_3cR8Mghfg-D_).

The primary topics about which the APA released political press releases are also informative (see Table 11.2). The most common topics included health insurance (21.4%), interrogation tactics (11.4%), immigration (9.1%), and funding (7.7%). The fifth most common topic (awards) relates to awards given to government officials for their support of mental health initiatives. Overall, 13 of these awards were given to Democrats, whereas only 1 had been given to a Republican (in 2004). Interestingly, the only position that consistently slanted Right was press releases on improving mental health treatment for military veterans (this topic accounted for 7 of the 13 press releases that slanted Right).

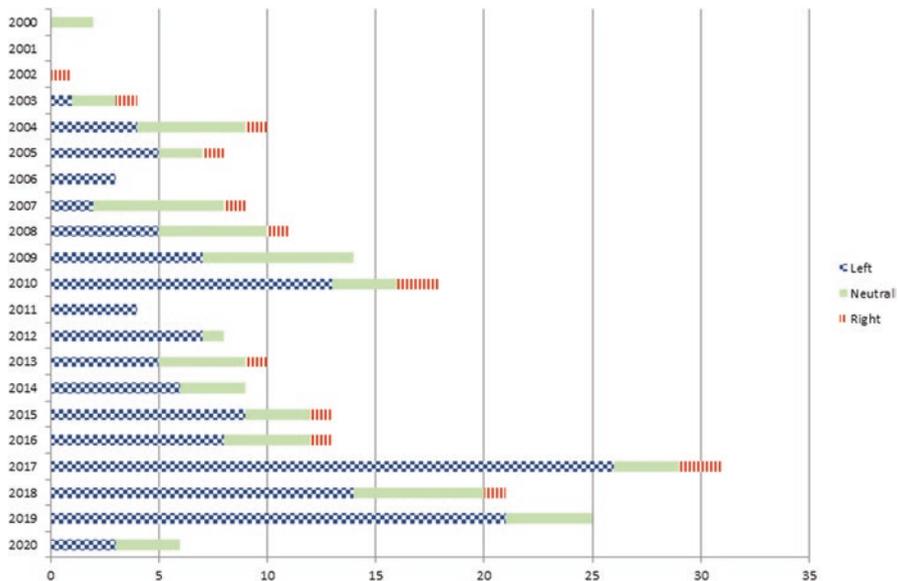


Fig. 11.2 American Psychological Association political press releases (2000 through April 2020)

**Table 11.1** American Psychological Association press releases with political positions on Left or Right (January 2015 through May 2020)

Title	Date	Theme	Position
American Psychological Association Calls for Immediate Halt to Sharing Immigrant Youths' Confidential Psychotherapy Notes with ICE	2/17/2020	Immigration	Left
Statement of APA President on Supreme Court Ruling Allowing Implementation of 'Public Charge' Rule	1/28/2020	Immigration	Left
Congress Should Make Cannabis Research Less Cumbersome, APA Says in Written Testimony	1/15/2020	Cannabis	Left
APA Criticizes Proposal to Stop Enforcing Non-Discrimination Requirements for HHS Grants	11/21/2019	Discrimination law	Left
Statement of American Psychological Association President in Response to Decision Overturning So-Called 'Conscience' Exception to Providing Health Care	11/7/2019	Religious freedom	Left
APA Statement on House Passage of Dignity in Aging Act	10/28/2019	Funding	Left
Statement of APA President Regarding Supreme Court Case Examining Whether Discrimination Based on Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity Should Be Illegal	10/8/2019	Discrimination law	Left
APA Statement on Proposal That Federal Government Use Technology to Predict Who Will Become Violent	9/10/2019	Mental illness and violence	Left
Statement of APA President Regarding HHS Inspector General Reports on Care, Treatment of Migrant Children	9/5/2019	Immigration	Left
APA Statement on Expected Rule Eliminating 20-Day Limit on Detaining Immigrant Children	8/21/2019	Immigration	Left
Statement of APA CEO on Administration Decision to Penalize Immigrants Who Rely on Public Programs	8/12/2019	Immigration	Left
American Psychological Association Calls on Government to Ensure Immigrants and Refugees Can Access Health, Mental Health Services	8/7/2019	Immigration	Left
Statement of APA CEO on Gun Violence and Mental Health	8/5/2019	Mental illness and violence	Left
APA Criticizes Administration Efforts to Weaken Federal Nondiscrimination Protections in Health Care	5/24/2019	Discrimination law	Left
Proposed HUD Rule Could Lead to Hundreds of Thousands of Homeless, Says APA	5/21/2019	Immigration	Left
APA Lauds Equality Act as Good for Business, Health and Families	5/17/2019	Discrimination law	Left

(continued)

**Table 11.1** (continued)

Title	Date	Theme	Position
Statement of American Psychological Association President in Response to So-Called 'Conscience' Exception to Providing Health Care	5/2/2019	Religious freedom	Left
APA Reaffirms Opposition to Transgender Military Ban	4/9/2019	Gay/transgender in military	Left
APA Calls on Attorney General to Break Logjam Surrounding Applications from Cannabis Growers to Enable Needed Research	2/26/2019	Cannabis	Left
SCOTUS Relies on Psychological Research in Deciding Texas Still Using Invalid Approach to Intellectual Disability	2/19/2019	Capital punishment	Left
Immigrant Family Separations Must End, Psychologist Tells Congressional Panel	2/7/2019	Immigration	Left
American Psychological Foundation Establishes Grant Honoring Christine Blasey Ford	1/23/2019	Sexual assault accusations	Left
APA Statement Regarding SCOTUS Ruling to Block Transgender Individuals From Serving in Military	1/22/2019	Gay/transgender in military	Left
Government Shutdown Increasing Stress on Federal Workers, Contractors, Families, APA Says	1/11/2019	Funding	Left
Statement of American Psychological Association CEO Regarding Texas Judge's Declaration of ACA as Unconstitutional	12/15/2018	Health insurance	Left
APA Statement on Proposed Reforms of Sexual Assault Rules for Universities	11/16/2018	Sexual assault accusations	Left
APA Decries Proposal Allowing Indefinite Detention of Immigrant Children	11/6/2018	Immigration	Left
APA Decries Apparent Administration Attempt to Erase Transgender Definition in Federal Programs	10/22/2018	Discrimination law	Left
Statement of APA President Regarding the Science Behind Why Women May Not Report Sexual Assault	9/24/2018	Sexual assault accusations	Left
Statement of APA President Regarding Administration's Proposal to Detain Child Migrants Longer Than Legally Allowed	9/6/2018	Immigration	Left
APA Voices Opposition to Using Federal Funds for Schools to Buy Guns	8/23/2018	Gun control	Left
APA Voices Concern at Continued Separation of Migrant Children and Parents	7/26/2018	Immigration	Left
APA Denounces Administration Plan to Roll Back Policies That Factor Race in College Admissions	7/5/2018	Discrimination law	Left
APA Disappointed and Concerned About Supreme Court Cakeshop Ruling	6/4/2018	Discrimination law	Left
Statement of APA President Regarding the Traumatic Effects of Separating Immigrant Families	5/29/2018	Immigration	Left

(continued)

**Table 11.1** (continued)

Title	Date	Theme	Position
APA Statement Regarding Transgender Individuals Serving in Military	3/26/2018	Gay/transgender in military	Left
APA Urges Defeat of Bill to Weaken Americans With Disabilities Act	2/14/2018	Discrimination law	Left
APA Urges Congress to Reject Spending Cuts That Would Undermine the Future Health of the Nation	2/14/2018	Funding	Left
Statement in Response to Executive Order on Supporting Veterans During Transition to Civilian Life	1/9/2018	Military treatment	Right
APA Calls for Consideration of Best Scientific Evidence by CDC, HHS	12/18/2017	Censorship	Left
Statement of APA President in Response to House, Senate Tax Bills	11/16/2017	Funding	Left
Statement of APA in Response to Trump Order to Halt Vital Health Insurance Subsidies	10/13/2017	Health insurance	Left
Statement of APA President in Response to President’s Executive Order to Override State Health Insurance Protections, Affordable Care Act Rules	10/12/2017	Health insurance	Left
American Psychological Association Welcomes Withdrawal of Cassidy-Graham	9/26/2017	Health insurance	Left
APA Urges Defeat of Latest Senate ‘Repeal and Replace’ Bill	9/21/2017	Health insurance	Left
APA Calls on President to Preserve “Dreamers” Program	8/31/2017	Immigration	Left
Letter to President Donald J. Trump on Psychologists’ Roles in National Security and Interrogation [PDF]	8/23/2017	Interrogation tactics	Left
Statement of the American Psychological Association on the Senate’s Failure to Repeal and Replace Affordable Care Act	7/28/2017	Health insurance	Left
APA Questions Announcement to Bar Transgender People From US Military	7/26/2017	Gay/transgender in military	Left
APA Again Urges Senate Defeat of “Repeal and Replace” Bills	7/25/2017	Health insurance	Left
Revised Senate Health Care Bill Worse Than First Version, APA Says	7/13/2017	Health insurance	Left
APA Continues to Oppose Administration’s Travel Ban	6/27/2017	National security	Left
APA Voices Opposition to Senate Better Care Reconciliation Act	6/22/2017	Health insurance	Left
Heads of Major Mental Health Associations Urge Senate to Reject Flawed American Health Care Act	6/8/2017	Health insurance	Left
APA Urges Senate to Start Over on Health Care	5/25/2017	Health insurance	Left
APA Criticizes White House Budget Proposal	5/23/2017	Funding	Left
APA Voices Disappointment Upon Passage of American Health Care Act	5/4/2017	Health insurance	Left

(continued)

**Table 11.1** (continued)

Title	Date	Theme	Position
APA Voices Opposition To Revised American Health Care Act	4/28/2017	Health insurance	Left
APA Hails SCOTUS Decision Texas Cannot Use Outdated Approach to Intellectual Disability	3/29/2017	Capital punishment	Left
APA Urges Congress to Support Veterans Affairs Research, Mental Health Services	3/29/2017	Military treatment	Right
APA Urges Congress to Reject President's Proposed Budget	3/17/2017	Funding	Left
APA Calls Upon Congress to Oppose American Health Care Act	3/16/2017	Health insurance	Left
APA Voices Concerns With American Health Care Act	3/9/2017	Health Insurance	Left
Trump Administration Orders Pose Harm to Refugees, Immigrants Academic Research, and International Exchange, According to Psychologists	2/1/2017	National security	Left
APA Thanks VA for Exempting Health Care Provider Positions From Freeze	1/27/2017	Military treatment	Right
APA Warns Against Reinstating 'Enhanced' Interrogation	1/27/2017	Interrogation tactics	Left
APA Urges Trump Administration to Safeguard Standing Rock Sioux in Response to Memorandum on Dakota Access Pipeline	1/26/2017	Energy	Left

Note: Retrieved from American Psychological Association (<https://www.apa.org/news/press/releases/>). All press releases since 2000 that directly comment on political issues are available at [https://drive.google.com/file/d/15CnjW5ZpZqBX7OJ8qCq\\_3cR8Mghfg-D\\_/view](https://drive.google.com/file/d/15CnjW5ZpZqBX7OJ8qCq_3cR8Mghfg-D_/view)

Some specific examples from the list of press releases bear mentioning as they illustrate some of the Left slants evidenced by the overall review. On February 17, 2020, the current APA president released a press statement calling on immigration officials to “immediately halt” sharing information about gang activity from therapy notes because this was “weaponizing therapy sessions,” which was “appalling” to her (APA, 2020). The basis for this press release was one news story largely about a single asylum seeker who disclosed in therapy that he was involved in gang activity and therefore was at risk of deportation (Dreier, 2020). The article was released 2 days prior to the APA president’s press release.

The president’s statement presented several problems. First, the language choices and characterizations could be considered extreme. Second, the response was based on a single news report. Third, the response was based on anecdotal evidence. Fourth, the response induces a generalization from a single case. Fifth, the APA president at most took only 2 days to consider a response. Finally, the president is essentially speaking for the profession without significant input from stakeholders.

To be clear, we believe issues related to patient confidentiality are important, and the patient needs to be provided informed consent about the limitations of confidentiality. However, the costs and benefits of this particular policy should be *carefully* considered, with costs and benefits being weighed appropriately (i.e., similar to

**Table 11.2** American Psychological Association press releases on political topics by position (2000 through May 2020)

	Total	Percent	Left	Neutral	Right
Health insurance	47	21.4	26	21	0
Interrogation tactics	25	11.4	23	2	0
Immigration	20	9.1	19	1	0
Funding	17	7.7	8	9	0
Award	14	6.4	13	0	1
Discrimination law	11	5.0	10	1	0
Same-sex marriage	9	4.1	9	0	0
Gay/transgender in military	7	3.2	7	0	0
Military treatment	7	3.2	0	0	7
Substance use	7	3.2	0	7	0
Criminal justice reform	6	2.7	3	3	0
Gun control	5	2.3	3	2	0
Treatment	5	2.3	1	2	2
Prescription privileges	4	1.8	1	1	2
Capital punishment	3	1.4	3	0	0
Sexual assault accusations	3	1.4	3	0	0
Cannabis	2	0.9	2	0	0
Hate crimes	2	0.9	1	1	0
Mental illness and violence	2	0.9	2	0	0
National security	2	0.9	2	0	0
Privacy	2	0.9	0	2	0
Religious freedom	2	0.9	2	0	0
Affirmative action	1	0.5	1	0	0
Campus safety	1	0.5	0	1	0
Censorship	1	0.5	1	0	0
Child abuse	1	0.5	1	0	0
Children's rights	1	0.5	0	1	0
Domestic violence	1	0.5	0	1	0
Energy	1	0.5	1	0	0
False confessions	1	0.5	0	1	0
Female self-image	1	0.5	0	1	0
Gun violence	1	0.5	0	1	0
Human trafficking	1	0.5	0	1	0
Islamic extremism	1	0.5	0	0	1
Media violence	1	0.5	0	1	0
Participation in government	1	0.5	0	1	0
Reparative therapy	1	0.5	1	0	0
Stigma	1	0.5	0	1	0
Unemployment	1	0.5	1	0	0
Videogame violence	1	0.5	0	1	0

limits on confidentiality in the areas of child abuse, elder abuse, suicide risk, and homicide risk). In other words, consider a simple thought experiment. Would this press release pass peer review? For the reasons noted earlier, it should be desk rejected. Yet, this statement was released with the full authority of the APA supporting it, and it illustrates the need for inquiry into APA's vetting process for press releases (or lack thereof). Such a vetting process could include input from a diverse set of stakeholders to mitigate the risk of a press release author's bias (ideological or otherwise) in statements that ostensibly represent the views of the profession.

Another example clearly illustrates a Left slant. On September 24, 2018, the APA president released a statement on underreporting of sexual assault "in light of the allegation by Christine Blasey Ford, PhD, with respect to Supreme Court nominee Brett Kavanaugh" (APA, 2018b). The statement reviews research indicating that women are likely to underreport sexual assault and are unlikely to make false claims about sexual assault. The statement indicates "Ford's alleged assault is reported to have occurred when she was 15—the developmental stage of exploring and determining one's identity, a time when many teenagers do not feel comfortable discussing any sexual issues with their parents, let alone an assault." Overall, the president of APA was making the case that Dr. Ford's testimony was most likely accurate (and by extension that Justice Kavanaugh sexually assaulted her). Of note, at the time of this writing, Democratic Presidential Candidate Joe Biden has been recently accused of sexually assaulting a woman named Tara Reade, but APA has not released a statement similar to the one made in support of Dr. Ford. It has been 3 months since her accusation. The APA's lack of comment on this and other issues that could reflect negatively on a liberal presidential candidate can indicate a Left bias and hurts public perception of the organization. Like the famous *dog that did not bark* clue from the Sherlock Holmes novels, the APA's silence on this issue is telling.

We agree that the research on underreporting of sexual assault is an important information for public dissemination. The problem is the context in which it was written. Here, too, consider a simple thought experiment. Would it be appropriate for a clinical psychologist to render an opinion about the veracity of sexual assault reporting without ever talking to (let alone evaluating) the person making the claim? And without considering alternative explanations of false memories as well as incentives for internal and external gain? The presidents of the APA, when making official statements that carry the weight of the American Psychological Association, should hold themselves to the same standard that we hold all other clinicians. Ultimately, Justice Kavanaugh was confirmed to the US Supreme Court on October 6, 2018. On January 23, 2019, the APA made another press release—describing the development of a grant in Dr. Ford's name, intended to fund sexual trauma research (APA, 2019).

One positive of the just described statement is that it mentioned psychological research. Alarming, only 40% of the political press releases reference psychological research (50% for Left leanings, 29% for Neutral leanings, and 14% for Right leanings). Moreover, only 14% provided citations for the research reviewed (16% for Left leanings, 11% for Neutral leanings, and 0% for Right leanings). Overall, we

call on the American Psychological Association to hold itself to the same standards to which it holds its members in terms of research and clinical practice. The process of doing so is quite simple, facilitated by the asking of two basic questions: (1) Would this release pass peer review? (2) Is this release consistent with standard clinical or research practice?

## A Way Forward

We assert that the breakdown in the peer review process/accountability that typically guards against individual/group human flaws (e.g., cognitive biases) is failing to preserve the legitimacy of the profession in the face of ideological or political bias. The replication crisis evidenced that traditional peer review was insufficient in identifying suboptimal or even unscientific methods and analyses in research. When the researcher's salient beliefs, values, and worldviews are thrown into the mix, traditional peer review is rendered even more inadequate.

An improved peer review process would include a recognition of and commitment to set aside one's ideological investment in particular research findings, particularly with those that challenge one's ideological values and presuppositions. Commitment to "good science" would be facilitated by a priori methodological approaches (to data collection, manipulation, analysis, and presentation) and increased ideological diversity professionally, including among reviewers. Additionally, particularly for topics that tap into underlying ideological and moral values, researchers and the APA would benefit from consideration of the following suggestions from Redding (2001) to mitigate the threats of ideological bias to its reputation.

First, Redding (2001) suggested that researchers explore conservative alternative explanations that challenge liberal ideology. This involves reframing and systematically testing hypotheses from different ideological models. Some have evidenced how doing so on right-wing authoritarianism research yielded more nuanced findings (Mullen et al., 2003). This is also reminiscent of Tetlock's (1994b) turnabout test that requires researchers to consider the opposite of their research question on politicized topics and to include complementary falsification methods. This is particularly important since academic scientists, according to a meta-analysis, judge articles that contradict their personal beliefs more harshly (Armstrong, 1997). This approach could also be applied to communications from the APA. Consider the press release described earlier in which the APA president denounced an immigration policy regarding a therapist's responsibility to breach confidentiality when a refugee discloses a history of gang activity. An ideological turnabout test might involve reframing the situation. Would the APA president be equally appalled by the situation if the therapy client was from a white nationalist gang (i.e., a concern of both parties but particularly the Democratic party)? If not, then they should reconsider the release.

Redding (2001) also suggests enrichment of the psychology curriculum with ideological diversity to foster critical thinking. To this end, it may be necessary to include other disciplines, such as political science, economics, public policy, and law. This will help balance the absence of conservative viewpoints in psychology. Additionally, Haidt's (2013) moral foundations would provide psychology students with a helpful framework for approaching issues related to ideology, politics, and values. He identified six fundamental value principles (care/harm, fairness/cheating, loyalty/betrayal, authority/subversion, sanctity/degradation, and liberty/oppression) that liberals and conservatives esteem differently. In turn, liberals and conservatives struggle to find common ground across a wide range of social issues without proper understanding of one another. Redding's (2001) final two suggestions are commitment to science over activism/advocacy and expansion of diversity. We expand on these suggestions in the next sections.

### *Commitment to Science over Activism/Advocacy*

The extent to which professions ought to incorporate activism and permit ideological influence is an ongoing debate in sociology (Akresh, 2017) and in social and political psychology (Tetlock, 1994a, b; published responses to Duarte et al., 2015), particularly given the recognition that theories have the potential of interfering with the scientific process when research scientists prioritize a theoretical point of view over impartial and skeptical scientific inquiry (Greenwald, 2012). Others have framed this question as competing goals between "truth" and "social justice" (Haidt, 2016). Science and activism/advocacy have potentially incompatible goals. The former requires commitment to truth, even if it is undesirable and incongruent with personal goals and values; the latter entails commitment to the pursuit of predetermined goals and attempts to persuade others to think similarly (Ferguson, 2015). Psychological scientists should question whether their allegiance is to the process of uncovering the nature of reality or advocating for socioeconomic policies, as well as questioning their competencies to advocate for these positions.

Understandably, many psychological scientists select topics to research according to personal values and interests. Yet, when determining whether or not to engage in advocacy/activism, some contend that psychologists should ask if they have sufficient data to advocate for particular social issues (Ferguson, 2015; Redding, 2001). In the wake of the replication crisis and publication bias, we have hopefully learned that we ought to be cautious when presenting initial/preliminary findings, which could easily be contradicted or challenged at a later time. Alternatively, some recommend it is acceptable to advocate for positions if it is transparent that the speaker/writer is an advocate/activist motivated by values on a given topic (Martel, 2009). Others suggest psychologists become transparent about their collective ideological values and participate actively in radical "social change," even if that would mean loss of support from some (Fox, 1993).

We believe that when psychologists make claims about value-laden and moral issues, they run a serious risk of conflating what *ought to be* with what *is*. In other words, advocacy and activism efforts are outside the scope of a scientific profession such as ours. Psychologists can report on scientific data but should carefully reconsider the appropriateness of advocating for specific policies/laws that require expertise of other disciplines. Much like the role of forensic psychologists, the role of psychologists should be to simply inform decision-makers on topics that they deem relevant. For example, this chapter first author had participated in congressional lobbying efforts for the FAMILY Act with Division 9 of the APA during her graduate training—but would now reconsider if given a similar opportunity again. Considerable psychological research evidences the importance of early childhood attachment on later development (e.g., Bowlby, 1979; Dickstein et al., 2009), the mental and physical well-being associated with the maternal-infant relationship, and the impact of financial strain and unemployment on familial relationships. Yet, it was clear to this author that psychologists cannot speak to the complex economic advantages and disadvantages of paid FMLA.

What of clinical psychologists who do not conduct research? To what extent are practitioners able to separate personal values from professional roles? Clinical psychologists frequently advocate on behalf of particular groups due to acquired professional expertise (e.g., geriatrics, youth with ASD, sexual minorities, etc.). The Ethics Code (APA, 2017) includes recommended guidelines for policy development and social intervention that permits psychologists' involvement in these activities. Like APA, the American Board of Professional Psychology (ABPP, n.d.) also calls for practitioners to engage in advocacy. Considered in this context, psychologists' uncritical or unquestioning use of ideologically charged psychological concepts applied to their working conceptualizations of their clients' problems can result in significant mischaracterization and misunderstanding of those they are meant to treat with authenticity and empathy. When the ideological biases of researchers shape the treatments applied by the practitioners, the individual clients are dependent upon a practitioner to not only suspend assumptions but also filter out political interference. One way to mitigate this risk is to consult with colleagues of different ideological beliefs. Along these lines, the APA is overdue to reconsider its operationalization of diversity.

### ***Expansion of Diversity: Revision of Multiculturalism Definition***

Redding's (2001) final suggestion is an expansion of the domain of diversity to increase conservative representation. He argues that this will serve to promote a more adept force in psychological science, improve the peer review process, and broaden the scope of viable and important research endeavors. This is particularly important as people are more likely to trust scientific findings when they perceive that the researchers are diverse in their political identities (Gauchat, 2012; Kahan et al., 2011). As argued in Silander et al. (2020), sociopolitical beliefs are a

component of cultural diversity. More specifically, ideology reflects values and worldview beliefs in addition to political persuasion (Haidt, 2013), which fall within the scope of cultural experience and identity. As such, and consistent with APA Ethics, ideological diversity variables should be afforded the same recognition in the discussion and commitment to multicultural diversity as does, for instance, religion/spirituality. Multicultural competency, sensitivity, and humility should be promoted to facilitate understanding and effectiveness in researching, collaborating professionally with, and providing treatment to one's ideological counterparts. APA can and should consider supporting calls of action across educational and professional activities to satisfy this more-than-achievable goal.

## Conclusion

As a consequence of taking public positions in controversial and moral topics, the APA has likely alienated much of the lay population and future clients (organizational, clinical, etc.). Attention toward viable research and professional topics has been missed. Population needs remain unaddressed due to predictable but incomplete explanations and understanding of human experience. Conservative representation (as well as representation of non-left-wing/progressive thought) in the profession could yield more examination of topics such as traditional family values and relationships, performance outcomes (vs. fairness processes), alternative and nuanced approaches to the study of privilege (e.g., economic), and more balanced appraisals of Western values that relate to human behavior. Because of the influence of ideological bias, an ever more distrustful portion of the American population, as well as specific stakeholders, will come to disregard or overlook valuable contributions made by APA.

Some may argue that the liberal ideology simply reflects the objective reality, and thus ideological diversity is unnecessary. However, the review of the multiple non-ideological threats to psychology's credibility should demonstrate that human factors (e.g., motivated reasoning, confirmation bias, draw to novelty, etc.) do in fact influence and jeopardize good science. Moreover, in a turnabout test, we would not be content with the argument that, in an alternate universe, only a conservative ideology is the appropriate lens through which psychological science should understand objective reality. Truth exists apart from ideology or political persuasion. On any given topic, it may, but need not, correspond with structured set of ideological presupposition. Regardless, we contend that regardless of ideological or political representation in the field, the APA should reconsider its public positioning on political topics, and psychology must be driven by research inquiries that prioritize the exploration of plausible alternative and falsifiable hypotheses that run counter to the dominant ideology. In the absence of this, the profession is cast into a tide of ideological movements.

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# Chapter 12

## One Psychologist's Reasons for Resigning from the American Psychological Association



Christopher J. Ferguson

### Introduction

In recent decades, significant left-leaning political biases have been well documented both within the field of psychology at large (Duarte et al., 2015; Redding, 2001) and for the American Psychological Association specifically (Silander, 2023). That such political biases exist is so well documented at this juncture that they are arguably beyond much reasonable debate. The implications for political biases within a scholarly field should also be fairly clear, as findings in the field will, by happy coincidence, tend to support the political leanings of those conducting them. This is perhaps best represented among studies which conclude conservatives are in a variety of ways cognitively or morally inferior to liberals based on questions that favor liberals (Stanovich, 2020). The current chapter is not intended to be a comprehensive review of this problem – which is admirably covered in other chapters in the book. Rather, this essay documents the decision of the author to terminate further relationship with the American Psychological Association (APA) out of concern that these biases are not only scientifically untenable but are also directly harmful to the general public (particularly to the very groups the APA purports to wish to help).

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## Resigning from the APA

I've been a member of the American Psychological Association (APA) for years and a fellow for the past 6 or 7 years. Exactly how many years I was an APA member is hard to recount for, as I recall, I'd been a graduate student member, then let that lapse, only to return as a faculty member in the early 2010s. I sat on the APA Council of Representatives, which theoretically sets policy for the APA, for 3 years. December 2021 brought the end of my term as president of the APA's Society for Media and Technology, where I have met many wonderful colleagues. Yet, at the end of 2021, I decided to resign my membership in the APA. My concern is that ongoing failures of the APA as an organization dedicated to science and good clinical practice have become critical. As a professional guild, perhaps it never was primarily dedicated to science or good practice, but I believe it is now advancing harmful causes about which I can no longer be a part.

Inevitably, these conversations bring up accusations of political wrongthink. Therefore, for what it might be worth, let me briefly speak to my politics. I would describe myself as an "Obama progressive" and generally support progressive causes ranging from legalization of marijuana, to gay and trans rights, to climate change, to a national healthcare system on the Nordic model. I've never voted for a Republican candidate for president. I consider myself a classic liberal on issues related to free speech and due process, which I consider core constitutional values. I have in print criticized President Trump (multiple times, in fact, though among others see the biography in Ferguson, 2020). I don't listen to Ben Shapiro or Joe Rogan or Candace Owens, nor watch Fox News. I could go on like this, but the reader will either take me at my word or they won't. My concern is not a defense of conservative or far-right political or social views (many of which I passionately disagree with), but what I see as a degradation of our scientific institutions' own moral standing and commitment to neutral, objective science, the "do no harm" principle of ethical clinical work, as well as free speech and academic freedom. My concerns do not appear to be a lone voice, but evidence suggests they may be fairly widely held, if spoken of most of in fearful whispers rather than direct objections (Frisby, 2018).

I originally became engaged with the APA in a futile effort to "fix from within." Much of this focused on the APA's deeply misleading policy statements in my own area of research: violence in video games. However, it is worth noting that others have pointed out similar problems regarding politicized APA policy statements in other areas such as abortion and even Zionism for decades (O'Donohue & Dyslin, 1996).

The APA's position on video games has a long and storied past. Back in the early 2000s, the field of video game violence became dominated by a small group of scholars who asserted that links between video games and aggression (and violent crime) were similar to smoking and lung cancer or that 10–30% of violent crimes might be eliminated if society dispensed with violent video games or other media (see Markey et al. (2015) for documentation of various claims made). In 2005,

during this heyday of alarmist claims, the APA released their first policy statement on video game violence. It's worth noting both that this policy statement was released despite some objection among varying boards and committees within the APA such as the Committee on Legal Issues and that it was viewed as a means of marketing psychology and its utility to the general public (Copenhaver & Ferguson, 2018). This desire to be relevant, including politically, may help us understand many of the APA's actions.

The APA updated this policy statement linking violent games to aggression in 2015 and again in 2020, despite over 200 scholars asking them to avoid making such statements (Consortium of Scholars, 2013). At about the same time, a reanalysis was conducted on the meta-analysis on which the policy was based. Ultimately, this reanalysis found the APA's meta-analysis to be deeply flawed, had missed numerous studies, included some studies that did not actually measure video game violence, and used a system for rating studies that was opaque and was not clarified by the APA task force even upon request (Ferguson et al., 2020). Ultimately, the APA's own Society for Media and Technology asked them to retract it (Society for Media Psychology and Technology, 2020).

This tendency to release policy statements overstating the scientific certainty of "harm" due to some value-laden controversy is not an isolated incident related to video games. Most notably, the APA's policy statements on other research fields such as spanking appear to be similarly flawed, overstating certainty of harmful effects (Larzalere et al., 2023).

In the clinical realm, the APA's advice has similarly been questionable. A 2017 recommendation highlighted Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT; in which I am myself primarily trained) as treatment of choice for post-traumatic stress disorder. It remains in effect despite several meta-analyses subsequently finding CBT has little benefit over other therapies (Carpenter et al., 2018; Steinert et al., 2017). More controversial (see Wright et al., 2019) were practice guidelines for men and boys (APA, 2018) – which drew deeply from feminist theories, dwelled on topics of patriarchy, intersectionality, and privilege, and arguably disparaged men and families from traditional backgrounds. This guideline is actively harmful to the degree it both misguides therapy in favor of an ideological worldview and likely discourages men and families from more traditional backgrounds from seeking therapy. In this case, as with video games and spanking, warnings in Council (mine included) that the guidelines might backfire and stoke controversy were ignored and the guidelines passed effectively with little oversight or opposition by the Council of Representatives. Having sat on Council for 3 years, my personal observation of the Council is that it rarely functions well as a deliberative or restraining body on the ambitions of the 16 member (including the council leadership team members) Board of Directors – or even specific special-interest groups pushing the APA to adopt policies friendly to their own worldviews.

Part of the problem is that the process for generating policy statements is not objective. Task force members are often chosen to develop position papers from among those who have "skin in the game" for a particular viewpoint, and the APA's continued reliance on this despite it being criticized suggests a purposeful nature to

this (Copenhaver & Ferguson, 2018). Much of the process is arguably stage-managed by advocates as well as the Board of Directors with Council Members who meet only twice a year. This body often has little clue of the science behind the policies on which they are voting. Appeals are often emotive and moralistic. This flawed process led to the unethical support of psychologists involved in harsh interrogations as detailed in the Hoffman Report (APA, 2016) and, largely unchanged since then, there's little reason to think it's gotten better since.

The ideological capture of the men and boys guideline should have been a red flag of what was to follow: a complete capitulation to far-left ideology following the death of George Floyd. This unfortunate murder raised legitimate questions not only of criminal justice reform (of which I am a supporter) but also reignited simmering debates about race. Such conversations are understandably emotionally fraught and often ideological, with deep right-left divides on the topic. There's a wide range of space between believing the USA is still mired in Jim Crow and that it is a racial utopia, but it is often hard to guide conversation into that constructive middle ground, where nuanced and data-driven conversations can be difficult but productive. What we don't need is our science organizations going all-in on one side of our polarized divide and stoking furor with hyperbolic statements. Unfortunately, that is exactly what the APA and other left-leaning organizations did.

In May 2020, the APA's then-president Sandra L. Shullman referred to the USA experiencing a "racism pandemic" (APA, 2020). The second word is basically a cliché obviously borrowing the buzzword from the COVID-19 era which had just hit the USA 2 months earlier. Shullman, speaking officially for the APA, went on to say, "The deaths of innocent black people targeted specifically because of their race — often by police officers — are both deeply shocking and shockingly routine. If you're black in America — and especially if you are a black male — it's not safe to go birding in Central Park, to meet friends at a Philadelphia Starbucks, to pick up trash in front of your own home in Colorado or to go shopping almost anywhere."

These are terrifying words. They're also at best debatable and arguably simply untrue (see, e.g., Fryer, 2019; Cesario et al., 2019). According to the *Washington Post's* database of police shootings, shootings of unarmed Black citizens are rare (Washington Post, 2021). There were 18 in 2020, the year Shullman was writing, and only 4 in 2021. The issue of policing and race is nuanced. As scholars such as John McWhorter (2020) and Wilfred Reilly (2020; both Black for the record) have pointed out, more unarmed Whites than Blacks are killed by police every year (left out of much of this is how infrequently Asian citizens are shot compared to either Whites or Blacks). However, most news agencies ignore White victims of police violence, creating an availability heuristic, wherein the public assumes Black victims of police violence are exponentially more numerous than they are, while White victims are underestimated (McCaffrey & Saide, 2021). The APA should be aware of the availability heuristic; after all, it's a well-known psychological concept, yet their language contributes to it. The APA appears to fall into the trap of well-known cognitive biases psychologists themselves have uncovered (see Frisby chapter, this text).

Proportionally, Black individuals are fatally shot by police more than Whites (though, again, Asians less than either), but proportionally, Black individuals are also overrepresented in the perpetration of violent crime (Beck, 2021) and in violence *toward* police (Shjarback & Nix, 2020). To clarify, I am convinced that the evidence suggests that *class* rather than race is actually the key variable we should be considering, whether we're talking about perpetrators of crime (Smith et al., [in press](#)) or victims of police brutality. Every victim of police brutality is one victim too many, whatever their ethnicity. But these are difficult, complex, and nuanced conversations to have, and we need steady hands to guide us. The APA may find itself both too beholden to moral advocates willing to use shame to coerce policy positions and deaf to those who argue the data may not support simplistic moral narratives.

Instead, the APA threw gasoline on the fire. The idea that Black citizens can't go outside without being shot by police is statistically untrue but also inflames racial tensions and, ironically, creates anxiety in minority communities. Unfortunately, homicides and other violent crimes have soared in US cities since May 2020, often hitting low-income neighborhoods and including the deaths of multiple children of color, something the APA has been, to my knowledge, conspicuously silent on. My concern is that their rhetoric on race, by delegitimizing policing and promoting false narratives about race and policing, has made the APA unintentionally complicit in this phenomenon.

The APA has continued to double-down. This year they released an apology for systemic racism (APA, 2021a) and declared its mission to combat systemic racism (APA, 2021b) in the USA and a policy dedicated to combating health inequities which it sees as the product of racism (APA, 2021c). All of these are filled with leftist jargon and assumptions from progressive worldviews and short on clear evidence or even definitions. For example:

- From APA (2021b) “Interlocking systems of oppression negatively affect students marginalized by their intersectional identities”
- From APA (2021c) “racialized education and training, science, and clinical practice, including by psychologists, have contributed to health inequities by mismatching mainstream psychological methods and practices to communities of color with vastly different cultural perspectives; and training models often neglect to educate psychologists in culturally appropriate methods for addressing health equity”
- “...academic hierarchical culture is not well-matched to the more collectivistic cultures of some communities of color; and education and training in health equity, EDI (equity, diversity, and inclusion), and structural racism is heterogeneous and often lacking in consistency over time”

Put simply, these are statements of leftist ideology, not science nor even good clinical practice.

As apologies go in our current Twitter-infused culture, the APA's apology was promptly rejected by the Association of Black Psychologists (ABP, 2022). The ABP

saw the APA apology as not far enough and performative (i.e., lacking in sincerity). I disagree with the ABP worldview of the modern USA, but I do agree with them that the APA's apology was probably performative. It fits well with past history of the APA's miscommunication of science not to mention their legacy of changing their ethics code to allow psychologists to participate in harsh interrogations of detainees at Guantanamo Bay, something that only came to light 7 years ago. As briefly referenced above, during the George W. Bush (and later Barack Obama) administrations, the APA was found to have colluded with the Department of Defense to change their ethics code to allow for psychologists to participate in harsh interrogations of detainees in the war on terror. The APA leadership was found to have not been transparent with membership and Council about these dealings (see APA (2016) for full accounting). Several psychologists later sued the APA for libel, claiming that the APA made false claims about their culpability in the matter (see Bradshaw (2020)). But this situation seems an example of the *apology treadmill* – wherein capitulation on one point simply drives moral grandstanders to push the goalposts further along or simply churns the waters of outrage with more blood. “We demand your apology” almost inevitably shifts to “Your apology wasn’t good enough.”

More recently, the APA announced a list of “inclusive language” (APA, 2022), adding to the language policing that has become common in left spaces from journalism to the American Medical Association. “Mentally ill” is replaced with the clunky “person living with a mental health condition” and “prostitute” with “person who engages in sex work.” We’ll no longer have the elderly or seniors (“older adults” or “persons 65 years and older”). Just to make the “person with” format confusing, “person with deafness” is out (“deaf person” is now preferred) as is “person with blindness” (“blind person”). Advocating color-blindness is out, as are Caucasians (“White” or “European” is preferred). We’re not to talk about birth sex or people being born a boy or girl (“assigned female/male at birth” is the language of choice now). There are no more poor people just “people whose incomes are below the federal poverty threshold.” We’re not to use words like “pipeline” (allegedly “triggering” to Native Americans give controversies over fuel oil pipelines on Native lands), “spirit animal” (use “animal I would most like to be” which isn’t really the same thing) instead, or “tribe.” “Violent” language like “killing it” or “take a stab at it” is to be avoided. A lot of this is obvious safetyism, which I worry that by treating people like they’re made of spun glass and incentivizing outrage and offense will contribute to escalating mental health crises. But, as others have pointed out, it’s also elitist as most people couldn’t hope to keep up with the ever-changing language rules of the academic elite (Barron, 2020; Clairmont, 2020). There are also issues of free speech and de facto censorship which may result from speech that is compelled or coerced for moralistic and ideological purposes (Parensky, Chap. 6, this volume).

### ***Problems at the British Psychological Society (BPS)***

In fairness, the APA is hardly unique in its ostensible capture by wokeness. The British Psychological Society in a statement (BPS, 2020a) uncritically quoting controversial “anti-racism” figure Ibram Kendi and speaking of COVID-19 said, “It arrived in a society beset with systemic racism, inequity and oppression of minority and marginalised groups...” In 2021, a UK government report (Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities, 2021) by a commission consisting mainly of scholars of color concluded that the evidence for systemic racism in the UK was lacking. In response (BPS, 2021), the BPS doubled down saying “We are particularly concerned that the re-traumatising of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic people through a denial of their lived experience, will have an adverse psychological impact.” Yet, lived experience (e.g., anecdote) both varies widely within groups and is generally a poor source of information. We should certainly listen to people’s views and experiences, and these can guide research, but they shouldn’t trump data.

The BPS has turned its accusations onto itself as well. BPS Chief Executive Sarb Bajwa mused, “Are we institutionally racist? I think my answer would be that, if it feels like we are, then we probably are” (BPS, 2020b). These kinds of public confessions swept leftist institutions in 2020, often without any clarity of what these statements meant or evidence to support them. They took on something of a quasi-religious revival like furor. It’s worth nothing that such statements don’t merely speak to historical racism, which would be fair to acknowledge, but explicitly state that some of society’s most progressive institutions remain institutionally racist to the present day.

In August 2020, the BPS publication *The Psychologist*, edited by Dr. Jon Sutton, published a letter by Dr. Kirsty Miller criticizing the BPS’ increased politicization and deviation from good scientific and clinical practice (the letter and exchange can be found on Dr. Miller’s website, Miller, 2020). The expected Twitter storm naturally ensued during which no one came out looking the better for it, but Dr. Sutton decided to retract Dr. Miller’s letter, a decision that certainly in my opinion is political censorship however it might otherwise be explained. *The Psychologist* subsequently published an issue (*The Psychologist*, September 2020) that focused on systemic racism and presented only one-sided views in support of the concept. This is unfortunate, as I have always respected *The Psychologist* (and Dr. Sutton) particularly for its bravery in considering controversial topics and views. This is needed for any actual conversation and progress on systemic racism. But like so many left institutions, rather than fostering a nuanced and complex conversation on a controversial topic, *The Psychologist* has eschewed this role in favor of promoting a single moralistic worldview and shaming those who disagree.

To be fair to *The Psychologist*, they did publish (to my knowledge) one subsequent critical letter by Dr. Lewis Mitchell (2020) who called for an evidence-based approach to these controversial questions. Dr. Sutton’s reply (available at the same link as Dr. Mitchell’s letter) to Dr. Mitchell stated “...we have always been very open about our desire to see constructive, evidence-based, psychological

conversation on these topics” but then pivoted to say “Of course we want scientific rigour. But at the same time, we are not seeking a debate over whether or not racism exists in our society. The evidence for that is all around us... And we will never invalidate personal experience by demanding ‘where’s your scientific evidence?’” This, of course, is a very strange argument to come from scientists and highlights the very anti-science nature of the current sociopolitical moment.

### ***Psychology’s “Wokeness” Problem***

To be explicit, I worry that capitulation to the kind of wokeness that has permeated left-leaning institutions akin to a kind of virus actually creates more harm than promotes the good. Specifically wokeness tokenizes and harms historically marginalized communities, increases polarization and racial discord, and obstructs data-driven progress on critical issues such as prejudice, criminal justice reform, and income inequality. What strikes me about all this is that these types of turmoil, whether in psychology, academia, journalism, or even role-playing games, are happening largely in elite, progressive spaces. Scholars such as Michael Lind (2020) and Batya Ungar-Sargon (2021) suggest that much of the current narrative on race (whether neoracist identitarianism from the left or the xenophobia of the right) is a proxy for class struggles, with elites in politics, business, and academia using this narrative to divide working-class people of all ethnicities. One need only look at the APA’s decision, communicated via exchanges on a division leaders’ listserv, in June 2020, to eliminate approximately 50 lower-level staff positions, but without reducing executive-level pay. Interestingly, comparing their executive salaries from 2019 tax documents (APA, n.d.) to draft 2020 tax documents provided to me by the APA treasurer, APA executives received significant *raises* in the same calendar year they let multiple lower-level employees go. For instance, the APA CEO made over \$800 K in total compensation in 2020. It is difficult to square “social justice” with a corporate policy of firing lower-ranked employees while simultaneously giving raises to executives.

### ***Fixing Psychology***

The past decade has seen a significant challenge to the reputation of psychological science in the form of the replication crisis (Nosek & Lakens, 2014). This decade has also brought cause for optimism in the form of a slow but increasing embrace of open science principles such as preregistration (publicly publishing hypotheses, methods, and data-analysis strategies prior to beginning data collection) and open data (providing all data files publicly without needing request; see Nosek et al. (2018)). These approaches can help reduce the likelihood that scholars will massage or torture their data to fit hypotheses (particularly those which are morally or value

laden), thereby creating clouds of false-positive, misinformative findings. We can see that with motivation, psychology can change for the better. Unfortunately (though perhaps predictably), some have insinuated that doing transparent, open science is itself, in effect, White supremacist (Grzanka & Cole, 2021). Such claims may fairly be interpreted as shielding emotionally and advocacy-driven scholarship from empirical scrutiny, and, as such, these efforts should not be allowed to take hold as they will distort and misinform.

I see the ideological challenges facing psychology currently and the replication crisis that has emerged over the past decade as interweaving challenges. Ideological biases, along with sheer careerism, are likely to result in greater proportions of false-positive results. Downstream in clinical psychology, this may result in therapies that are more harmful than helpful, such as those advocated in the APA's clinical guidelines for men and boys. I offer here a few themes, presented rather briefly, that we should be thinking about for psychology's future. Some would, theoretically, be easy to do – others would take greater time investment.

**Moratorium on Policy Statements** As a straightforward approach to reducing misinformation, professional psychological associations such as the APA should stop almost all public statements, aside from those narrowly tailored to lobbying for the profession which is the basic function of a professional guild (O'Donohue & Dyslin, 1996). This means that policy statements related to matters of science; “inclusive language” guidelines; clinical practice guidelines, aside from those that warn against potentially harmful treatments and ethics issues; and political statements opposing or supporting specific government policies should be eschewed. Perhaps there may be rare exceptions to this, but they should indeed be rare as compared to the fury pace at which such statements are currently issued by the APA and other groups (Silander, 2023).

**Disassociate from Advocacy Groups** In the wake of the George Floyd death, the APA and many state psychological associations released statements either implicitly or explicitly supporting advocacy groups such as Black Lives Matter (BLM). However, arguably, many positions advocated by BLM are highly ideological and inconsistent with nuanced data on race and various outcomes or endorsed concepts such as implicit biases which are controversial in the research base. Social science groups may, in particular, be overeager to demonstrate the public policy relevance of “soft” science, causing them to overstate the strength and consistency and clarify of research findings (in a conversation with several APA executives I once had at an APA convention, they stated to me directly that they felt pressure from policy makers to have “the answer” on complicated social phenomena). This brings such groups dangerously close to supporting outright misinformation which can be harmful, particularly in light of soaring homicide rates in the wake of protests and riots following George Floyd's death (Cassell, 2020). Though unlikely in the current atmosphere of liberal-leaning biases in psychology, the same problems would obviously be evident should psychological associations associate themselves too closely with right-leaning advocacy groups. Such associations may inevitably

reflect badly on psychology when groups prove more controversial than at first blush since as when BLM advocates supported the authoritarian regime in Cuba (Adams, 2021) or experience later questions or investigations regarding financial irregularities (e.g., once again Black Lives Matter; see Turley (2022)). Psychology's reputation as neutral arbiters of complex and nuanced information can be restored by eschewing further statements of support for advocacy organizations on either side of any debate. The purposes of science (and clinical work which also should be politically neutral) and advocacy are often diametrically opposed and seldom mix well. Like the broader culture war, psychological groups are indulging in sweeping narratives of good and evil and assigning actual human beings to these groups. However, the story of race, racism, prejudice, and other forms of intolerance and human aggression is actually one of universal bad behavior, not something characterizing any one group or to which any group is immune.

**Avoid Culture Wars** Likewise, psychological associations should avoid advocating for policy related to culture war issues. Inevitably, given the political imbalance within the profession of psychology, such positions will reinforce impressions of psychology as a left-leaning political advocacy organization rather than a scientific organization. For instance, on an issue such as abortion (on which I have no strong opinion), groups such as the APA should avoid advancing any specific policy recommendations (O'Donohue & Dyslin, 1996). The APA and other groups certainly could point policy makers toward evidence regarding the impacts of abortion (assuming this is done in a balanced fashion given inconsistencies and controversies in any field) but should avoid functioning as progressive (or conservative) advocates for specific policy goals (unfortunately, the APA's 2008 review on the topic failed in this respect).

**Endorsing Academic Freedom** The APA and other psychological organizations should adopt statements endorsing wide academic freedoms and freedom of speech and deploring censorship in any form (either de jure or de facto via private entities). As freedom of speech is essential both to science and good clinical practice, this value is important to publicly endorse. O'Donohue and Fisher (in press) recently called for the APA Ethics Code to be revised to include enforceable principles protecting free speech, and this seems to be a worthwhile suggestion.

**Promoting Political Neutrality in Clinical Work** When I was trained as a clinical psychologist, it was emphasized to us that our political beliefs should be left out of the clinical setting. Increasingly, that message appears lost on more recent generations, particularly as the APA promotes clinical guidelines such as those for men and boys which specifically promote left-leaning political and sociocultural narratives. This is almost certainly going to reduce the quality of clinical practice and will discourage many conservatives from seeking psychotherapy in the first place. Such cultural shifts in psychology violate the "do no harm" principle and should be reversed (Redding & Satel, 2022).

**Encourage Conservatives to Get Involved in Psychology** The dearth of conservatives in psychology is undoubtedly due to many factors. Some of these are certainly self-selection (conservatives may prefer business-related majors to those in the social sciences), but academic psychology may also communicate a lack of welcome for conservative thought. Quantitative analysis suggests that conservatives in academia experience more discipline and peer pressure related to their views than do liberals, and many liberals express a willingness to discriminate against conservatives such as during hiring processes (Kaufmann, 2021). This state of affairs should be an embarrassment for academia and psychology specifically. Reversing it and encouraging more conservatives to become involved in psychology as students, clinicians, and researchers is a worthwhile endeavor, and diversity of thought would go a long way toward reducing political biases in psychology. Such efforts need not be at odds with diversity efforts related to race, gender, etc. but should be considered part of such efforts (Duarte et al., 2015).

## Conclusions

In many respects, psychology both in regard to clinical work and research is at its worst crisis point during my lifetime. However, responses to the replication crisis offer hope and optimism (Ritchie, 2020). As a field, psychology has remarkable fortitude to learn from its mistakes and improve. Just as we are adopting more open science principles in regard to scientific work, so too can we put our heads together to address the now widespread political and sociocultural biases that threaten to render our profession little better than purveyors of misinformation. At present, I have concluded that the actions of the APA have become so persistent and dangerous that I could no longer support them with my membership. However, I have hope that in speaking out, and others speaking out, we can begin a process of revitalization and commitment to principles of sound science and good clinical practice. The road forward may be long and sometimes painful, but it can be done, and psychology will be the better for it.

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# Chapter 13

## How Politically Motivated Social Media and Lack of Political Diversity Corrupt Science



Wendy M. Williams and Stephen J. Ceci

### Introduction

We describe a growing risk faced by scientists and particularly social scientists and its effect on the non-scientific public. The risk results from two sources—first, the merger of scientific peer review with online social media, which are increasingly likely to be co-joined in what is termed “post-publication peer review” (PPPR). A second source of risk is the sociopolitical asymmetry among social scientists, which makes certain hypotheses more likely to be posed, tested, and published. We begin by discussing the first of these problems, the misuse of post-publication peer review (PPPR) via social media.

### How Political Biases Manifested in Social Media Corrupt Science via Post-publication Peer Review

PPPR was launched with the goal of filtering and extending research findings that had already passed peer review in disciplinary journals. The results of this merger can be salutary—the democratization of science and the participation of “citizen

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We dedicate this chapter to our friend, Scott Lilienfeld, who attended the same public primary school as the first author—in Queens, New York, in the 1960s—and carried the trademark New-York-City “Brook No Bullshit” attitude throughout his life.

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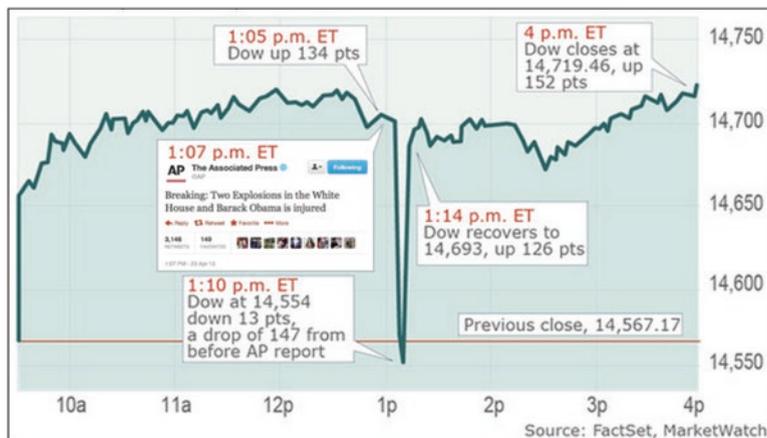
scientists” to produce an accessible news source for learning about scientific findings. However, this merger has also been problematic.

Surveys show that many Americans learn about science almost exclusively from online platforms, such as Facebook, Twitter, Reddit, blogs, comment threads, TikTok, and Snapchat. In a 2015 Pew survey, Barthel et al. (2015) reported that 63% of the 2000 Twitter and Facebook users they surveyed obtained scientific news via these online social media. Many indicated they got their news exclusively from these platforms without following news coverage in traditional scientific media: “The rise in the share of social media users getting news on Facebook or Twitter cuts across nearly every demographic group” (Barthel et al., 2015, p. 2). Reddit’s *Ask Me Anything*, which has over 11 million readers, is the single most likely place for non-scientists to learn about breaking scientific news. This broad popularity of social media has many beneficial effects. The lay public can quickly become informed about scientific findings and be exposed to multiple views absent from mainstream media in the pre-digital era. With the benefits, however, come costs, some of which are substantial and significant for science and society. Before discussing scientific costs, we briefly address some non-scientific ones to provide a broader context in which to consider potential harms of social media, both within and beyond the field of science.

### ***Misuse of Social Media in Non-scientific Realms***

There are many examples in which social media was harnessed to mislead readers outside of the scientific realm. Numerous instances have been documented of individuals posting false information on the Internet to disrupt financial and political markets. For example, on April 23, 2013, at 1:07 p.m., a fake tweet claimed twin explosions at the White House injured President Obama. Within minutes, this tweet went viral, reaching millions of Americans. Before it could be debunked, the Dow Jones Stock Exchange fell 147 points (Fig. 13.1). Although it recovered, \$136 billion dollars in equity was erased.

Ferrara (2015) describes similar cases in which misinformation was deliberately spread over social media, causing financial and political disruptions. For example, social media was used to deliberately distort market analyses about how well a movie was doing at the box office or how high a new TV show was being rated by online viewers. Political campaigns now routinely use bots to shape public opinion by automatically posting comments from fake accounts in response to critical blogs, using fictitious names (e.g., Ratkiewicz et al., 2011). The two most recent presidential campaigns were riven with bots and misleading tweets, and Facebook/Meta has taken down hundreds of thousands of fake accounts that were launched to mislead viewers about political platforms, COVID treatments, etc. Commentators with political agendas have even succeeded in de-funding federal research; it has been claimed that the “Republican War on Science” was a deliberate attempt to distort scientific findings to further a political agenda (Mooney, 2005).



**Fig. 13.1** The fake tweet causing the Dow Jones to plunge on April 23, 2013, in 3 minutes erased \$136 billion dollars in equity market value. (“Syrian hackers claim AP hack that tipped stock market by \$136 billion. Is it terrorism?” [washingtonpost.com/blogs/worldviews/wp/2013/04/23/syrian-hackers-claim-ap-hack](http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/worldviews/wp/2013/04/23/syrian-hackers-claim-ap-hack). (Reproduced from Ferrara (2015))

### *Methods and Mores of Science*

In contrast to such partisan attacks, scientists (at least in principle) endorse a set of canons that is the antithesis of the deliberate spread of misinformation: scientific canons are known as Paradigm 1. Sampson (1978) describes the historical roots of Paradigm 1 science, with its emphasis on the universal, abstract, generalizable nature of scientific findings, unaffected by the researcher’s personal, historical, or cultural attributes: “the emergence of Paradigm 1 science with its assumption of an independent and autonomous order of facts...(is) not linked to the lenses of the observer nor thereby to history, culture, gender, or class. All who used proper methods could behold this same order” (p. 1337). Sampson contrasts such scientific mores with the so-called Paradigm 2 values, which are contextual, socio-historical, personal, and influenced by ethnicity, gender, and class.

Our contention here is that today’s efforts to democratize science (“participant science,” “citizen science”) sometimes reflect aspects of a Paradigm 2 approach that ultimately undermines the dissemination of sound science. Efforts to democratize science enter Paradigm 2 territory via the process of post-publication peer review (PPPR), in which commentators swarm or “dog pile” authors of Paradigm 1 publications that they find socially or politically unacceptable. We are not arguing that Paradigm 1 published findings should never be challenged. Rather, we argue that many PPPR critiques diverge from the objective canons of Paradigm 1 evidence, invoking personalized cultural mores as the basis for evaluating findings. When this occurs, scientists are often at a loss to refute such critiques, because Paradigm 2 proponents believe that “since it occurs in a cultural context and is heavily influenced by many nonscientific factors (e.g., the gender, race, political ideology of

researchers), science doesn't really have any special claim to objective knowledge. Rather, scientific expertise is deemed to be just as contingent, just as sociologically determined, as anyone else's belief system" (Mooney, 2014).

Proponents of this Paradigm 2 position can point to examples of scientists blocking or hiding their findings, such as during *Climategate* when some scientists displayed less-than-forthright behaviors aimed at silencing their critics. A result of Paradigm 2 values is that sometimes non-expert or discredited expert opinions are the basis of online efforts to undermine accepted Paradigm 1 scientific findings. In the past, this occurred when vaccine deniers relied on discredited science, including work that was retracted by the journal: "emotional contagions, digitally enabled, could erode trust in vaccines so much as to render them moot. The deluge of conflicting information, misinformation and manipulated information on social media should be recognized as a global public-health threat" (Larson, 2018). This has also occurred during the current pandemic when vaccine deniers made false claims about infertility (see below).

In his seminal treatise on the cultural and moral values of science, the eminent sociologist of science, Robert K. Merton (1942), wrote that science was distinguishable from non-scientific ways of knowing on the basis of several canons, importantly its *universalism* and *disinterestedness*. Concerning the first, he argued that "truth-claims, whatever their source, are to be subjected to pre-established impersonal criteria: consonant with observation and with previously confirmed knowledge" (p. 272). The second canon, disinterestedness, stipulates that "the acceptance or rejection of claims entering the lists of science is not to depend on the personal or social attributes of their protagonist" (p. 276). Although these are values that are broadly endorsed by mainstream scientists, it is nevertheless common for scientists themselves to call research into doubt on the basis of the personal attributes of those who conducted or funded it, as can be seen in this footnote.<sup>1</sup>

Lilienfeld (2002) provides a detailed account of how Paradigm 2 cultural and moral values can trump Paradigm 1 scientific findings vetted by a rigorous peer-review process. The story started with the publication in the high-impact, prestigious journal *Psychological Bulletin* of a meta-analysis by Rind et al. (1998; see Rind, Chap. 30, this volume). Based on 59 published studies involving 15,000

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<sup>1</sup>Examples of such doubt-raising claims are rampant. For example, [Stanley811](#)neecoo007 • a month ago undermined the accuracy and integrity of a [paper](#) published by a team of astrophysics led by the Irish researcher Willie Soon and funded by the *Heartland Institute* that called into question the consensus on human-caused global warming. The poster remarked: "According to documents, Willie Soon is funded almost entirely by the fossil fuel lobby." And another poster responded "You're right. It's all about money, that's why Big Energy pours millions of dollars into companies like the Heartland institute, to make it seem like there are actually scientists that don't believe in Climate Change... The only scientists disputing it, are the ones paid by Big Oil and Big Coal. The Heartland institute is famous for defending these clients, the same company hired to defend cancer-causing tobacco industry."

On the opposite side of the sociopolitical spectrum, a poster faulted research supporting global warming by invoking its liberal funding source: "According to documents, [disqus\\_ky8vtfPjLn](#) noted it is 100% funded by a combination of Greenpeace and the Soros Foundation."

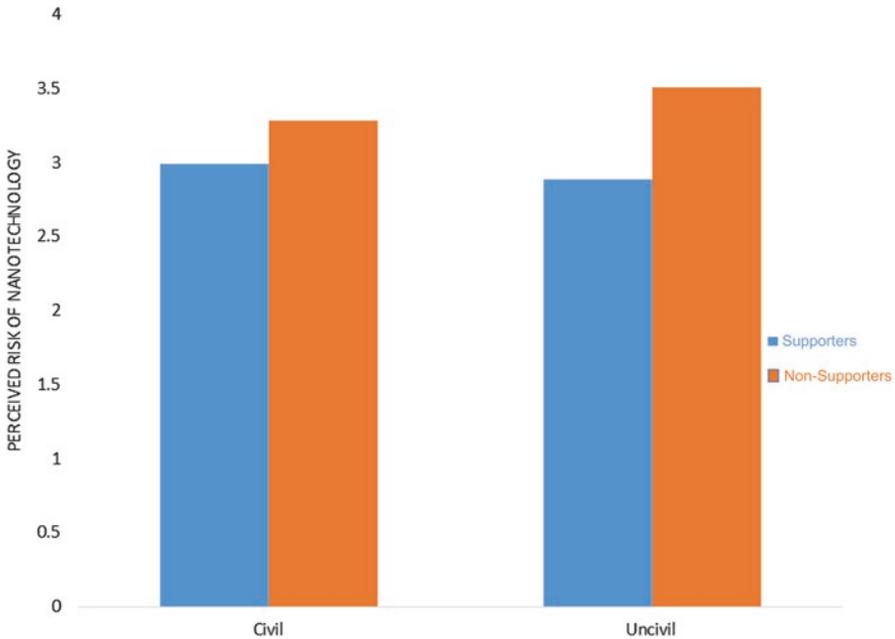
college students, Rind et al. reported that the relationship between child sexual abuse and later psychopathology was small in magnitude for each of the dependent variables studied:  $r = 0.04$  to  $r = 0.13$  across 18 different dependent measures of psychological symptoms. A firestorm of protest occurred in the aftermath of the publication of this meta-analysis, led by conservative religious and political groups, national media personalities (Dr. Laura), and politicians. Lilienfeld (2002) describes the relentless media attacks on the study and its authors' alleged sociopolitical and pedophilic leanings. Nowhere was there an acknowledgment that the study had been subjected to unusually rigorous peer review in a highly respected journal. Nor did critics acknowledge the authors' moral position in their denunciation of child sexual abuse in the conclusion to their article. Rind and his coauthors had written:

It is important to consider implications of the current review for moral and legal positions on CSA (child sexual abuse). If it is true that wrongfulness in sexual matters does not imply harmfulness (Money, 1979), then it is also true that lack of harmfulness does not imply lack of wrongfulness. Moral codes of a society with respect to sexual behavior need not be, and often have not been, based on considerations of psychological harmfulness or health (cf. Finkelhor, 1984)...In this sense, the findings of the current review do not imply that moral or legal definitions of or views on behaviors currently classified as CSA should be abandoned or even altered. (Rind et al., 1998, p. 47)

Critics offended by Rind et al.'s findings for reasons unrelated to their scientific integrity often justified their wrath by citing one scientist's complaint, which focused on some technical aspect of the meta-analysis, ignoring the refutations of this claim by other experts. The culmination of a relentless swarm of media attacks occurred when the House of Representatives of the US Congress voted 355 to 0 (with 13 abstentions) to condemn Rind et al.'s meta-analysis. Ten days later, the US Senate also voted unanimously to condemn the study.

Such ad hominem diatribes can increasingly be found today in the online world of post-publication peer review (PPPR). And when they occur, the authors of the original papers have little recourse or way to effectively refute them—assuming these authors could even persuade online editors to post their refutations in the first place.

Mean-spirited and/or polemical online comments can also shape readers' perceptions of the scientific status of a study or lack thereof. For instance, Anderson and her colleagues demonstrated the polarizing effect of an uncivil tone by online critics. These researchers carried out an online experiment using a nationally representative sample of Americans. Participants were provided with online comments that were in response to a blog about the risks and benefits associated with silver nanoparticles (water contamination vs. antibacterial properties). The authors found that comments that were uncivil (referring to opponents as idiots) polarized readers' perceptions of risk, compared to comments containing the same factual information but expressed in civil terms (referring to the opponent by name rather than by expletive). As can be seen in Fig. 13.2, which we adapted from their data, the effect of uncivil online language was to polarize particularly those people with predispositions against the research finding, making them even more negative. This is consistent with the finding that people holding beliefs that are disconfirmed become more



**Fig. 13.2** Change in support for nanotechnology as a function of the civility of discourse. (Adapted from Anderson et al.'s (2014) findings)

entrenched in their beliefs and skeptical of the scientific methods that led to disconfirmation (see Lilienfeld, 2012). Uhlmann et al. (2009) demonstrated how participants' moral judgments are often affected by the desire to protect their ideological beliefs: people are motivated to justify their current proclamations in terms of their prior opinions and moral principles, largely independently of the case facts.

This is why some magazines have discontinued their online comment sections, because the incivility suggests that posters on their sites were entrenched in their beliefs and nothing could alter their opinions—yet their uncivil comments exacerbated readers' already polarized opinions (e.g., a number of online magazines, including *Popular Science* and *Huffington Post*, have dropped their comments section or reduced its frequency for just this reason). Referring to a fractious minority of Internet posters, Suzanne LaBarre (2013), the online content director of *Popular Science* magazine, wrote of the decision to drop online comments:

Uncivil comments not only polarized readers, but they often changed a participant's interpretation of the news story itself... Those exposed to rude comments ended up with a much more polarized understanding of the risks connected with the technology. Simply including an ad hominem attack in a reader comment was enough to make study participants think the downside of the reported technology was greater than they'd previously thought. Another, similarly designed study found that just firmly worded (but not uncivil) disagreements between commenters impacted readers' perception of science. If you carry out those results to their logical end—commenters shape public opinion; public opinion shapes public policy; public policy shapes how and whether and what research gets funded—you start to see why

(at Popular Science) we feel compelled to hit the “off” switch...because comments sections tend to be a grotesque reflection of the media culture surrounding them, the cynical work of undermining bedrock scientific doctrine is now being done beneath our own stories, within a website devoted to championing science. (LaBarre, 2013)

A similar argument was offered by Anderson and her colleagues in response to their study:

Much in the same way that watching uncivil politicians argue on television causes polarization among individuals, impolite and incensed blog comments can polarize online users based on value predispositions utilized as heuristics when processing the blog’s information. The effects of online, user-to-user incivility on perceptions towards emerging technologies may prove especially troublesome for science experts and communicators that rely on public acceptance of their information. The effects of online incivility may be even stronger for more well-known and contentious science issues. (Anderson et al., 2014, p. 383–384)

### ***Reliance on Uncurated Social Media News Can Be Problematic for Both Science and Politics***

As we noted above, over two-thirds of Americans rely on Facebook as a news source, often as the only source and particularly among the youngest online users. “Moreover, online commenting is becoming concentrated on Facebook, as increasing numbers of news organizations remove their websites’ comment sections” (Su et al., 2018). Despite requiring real identities to be listed with comments on Facebook, approximately 60% of Americans responded that comments following news stories on Facebook were uncivil. This is problematic because, as numerous scholars have argued, “Although civility is recognized as a fundamental principle of democratic deliberation and an important marker of a developed democratic society (Herbst, 2010; Papacharissi, 2004), this ideal does not appear to have been realized on social media” (Su et al., 2018). Amplifying the problem with uncivil commentary is the prevalence of bots. In an extensive analysis of social media for the Hewlett Foundation, a team of social media scholars found that:

30%–40% of automatic texts on factual topics deceive ordinary internet users (and 15%–25% deceive even experts), whereas this percentage goes up to 60% for non-factual (entertainment, adult) topics (30% with experts). They also find that texts that are disliked by the crowd have a higher deception rate (from 10% to 15% higher versus texts that are liked or rated as neutral) for both ordinary users and experts. These findings indicate that anti-democratic computational propaganda in democratic countries has the potential to be harder to detect due to perceptual biases in both the general public and the expert community to view disagreement with the dominant viewpoint as a sign of human activity. Aside from the impact of incivility on democracy, social media can foster a false sense of scientific news, leading to misunderstanding of important political, economic, and medical findings. (Tucker et al., 2018, p. 34)

One needs to look no further than past fraudulent claims regarding antimicrobial resistance, viral contagions, conspiracy theories, and superbugs to appreciate how

erroneous scientific findings can affect the economic, political, and physical health of a nation (for examples, see Groshek & Bronda, 2016; Ferrara, 2015; Larson, 2018). Errors in the scientific literature that result from the publication of non-replicable findings or the dissemination of misleading or fraudulent claims are a misuse of taxpayers' money and can undermine the health, security, and welfare of our society. Such errors can also diminish the public's trust in science itself.

Unfortunately, errors in the scientific corpus can be exacerbated by social media. Blogs, tweets, posts, snapchats, and comment threads can amplify scientific errors by creating insular bubbles of misleading information. To appreciate the role of social media in popularizing scientific misconceptions, consider the unsupported advertisements made by some stem cell clinics, or the claim that red wine can substitute for exercise, or that the consumption of chocolate is a viable weight reduction strategy (see Ogbogu et al. (2013) for documentation of overly optimistic claims regarding stem cell therapy). Also see DeVicario et al.'s (2016) demonstration of the spread of false rumors of a civil war and Groshek and Bronda's (2016) documentation of misinformation about antimicrobial resistance that may indirectly lead to the misuse of antibiotics.

Traditional media have corrective mechanisms to mitigate problems such as the above misrepresentations when they occur—for example, retractions, editorial apologies, and the publication of contradictory findings. However, social media usually have no centralized editorial authorities to correct misinformation, no curator to ensure that all sides of a complex issue are fairly represented in comment threads, and no conflict-of-interest attestations or disclosures of conflicts by those posting uncivil or misinformed claims. Once scientific misinformation makes its way into social media, echo chambers can take over and amplify it (Groshek & Bronda, 2016). Echo chambers, which are formations of homogenous clusters of online users generated by their selective exposure to scientific content, propel the diffusion of misinformation in a manner similar to rumor spreading (DeVicario et al., 2016). Echo chambers have been documented for anti-vaccine proponents, HIV-AIDS skeptics, climate deniers, conspiracy theorists, and others. Ignoring their impact may not be in the best interests of either science or society.

Scholars have documented the viral spread of misinformation over Twitter about the Ebola virus, Hurricane Sandy, the Boston Marathon bombers (e.g., Ferrara, 2015; Gupta et al., 2013), and the fake claim that President Barack Obama was injured in a terrorist attack on the White House, as well as various smearing attacks perpetrated to defame political candidates. Consider:

The effects of such types of social media abuse have been observed during Hurricane Sandy at the end of 2012, after the Boston Marathon bombings in April 2013, and increasingly ever since. During Sandy, a storm of fake news struck the Twitter-sphere: examples of such misinformation spreading include rumors, misleading or altered photos, sharing of untrue stories, and false alarms or unsubstantiated requests for help/support. After the Boston bombings, tweets reporting fake deaths or promoting fake donation campaigns spread uncontrolled during the first few hours after the events. Rumors and false claims about the capture of the individuals responsible for the bombing occurred throughout the four days after the event (the period during which the man hunt was carried out). (Ferrara, 2015, p. 6)

We are not claiming that social media is without merit; it very clearly can play an important role in informing society. Social media has been extensively adopted during crises and emergencies to help accomplish important goals (Hughes & Palen 2009). These goals include coordinating disaster response (Yates & Paquette, 2011), enhancing situational awareness (Smit et al., 2018), organizing protests and influencing mainstream media (Freelon et al., 2018), helping structure grievances by outgroup members (LeFebvre & Armstrong, 2018), sensing the health state of the population (Sakaki et al., 2011), and refuting misinformation regarding vaccine dangers (Corcoran et al., 2018). However, manipulation of information (e.g., promotion of fake news) and the spreading of misinformation can cause panic and fear in the population, which can in turn become mass hysteria. Some scientists predicted an impending influenza epidemic as a direct consequence of misinformation going viral regarding vaccines (Larson, 2018).

Recently, the Center for Mobile Communication Studies at Boston University convened a panel of experts to discuss experiences and research in communicating science online. They described myriad examples in which social media perpetuated scientific misunderstanding. Acknowledging that social media can be a powerful tool in creating public health awareness, they noted that social media “is also a great way to spread misinformation, too.” Americans’ ideas about controversial scientific questions—things like personal genetic testing, genetically modified foods, and their use of antibiotics—are based largely on what they read on social media:

Most (experts) indicated it’s more possible than ever for researchers to participate meaningfully in public debates and contribute to the creation and diffusion of scientific knowledge—but social media presents many pitfalls along the way. Our team from the Emerging Media Studies division at Boston University presented new findings that indicate social media can perpetuate misinformation about antimicrobial resistance (AMR) and may contribute indirectly to the misuse of antibiotics. (Groshek & Bronda, 2016)

At the conference of the Society for Personality and Social Psychology, a survey was described, focusing on 700 social psychologists’ perceptions of the influence of social media on their careers. Alison Ledgerwood, a social psychologist, argued that uncivil exchanges on social media will drive women away from the field, because women in the survey reported they participated less than their male peers in social media exchanges. “It’s become like politics — we’ve created two camps of people who shouldn’t be in two camps in the first place,” says Jay Van Bavel, a social psychologist at NYU. “It’s perceived slights and defensiveness, and everybody has some history or grievance — and it will never end because there is that history of perceived grievances, of one of your colleagues who has been put through it, or criticized your friend in a public forum. It’s terrible for science. It’s not good” (Dominus, 2017).

In what follows, we describe efforts by the scientific community to protect against scientific errors, although these efforts are aimed at those *within* various scientific communities and not at those outside of them. Moreover, these efforts are aimed at the subset of people within the relevant scientific community who have expertise on the matter at hand, rather than those from outside the domain of expertise. Following this, we show that the merger of science and social media presents

challenges, particularly for social scientists, that cannot find resolution in the legal arena, except in rare instances of demonstrable defamation. We conclude with a modest proposal to minimize the problem, although its total remediation will doubtless require multiple interventions over time, and of grander scope than our proposals.

### *Scientific Efforts at Self-Policing*

No one claims that every study that passes peer review is flawless or, conversely, that important findings never get rejected by journals. Scientists have long been aware of the limits of peer review regarding filtering out of errors and of biases in favor of elite scientists (Peters & Ceci, 1982). A number of efforts within scientific publishing have arisen to expose publications of poor quality and unreliability, such as PPPR:

There is every need to fortify the validity of data that exists in the scientific literature, not only to build trust among peers, and to sustain that trust, but to reestablish trust in the public and private academic sectors that are witnessing a veritable battle-ground in the world of science publishing...Even though many science journals, traditional and Open Access, claim to be peer reviewed, the truth is that different levels of peer review occur, and in some cases no, insufficient, or pseudo-peer review takes place. This ultimately leads to the erosion of the quality and importance of science, allowing essentially anything to become published. In the light of an explosion of such publications...there is an urgent need to reform the way in which authors, editors, and publishers conduct the first line of quality control, the peer review. One way to address the problem is through post-publication peer review (PPPR), an efficient complement to traditional peer-review that allows for the continuous improvement and strengthening of the quality of science publishing. PPPR may also serve as a way to renew trust in scientific findings by correcting the literature. (da Silva & Dobránszki, 2015, p. 22)

In its original formulation, PPPR was intended to encourage the ongoing scientific review of research after formal peer review and publication occurred. Scientists posted critiques of published findings, and the original authors and others responded in an iterative process that advanced our understanding. Numerous examples of this type of PPPR exist, such as *The Winnower* (<https://thewinnower.com/about>) and *F1000* (<http://f1000.com/>). For example, Hunter (2012) describes the motivation for the 11,000 plus scholars who participate in PPPR for the fields of biology and medicine:

Peer review is broken. We have all heard that phrase many times in recent years. It's become a truism, a shorthand complaint about the status quo...So what's wrong? From an author's point of view, a lot. Peer review is slow; it delays publication. It's almost always secret; authors do not know who is reviewing their work – perhaps an ally but, equally, perhaps a competitor. It can block ingenuity; think of the classic case of Lynn Margulis and the 15 or so journals that rejected her ground-breaking article...And there's a lot wrong for reviewers too: A referee's hard work may be contributing nothing new to an author who would rather take his or her chances with another journal than do the extra work suggested by reviewers. (Hunter, 2012)

Thus, in its original formulation, PPPR is an admirably open process; signed comments are posted by experts, the original authors are given the opportunity to respond, and reviewers' names may be published. The idea is to continue the dialog after publication (i.e., publish and filter), taking into account experts' opinions in their signed critiques, rendering the discussion transparent: "Articles submitted to F1000 Research are first processed through an in-house sanity check and then, assuming they pass, published immediately. Post-publication, they are subjected to formal peer review. Referees' reports are published on the site and all referees are named" (<http://f1000.com/>). The various archives (e.g., Cold Spring Harbor's bioarchive, Cornell University's arXiv) and working-paper repositories such as NBER have emerged as popular preprint servers for posting working drafts. Scientists frequently contribute reactions to posted studies.

With the ubiquity of social media, however, PPPR has sometimes devolved into a catch-all label that includes not only reputable publish-and-filter initiatives such as the repositories described above but also anonymous, misleading, and ad hominem criticisms that are posted on a variety of websites unconnected to the original scientific communities. These include scores of popular media sites such as *Huffington Post*, *Slate.com*, *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, *New Scientist*, and *Inside Higher Ed*, as well as myriad organizational and personal web pages. *Nature News and Comment's* Career section features stories of scientists who have been harassed in social media, along with the scientists' advice for dealing with insulting and emotional online attacks (Gewin, 2018).

Such misleading and sometimes evisceratingly cruel comments are frequently posted by outsiders to the scientific field, sometimes by laypersons. Those who post on such sites may allude to their training in scientific fields outside the original authors' field as justification for the validity of their summary judgments about the alleged flaws in the original findings. At their best, these posts can reveal probing insights into problems that were missed by a journal's expert peer reviewers and thus caution readers against over-imputing the original study's importance. At their worst, however, these posts consist of ad hominem attacks by ideologically or financially interested parties with the goal of destroying the reputation of an author whose findings they find personally or politically unpalatable.<sup>2</sup> When this occurs, the original authors may have no effective recourse because the immediacy and numeracy of the online attacks can overwhelm responses, and authors may not be allowed to post refutations on the same sites. As noted earlier in this chapter, research shows that judgments of science can be significantly influenced by such attacks.

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<sup>2</sup>Some have opined that the current academic workplace has responded to the scarcity of tenure-track jobs with injunctions to develop personal "brands" to attract followers. As Duffy and Pooley (2017) note, the encouragement to "brand the self are overlaid on ideals about employability, professionalism, and self-enterprise...in today's hyper-competitive employment market, workers in such diverse fields as accounting, religion, healthcare, and education are encouraged to cultivate and maintain a personal brand." Crockett (2017) argues that the expression of moral outrage online can lead to personal benefits: "Digital media may promote the expression of outrage by magnifying its triggers, reducing personal costs and amplifying its personal benefits, while at the same time reducing its benefits for society" (*Nature*).

## *Examples of Destructive and Unprofessional Online Comments*

As already noted, when online incivility occurs, the original authors may have no way to combat it and no means of defending their findings and their reputation. Earlier, we cited research demonstrating public judgments of science and scientists can be influenced by such vitriolic attacks. Here we provide a few examples of the kind of attacks we are referring to.

Historians of modern science have chronicled this type of self-invested, politicized PPPR. Dreger (2015) describes scholars who, after basing their claims on careful, peer-reviewed findings, were attacked by zealots who denounced their methods as sexist, homophobic, and racist; other scholars who came to their defense were also attacked. Dreger's investigation led her to the opinion that one scholar who was a recipient of social media vitriol was not guilty of the charges leveled against him by critics. Her defense of him resulted in some of the ugly attention being directed at her, with "page upon page on the Web exposing me as a right-winger, a fake, a eugenicist...the incivility amps up the stakes, with careers on the line, big egos at play, and pure venom in place of academic rigor." As Dreger and others attest, when this happens, there is no satisfactory means of reaching the readers influenced by such attacks.

On Facebook's Psychological Methods Discussion Group page, the statistician Uli Schimmack denounced Wolfgang Stroebe over a claim the latter made regarding the lack of evidence for the role of publication bias in replication failure. In critiquing Stroebe's article, Schimmack posted: "No evidence? How did this get published? Where is peer review quality control? So Stroebe is not only a liar, he is a stupid liar, who doesn't see the connection between his section on low power and the section about replicability and publication bias. Therefore, he earns a BAD SCIENCE badge." As can be seen, such comments go beyond merely providing a critique, to impugning the intelligence and honesty of a colleague. Sadly, many similar examples of eviscerating remarks under the pretense of PPPR exist. We provide a couple more examples to give a sense of how significant this aspect of PPPR can be to the reputation of authors whose work endured the trials of peer review, only to run into a chorus of naysayers whose critiques never passed the test of peer review and who are not accountable to anyone.

Susan Dominus, in a *New York Times Magazine* essay entitled "When the revolution came for Amy Cuddy," documented the social media attack on Cuddy's work on body language and hormones. Putting aside what may be legitimate criticisms of her work on social media, Cuddy's critics swarmed her online and, by their sheer numbers and vitriol, prevented her from mounting a rebuttal. In one critical blog, her name was allegedly mentioned 600 times. In another, she was compared to fraudulent criminals and brain-damaged patients because of mistakes she made in her article touting the validity of "power poses." Conference organizers who invited her to speak were chided for inviting someone so clearly unfit. Her attackers posted a stream of mean-spirited, highly personalized remarks that called into question not

only her science but her character. The criticisms reached her colleagues at Harvard before her tenure review, prompting her to resign her position. In Dominus's words:

"She has no serious conception of 'science,'" one posted. Another compared Cuddy to Elizabeth Holmes, the Theranos chief executive under investigation for misleading investors... In one exchange in July 2016, a commenter wrote, "I've wondered whether some of Amy Cuddy's mistakes are due to the fact that she suffered severe head trauma as the result of a car accident some years ago..." At conferences, in classrooms and on social media, fellow academics (or commenters on their sites) have savaged not just Cuddy's work but also her career, her income, her ambition, even her intelligence, sometimes with evident malice. Last spring, she quietly left her tenure-track job at Harvard...many of her colleagues, and even some who are critical of her choices, believe that the attacks on her have been excessive and overly personal. (Dominus, 2017)

A final example of ad hominem comments posted under the guise of PPPR involves our own work (Williams & Ceci, 2015). In an article in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* (PNAS), we reported five experiments demonstrating that hypothetical female applicants for tenure-track positions were favored over identically qualified male applicants, a finding that unleashed a torrent of politically charged online criticism. Online critics demeaned our "scholarship," referring to it as "mud." We were called two "[incompetent crustaceans](#)," and hashtags were created to organize opposition not only to our findings but also to us as people; for example, the hashtag [#gaslightingduo](#) was used to organize criticisms of us.<sup>3</sup>

One critic dismissed us with the term "White patriarchal fantasies," posting on a personal page: "We must be ever-vigilant of how our biases contribute to inequality in STEM, and we must not accept abuse of power pandering to populist notions that we live and work in a so-called post-feminist, post-racial world. The evidence does not support such White patriarchal fantasies." Critics accused us of victim-blaming because we cited several studies showing that women PhDs choose to apply for tenure-track jobs more often in some fields than in others. The word "choose" triggered critics who argued that women's career choices were not freely made but rather were the result of institutional and societal biases. Several seized on the statement that women choose careers in biology and veterinary medicine more often than careers in engineering and physics and analogized it to refugees "choosing" to flee ISIS or to women "choosing" to flee domestic violence, implying that we were victim-bashing: "I suppose we could argue that ISIS is not a problem in Iraq, because all those refugees chose to flee their homes." ([link](#)).

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<sup>3</sup>The word gaslighting comes from the famous 1944 film, *Gaslight*, in which a psychopath attempts to convince his wife that she is imagining devious changes he keeps making to her environment, such as dimming the gaslight and then denying the room was getting dimmer when she noticed. Beryl Benderly, writing in her column at *Science Magazine*, criticized this hashtag: "Nonscholarly reactions to Williams and Ceci began with the [publication](#) of a paper and essay declaring that 'female PhD applicants fare at least as well as their male counterparts in math-intensive fields.'... The attacks escalated with the publication of the current paper, many through the hashtag [#GaslightingDuo](#)...The analogy between the film and the peer-reviewed and extensively documented research appears to be intended to accuse Williams and Ceci of conscious and malicious distortion." ([link](#))

## How Lack of Political-Viewpoint Diversity Harms Science and Society

Having considered how post-publication peer review can mislead the public, we now turn to a related and troubling issue that has received very little attention within the scientific community, but which may have an even more deleterious effect on the public's perception of scientific findings. We are referring to the lack of sociopolitical diversity among those contributing to the scientific corpus. One's sociopolitical orientation can color the way research questions are framed, how hypotheses are worded, how variables are defined, and what precisely will be accepted as confirmatory or disconfirmatory evidence. Although this is true regardless of whether the researcher's sociopolitical orientation is liberal or conservative, because the overwhelming majority of social scientists are liberal-progressives, this asymmetry can result in a research corpus that tilts in that direction.

Suppose nine out of ten social scientists who study the influence of gender on corporate finance believe that mandated minimum quotas on the fraction of women appointed as CEOs and corporate board members are beneficial to the corporation's bottom line. Now imagine that there is truly no relationship between gender of CEOs and board members and the corporation's profitability. However, analyses designed to test the claim that there is a relationship may be more likely to find some evidence for it because of the way studies are framed by researchers committed to liberal sociopolitical beliefs about the moral value of gender equity. Such beliefs could conceivably influence how they frame their research question and define their constructs and what they accept as disconfirmatory evidence. In a research community in which nine out of ten researchers share a given belief, the published studies may tilt in that direction even in the absence of a true relationship between gender of CEO/board members and the corporate bottom line. This would lead to a body of research supporting the claim that corporate boards with more women have greater earnings. (Actually, the opposite seems to be true, according to a recent meta-analysis that found that boards with the most women actually earned less—Yu & Madison, 2021—which defied popular belief based on high-profile reports.)

Of course, this hypothetical example presupposes that the relevant research community is heavily lopsided in terms of sociopolitical values. But is this in fact the case? Figure 13.3 shows how pronounced the sociopolitical asymmetry is in the American academy. In psychology, there are 16.8 registered Democratic faculty members for every 1 registered Republican. In fields like Sociology and Communications, the gap is dramatically wider. Elsewhere we have documented the deleterious effects of such an imbalance in fundamental values (Ceci & Williams, 2022; Ceci, Kahn & Williams, 2023). For example, the identical applicant is rated more or less hireable depending on the gender of the name on the CV; the same grant proposal is rated higher or lower depending on the political implications of the findings; symposia invitations are influenced by the perceived sociopolitical values of potential participants, etc. (Clark & Winegard, 2020; Stewart-Williams & Halsey, 2021; von Hippel & Buss, 2017).

Number of Democratic Faculty Members for Every Republican in 25 Academic Fields

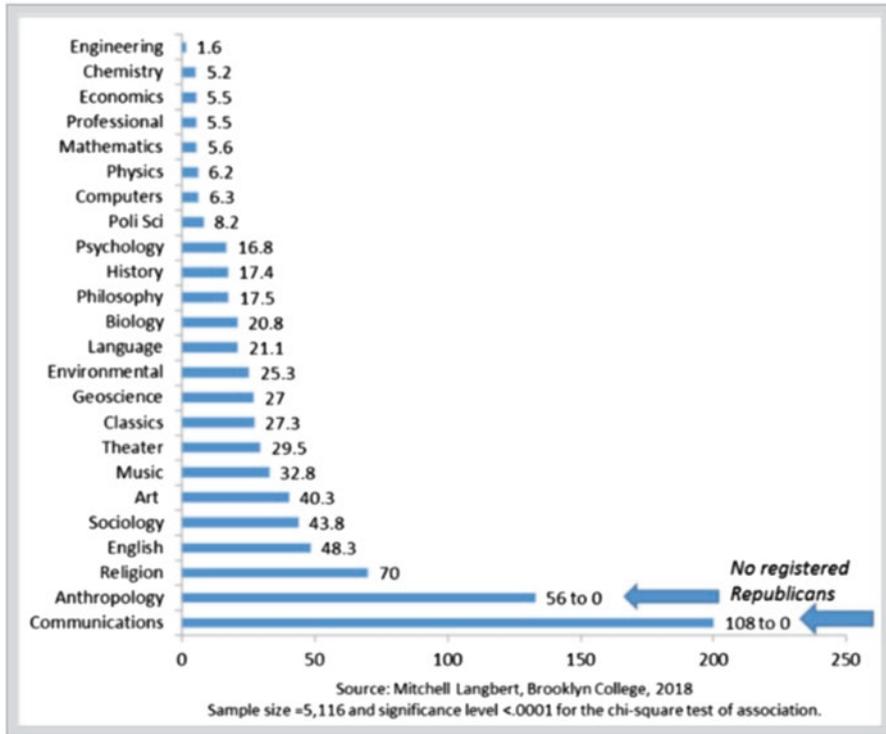


Fig. 13.3 Ratio of Democratic-to-Republican faculty members at US colleges and universities. (Reproduced with permission from Langbert (2018))

The sociopolitical asymmetry in the academy, particularly in the social sciences and humanities, results in an extreme politically valenced imbalance in the research questions that get posed and empirically tested. As Nelson argues, it is impossible to estimate the average meta-analytic effect because it needs to include all of the following information, most of which is unavailable, particularly e) and f).

- A true average effect size needs to include all of the following:
- a) Conducted studies that were significant and reported
  - b) Conducted studies that were non-significant and reported
  - c) Conducted studies that were significant and not reported
  - d) Conducted studies that were non-significant and not-reported
  - e) Non-conducted studies that would have been significant if they had been conducted
  - f) Non-conducted studies that would have been non-significant if they had been conducted

Hypotheses framed in such a manner as to maximize the likelihood of a conservative outcome are less likely to be formulated. Thus, the research based on them is less likely to be conducted and accepted by contrary reviewers, given the extreme asymmetry in faculty political leanings. Any potentially significant outcomes that defy the dominant liberal narrative in the academy today may go unnoticed.

One way to re-balance the way research is conducted, and make research more representative of the world beyond the confines of the academy, is through what are termed “adversarial collaborations” (Clark et al., 2022; Ceci & Williams, 2022). If research team members are deliberately chosen to be diverse with respect to their political leanings, then they will at the outset have to negotiate with each other about the framing of the hypotheses, the operationalization of constructs and definitions, the most suitable methods to use, and what outcome will be accepted as evidence against each side’s position. Such sociopolitical diversity among team members would go a long way toward offsetting groupthink and mysidedness. Adversarial collaborations are very difficult to organize (see Clark and her colleagues, in press), but their potential payoffs seem sizable.

## Conclusion

We have argued that various biased practices exist in the way social science research is conceptualized, organized, conducted, analyzed, evaluated, reviewed, and reported. Citizen science initiatives, which have the potential to broaden and democratize science, also have the potential to corrupt post-publication peer review via social media attacks on findings that are at odds with the sociopolitical stance of the dominant group. This is especially likely when not all who participate in critiquing findings endorse traditional scientific norms such as universalism and disinterestedness. The sociopolitical asymmetry in the academy means that the likelihood of balanced research teams (with regard to political viewpoints) is very low, unless steps are taken to occasionally balance teams through adversarial collaborations, which can be difficult to organize for myriad reasons. While we do not have the perfect recipe to offset documentable weaknesses in the current situation, awareness of these issues—and willingness to admit and address them—is an essential first step.

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# Chapter 14

## Does Psychology's Progressive Ideology Affect Its Undergraduates? A National Test



Robert Maranto, Richard E. Redding, Jonathan Wai, and Matthew Woessner

Leading academics in the social sciences and psychology (see Maranto et al., 2009; Lukianoff & Haidt, 2018; Redding, 2001, 2012, 2015) have argued that the leftist domination of higher education faculty contributes to ideological orthodoxy on campus, signaling to conservative and even centrist students and faculty that their views are unwelcome and that expressing those views poses risks to career success and advancement.

How might this pedagogical and scholarly climate affect undergraduates majoring in psychology? As many of the chapters in this volume illustrate, a liberal socio-political zeitgeist pervades the science and profession of psychology (see Crawford & Jussim, 2018; Duarte et al., 2015; Inbar & Lammer, 2012; Redding, 2001, 2012, 2015), particularly in applied subdisciplines (Frisby, 2013). Social psychology, for example, has historically showed interest in promoting social change (Lewin, 1946). Surveys show that psychology professors are ideologically to the left of professors generally, who self-identify and vote well to the left of the general public (Redding, 2023). In psychology, liberal professors outnumber conservatives and libertarians by at least 10 to 1, making the discipline somewhat more liberal than academia as a whole (Redding, 2023). Given that liberals strongly predominate in the discipline, it is not surprising that the science and profession of psychology has a strong liberal

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ethos and bias, reflecting an underlying value system that is congenial with liberalism but not with conservatism (Redding, 2023).

How might the progressivism of psychology faculty, combined with the appeal of the field to those on the left, affect the self-reported ideology of undergraduate psychology majors, and how does their exposure to the sociopolitical values and messages inherent in the psychology curriculum potentially influence their ideology to shift further to the left while in college? If exposure to psychology does affect such an ideological shift among students, then the implications could be significant and widespread – psychology is the third most common major, with 6% of all students graduating with a psychology degree (Yu et al., 2020).

Using a nationally representative sample of undergraduates from UCLA's Higher Education Research Institute (HERI) surveys of 17,667 students in their first and fourth years of college, we examined whether, relative to other undergraduates, psychology majors shift left in their reported ideology generally and on various social issues. We found that psychology majors are more liberal than their peers, with liberal psychology students outnumbering conservatives by two to one. We found no evidence that the psychology major attracts liberal students into the major from other majors or that conservative students leave the psychology major for other fields. Most psychology majors do not become more ideologically liberal between their first and fourth years of college, though among the few students who do shift their ideologies during college, twice as many moved to the left as to the right. We discuss the implications of these findings for undergraduate and graduate education in psychology and directions for future research. First, we briefly review the role that political ideology plays in academic psychology.

## Ideology in Academic Psychology

Studies show that higher education faculty and administrators lean well to the left ideologically, relative to the general public. This is particularly true of professors in the social sciences and psychology (Gross & Simmons, 2014a, b; Klein & Stern, 2009; Redding, 2023), where ideology matters most in determining which research questions to ask, how to ask those questions, and how to interpret data and social events. Indeed, professors have moved even farther left in recent years (Lukianoff & Haidt, 2018; Redding, 2023). Conservative professors have become nearly extinct in New England (Abrams, 2016), the home to a disproportionate number of elite universities and liberal arts colleges, where the liberal tilt on faculties tends to be greater than at non-elite institutions (Gross & Simmons, 2014a, b).

To be sure, ideology matters, particularly in the enterprise of education, which is or should be *all about* teaching, debating, and researching *ideas*. The strong leftist tilt of the academy may make it difficult for professors to credit the concerns of those outside their own narrow discipline or beyond the ivory tower (Brennan & Magness, 2019; Williams, 2017). The dearth of conservative and even centrist professors limits the range of research questions asked, which very likely damages our

ability to develop knowledge and solve social problems (Maranto, 2020). Yet, it is axiomatic that scientific progress requires exploration of a broad range of questions; energetic, fluid critiques of existing work; and a willingness to abandon findings that have been overturned or have failed to replicate for reasons that include political ideology, but certainly are not limited to it (Ritchie, 2020). These processes can be facilitated by ideological diversity (Jussim, 2012; Lukianoff & Haidt, 2018; Redding, 2001, 2012, 2015). In certain applied subfields of psychology, ideological uniformity akin to that of a one-party state can undermine research, leaving flawed approaches uncorrected by scientific criticism and testing (Frisby, 2018b). Notably, some professional groups and subdisciplines in psychology, such as one of the American Psychological Association's earliest Divisions (9) – the Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues – and its journal *Social Issues*, have a long history of promoting liberal social causes through “action research” (see Lewin, 1946). A growing literature documents that there frequently is a liberal bias implicit in how research questions are framed, the kinds of questions asked and not asked, as well as how studies are designed and results interpreted and applied to policy questions (Duarte et al., 2015; Crawford & Jussim, 2018; Frisby & O'Donohue, 2018; Maranto & Wai, 2020; Redding, 2001, 2004, 2012, 2013). For example, the field has also by and large avoided such topics as the educational and policy implications of intelligence research (Maranto & Wai, 2020; Wai et al., 2018; Warne et al., 2018), which lend support for constrained rather than unconstrained approaches to individual and social interventions (Frisby, 2018b). Tetlock and Mitchell (2009) advocate “adversarial collaborations” between disagreeing researchers on common research projects, to guard against groupthink and thereby safeguard science. Arguably, these and related efforts involve the very purpose of modern higher education. Whittington (2018) argues that unlike the nineteenth-century higher education which provided (mainly Christian) indoctrination and elite networking, higher education missions now center on knowledge creation, which require free speech and critique. Otherwise, modern higher education loses its very purpose (University of Chicago, 1967; Zimmer, 2015).

But the relative ideological monoculture in higher education tends to stifle free speech and intellectual debate among faculty and students alike (Ceci & Williams, 2018; La Noue, 2019), and this negative climate for the free exploration and debate of ideas is getting worse (Paresky, 2019), thus undermining the educational and scholarly process. Thus, the elites-in-training may receive little training in respectfully interacting with ideological opponents (La Noue, 2019; see also Reeves & Halikias, 2017). Lukianoff and Haidt (2018) lament the widespread presumptions that ideological disagreements reflect battles between good and evil as well as the rise of “safety bureaucracies” to encourage students to feel “unsafe” when facing ideas they disagree with, particularly on elite campuses. This can leave students unprepared for pluralistic democracy, which inherently involves political competition and bargaining among relative equals rather than elites dictating propriety to their inferiors (Crick, 1983).

Likewise, this ideological monoculture may undermine the public legitimacy of and, thus, taxpayer support for higher education. If significant social groups feel

that they have no opportunity to work in or influence higher education, they may feel disinclined to support those institutions with tax and tuition dollars (Redding, 2012). If conservatives and moderates believe that research is skewed in ways supportive of progressive views, they may dismiss it entirely. As Maranto (2020) argues, higher education's failure to confront such matters as crime, family change, national identity in an era of mass immigration (see also Kaufmann, 2019), and the failures of socialism may undermine our credibility on such matters as climate change and the (un)suitability of President Trump for office. If professors virtually always take liberal positions, their views might be discounted even when those views have considerable empirical support (Redding, 2001). Indeed, a long line of psychological research demonstrates source-message interactions vis-a-vis the human tendency to discount certain sources based on their perceived credibility (Jervis, 1976).

Importantly, academic psychologists may discriminate against conservatives and non-liberals. Surveying 800 academic social and personality psychologists, Inbar and Lammer (2012) found that a many of them admitted that they as well as others in their department would discriminate against conservatives in faculty hiring, would be less favorably inclined toward grant applications and journal submissions having a conservative tilt, and would be less likely to invite conservative colleagues to participate in a symposium. If they discriminate against conservative colleagues, speakers, and research perspectives in this way, they may well discriminate against conservative students and shy away from offering conservative perspectives in their courses while favoring and promoting liberal perspectives on psychological theory, research, and policy applications. For example, a recent analysis of introductory psychology textbooks showed that research on human intelligence, one of the most important and well-replicated constructs in psychology and the social sciences (Jensen, 1998), was reflected inaccurately: 78.3% of textbooks contained inaccurate statements that often framed and interpreted research findings toward liberal perspectives (Warne et al., 2018). Frisby (2018a, b) and Phillips (2018) offer numerous examples of inaccurate or at least incomplete teaching in psychology on diversity and cultural competence, always in accord with progressive models assuming discrimination as virtually the sole cause of intergroup differences, rather than other more complex and empirically supported models not premised on identity politics.

## **Does Psychology's Progressivism Affect Its Undergraduates?**

It is widely assumed in conservative circles that liberal professors influence the attitudes of undergraduates. Dennis Prager (2013) called higher education a "left-wing seminary" indoctrinating students into liberal causes. After all, professors control the content of their courses, grading, recommendations, and mentoring. A national survey found that a significant minority of professors perceived some bias in teaching at their institutions, usually involving the selection and discussion of

course content but occasionally extending to grading bias against students when they express conservative viewpoints (Smith et al., 2008).

Certainly, some professors may attempt to influence their students' political and social views, a matter resented and perhaps exaggerated by some (mainly conservative) students (Binder & Wood, 2013). Further, it seems one-sided to expect inexperienced undergraduates to freely debate faculty who outrank them in terms of expertise and power, particularly when the ethos in higher education often explicitly calls for indoctrination (see Abrams, 2019; Klafter, 2020). For example, Broido and Reason (2005) call upon student affairs professionals to advocate for the creation of "social justice courses" to foster "development of social justice attitudes." We can find no similar mainstream higher education efforts to foster conservative or libertarian attitudes. Organizations like the National Association of Scholars and the Institute for Humane Studies do advocate creating centers for conservative, classical liberal, and libertarian thought within higher education. Yet such programs are marginal, often funded by Koch-related charities or wealthy alumni rather than tax or tuition dollars, and often threatened, as when in 1995, Yale University returned a \$20 million alumni gift to support new programs in Western civilization and cancelled a highly successful elective in the area (Balch, 2009; Dashan, 2019). No one from such a program is likely to become a dean or provost. Indeed, an interest group, "UnKoch My Campus," encourages students and professors to demand that their universities ban such centers, even picturing the late David H. Koch, a libertarian, as the busted ghost from *Ghostbusters*.<sup>1</sup> In contrast, we know of no recent organized efforts pressuring higher education institutions to reject support from left-leaning philanthropists or organizations (Hendershott, 2018).

The leftist ideals of professors, however, may not necessarily affect the political attitudes of their students. Recent studies have found that students' political orientation and their opinions on specific policy issues remain largely unchanged throughout college (Dodson, 2014; *The Economist*, 2020; Woessner & Kelly-Woessner, 2009a, b). Second, professors are more likely to encourage ideological conformity among colleagues and graduate students rather than among undergraduates (al-Gharbi, 2019), with whom professors have far more limited and distant relationships. Generally, the shifting focus of higher education from teaching to research leaves professors less concerned about what undergraduates learn and believe; rather, undergraduates may be viewed as paying consumers whose tuition enables professors to focus on what they truly value and are rewarded for, research and graduate teaching. For their part, if undergraduates see higher education primarily as social and vocational rather than intellectual, even if taught particular values, they may ignore or reject those values. Relatedly, Arum and Roksa (2011) find that postmodern undergraduates study far less than their peers in decades past, and support for Arum and Roksa's empirical findings comes from a fascinating case study by "Rebekah Nathan" (Nathan, 2006), a pseudonym for an anthropology professor who spent a year living in a freshman dorm at her own university. Thus, we can

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<sup>1</sup> See <http://www.unkochmycampus.org/>, accessed November 25, 2019.

conjecture that the dearth of academic engagement at most colleges and in many undergraduate majors may also limit the *ideological* impact of college professors and the classes they teach.

Moreover, people are generally resistant to information and messages challenging their preexisting views (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2017). When confronted with information challenging political values, people engage in motivated reasoning; they use counter arguing, source derogation, and selective attention to maintain their previous viewpoints (Lord et al., 1979; Taber & Lodge, 2006). Political party affiliation can lead to this type of biased information processing and creates a “selective pattern of learning” (Jerit & Barabas, 2012). As Binder and Wood (2013) detail, conservative undergraduates may also enjoy underdog status, taking a certain pride in subverting efforts to alter their views. Some conservatives also avoid certain professors and fields or keep their opinions closeted, tactics used by other non-visually distinct minorities in unfriendly environments.

Accordingly, there are reasons to suspect that undergraduates will be influenced by their (mostly) liberal professors and equally logical reasons to expect that such influences will be minimal (e.g., students may already have certain predispositions well before entering college and self-select into psychology or other majors based on those characteristics). Political scientists regard political party affiliation as “the unmoved mover,” deep, relatively stable psychological attachments formed early in life, and serving as filters through which individuals interpret political information (Campbell et al., 1960; Green & Palmquist, 1994; Clarke & McCutcheon, 2009), and social attitudes are likely heritable (Bouchard Jr., 2004; Polderman et al., 2015). Thus, we might more likely expect changes on specific issue positions rather than in party identification (Woessner & Kelly-Woessner, 2020). In academia (and particularly in disciplines like psychology), social and identity issues such as same-sex marriage, immigration, abortion, and affirmative action have more emotional power than do economic issues like free trade and taxes (Rothman & Lichter, 2009; Yancey, 2011, 2012; see also Posselt, 2016). Indeed, there is empirical evidence that such issues serve as status markers dividing the privileged and less privileged (Paul, 2018).

## National Survey of Psychology Undergraduates

We present the findings from a national study, the first of its kind, on whether psychology majors report ideological positions to the left of other college undergraduates and whether they move still farther to the left while in college. Given the strong progressive values (reviewed earlier) in the discipline of psychology, we began with the following hypotheses:

1. Undergraduate psychology majors will self-report being more politically liberal than undergraduates in many other majors.

2. Political conservatives will be more likely to leave the psychology major than to enter it.
3. Psychology majors will shift to the left politically between their first and fourth years in college and will shift more so relative to other students in many other majors.
4. Ideological shifts will be more likely to occur on specific social issues than on political ideology generally.

## *Measures*

The Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) is a well-known comprehensive survey of college students by the Higher Education Research Institute (HERI) at UCLA. The surveys ask students about their socioeconomic background, attitudes, and college experiences (Woessner et al., 2019). The longitudinal data tracking student attitudes over 4 years is based on the results of the 2009 CIRP college freshman survey and the 2013 CIRP senior survey, including 17,667 students at 156 campuses who completed both the freshman and senior surveys, providing a nationally representative sample of college students. Where the HERI posed the same questions about politics and policy in both the freshman and senior survey, we were able to measure shifts in political attitudes over time. Both surveys include a question about students' ideological orientation on a 5-point scale ranging from "far left" to "far right" (Woessner et al., 2019).

## **Results**

### *Political Attitudes*

As Table 14.1 shows, psychology majors ( $n = 1,254$ ) are only slightly but significantly more likely to identify as liberal ( $t = 6.84$ ;  $M = 3.23$ ,  $SD = 0.81$ ;  $p = 0.001$ ) than college students generally ( $M = 3.06$ ,  $SD = 0.85$ ,  $n = 15,835$ ), based on a 1–5 scale from 1 (most conservative) to 5 (most liberal) political orientation scale.

Table 14.2 shows that among psychology majors, liberals outnumber conservatives by roughly two to one (41% vs. 19%), a sizeable tilt that is well to the left of social science students (34% vs. 26%) and students generally (33% vs. 28%),  $X^2(16) = 49$ ,  $p = 0.001$ . Interestingly, among majors in the professions, conservatives actually outnumber liberals (34% vs. 24%). These include physical education (3.1:1 conservative to liberal ratio), finance (2.9:1), business administration (1.6:1), and elementary education (1.3:1). These findings accord with prior work by Woessner and Kelly-Woessner (2009a, b), who found that conservatives are more likely than liberals to stress the vocational purposes of college as a way to prepare

**Table 14.1** How would you characterize your political views?

Political views	Mean	N	Std. deviation
Arts and humanities	3.21	3,248	0.861
Sciences	3.09	2,756	0.833
Professional	2.89	6,304	0.826
Social sciences (no psychology)	3.17	2,273	0.881
Psychology	3.23	1,254	0.806
Total	3.06	15,835	0.853

(One conservative and five liberals)

**Table 14.2** How would you characterize your political views?

Political views	Arts and humanities	Sciences	Professional	Social sciences	Psychology	Total
Far right	1.1%	1.3%	2.3%	2.1%	0.7%	1.7%
Conservative	21.3%	24.6%	31.7%	22.1%	18.4%	25.9%
Middle of the road	36.9%	39.8%	41.7%	36.1%	40.4%	39.5%
Liberal	36.6%	32.3%	22.9%	36.3%	37.6%	30.4%
Far left	4.0%	2.0%	1.3%	3.5%	2.9%	2.4%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

for a good job and lifestyle. Liberals are more likely to see college as a way to develop a meaningful philosophy of life, a concept many conservatives refer to as *religion*.

Thus, psychology majors are somewhat more liberal than other students, but we must acknowledge that this is a relatively imprecise self-report measure. If students compare their own ideology to that of their peers in the same major, the actual differences across majors could be somewhat greater than measurements indicate, since a liberal having predominately liberal peers may consider herself to be a moderate, as might a conservative having predominately conservative peers.

The ideological differences between psychology and other majors are not mainly a function of students changing majors. Students who began and ended their college careers as psychology majors are the most liberal, followed by those entering the major from other majors, followed by those who started in psychology and then left for other majors (see Fig. 14.1). Yet, the differences between these three groups are quite modest and neither statistically nor practically significant, with mean ideology scores ranging from only 3.28 to 3.34. In contrast, the difference between students never majoring in psychology ( $M = 3.13$ ) and those starting and ending there ( $M = 3.34$ ) is statistically significant ( $F = 22.56$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ) yet still modest. This accords with earlier (Woessner & Kelly-Woessner, 2009a, b) and ongoing work using the HERI data (Woessner et al., 2019), suggesting that ideological differences among students typically predate college (Table 14.3).

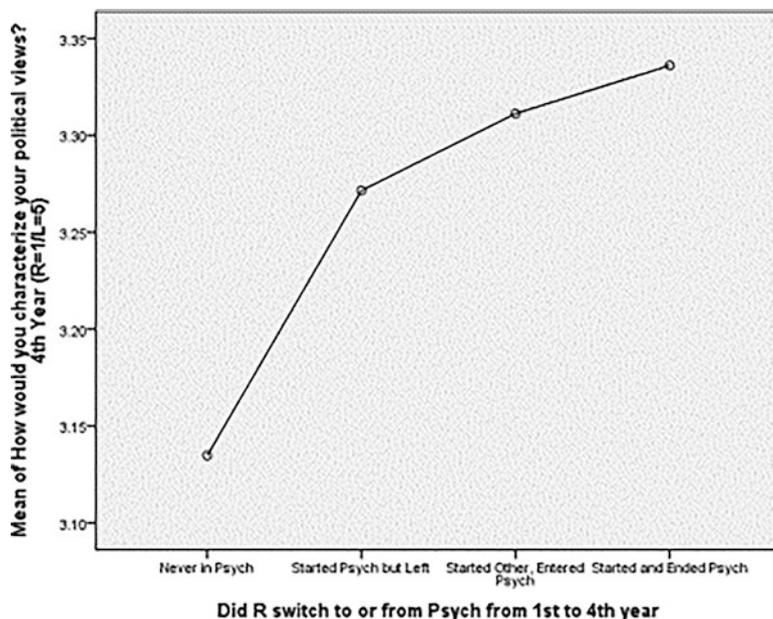


Fig. 14.1 Undergraduate political ideology and psychology major

Table 14.3 Ideological movement from 1st to 4th year by field

Movement	Arts and humanities	Sciences	Professional	Social sciences	Psychology	Total
3 Units right	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
2 Units right	1%	1%	2%	1%	1%	1%
1 Unit right	12%	12%	14%	13%	15%	13%
Same	62%	64%	63%	60%	61%	62%
1 Unit left	22%	21%	19%	21%	22%	20%
2 Units left	3%	2%	2%	4%	1%	2%
3 Units left	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
<i>n</i>	3,203	2,735	6,246	2,249	1,238	15,671

### Effects of the Psychology Major on Political Attitudes

Psychology majors do not shift to the left to a greater degree between their first and fourth years in college relative to students in other majors. Across majors, 60–64% of students report the same ideological placement on the 1–5 conservative to liberal scale in their fourth year than they did in their first year. Only 1–2% shifted two or three units on this 1–5 scale. For psychology majors, 2% shift to the left and 1% to the right, which is identical to undergraduates generally. Although few students make notable ideological shifts, for the small number who do, *twice as many move left as right*. While few students shift two or more units, a third shift one unit left

(20%) or right (13%). Here, psychology students shift slightly but not significantly more than their peers, with 22% shifting one unit left and 15% one unit right ( $T = 0.46$ ;  $DF = 16,907$ ;  $p = 0.36$ ).

When ideological shifts did occur, they were on specific social issues rather than on ideology generally. Here, we will report results from our other recent work (Woessner et al., 2020). Using regression analyses controlling for a range of variables, we found that majoring in psychology is associated with slight movement to the left on “gay marriage,” which may reflect relatively rapid shifts in public support for same-sex marriage during the time period of the study (see Paul, 2018). There was also a slight movement to the right in psychology majors’ attitudes on affirmative action, but no shifts on ideology generally, the perception that racism is a problem, views on abortion, or the need for dissent in a democracy. Attending an elite institution is also associated with statistically significant shifts to the left on five of six items (all but dissent, which might not have a clear ideological valence, given that in higher education, it is the conservatives who are often the dissenters). Similarly, peer ideology (of the institution generally) is associated with statistically significant shifts to the left on five of six issues (all but views on racism) for psychology majors. Given recent events, it would be interesting to retest this using newer data.

## Discussion

Three key findings, based on our large national sample of college students from diverse colleges and universities across the country, emerge from the results. First, although psychology majors are only slightly more liberal than college students generally, who tend to be moderate to center-left, liberal psychology students outnumber conservatives by two to one. Second, we found no evidence that the psychology major attracts liberal students into the major from other majors or that conservative students leave the psychology major for other fields. Instead, the most liberal students in psychology are those who never switched majors but began and ended as psychology majors. Third, most psychology majors do not become more ideologically liberal between their first and fourth years of college, though among the few students who do shift their ideologies during college, twice as many moved to the left as to the right. We discuss each in turn.

Psychology is one of the most liberal academic disciplines, and psychology professors are among the most liberal professors in the academy (Redding, 2023). Our findings show that overall, college students majoring in psychology are not more liberal than other college students and, although there are twice as many liberals majoring in psychology as conservatives, this is roughly the same ratio of liberals to conservatives that we find with college students generally. The most liberal psychology students were those who did not change their majors during college, but both began and ended as psychology majors. This suggests that liberals are drawn to the discipline of psychology from the very beginning of their college careers or even

before, perhaps because the value system implicit in the field is consistent with their liberal political views (Redding, 2023), or that students interested in psychology also tend to have a certain constellation of political views.

But conservatives who start out majoring in psychology do not leave the major much more frequently than do liberal students. Yet, we know from other studies that students pursuing graduate study in psychology are overwhelmingly liberal (just like their professors) and that, in addition to discrimination against conservatives in graduate school admissions, conservative college students may self-select out of graduate study in psychology because they may find the discipline to be incompatible with their sociopolitical values and attitudes (Redding, 2023). Thus, the self-selection and sorting effects in and out of psychology as a function of political views do not take place when students are undergraduates, but rather, at the point when they decide whether or not to pursue graduate study in psychology. If we wish, therefore, to attract more conservatives, libertarians, and those of other diverse political viewpoints into the discipline of psychology, we need to focus on advanced undergraduates who are considering graduate school rather than college students deciding whether or not to major in psychology.

Although most psychology majors do not shift their political ideology over the course of their education in the major, a small minority do become more liberal. This suggests either that the major has no impact on students' ideology or that it has an impact, in the liberal direction, on a relatively small number of students. For several reasons, however, these findings must be interpreted with caution. First, to the extent some psychology students become more politically liberal between their freshman and senior college years, we cannot know whether that attitudinal change is due to being a psychology major or other influences. Second, to the extent they do not become more politically liberal, we cannot know whether they might have become more conservative had they majored in a more conservative discipline instead. In other words, it is possible that psychology served to maintain and reinforce their preexisting liberal attitudes. Third, students may shift their political attitudes in ways not tapped by the questions used in the HERI student surveys.

Other studies have similarly found that 4 years of a college education apparently does not change the political views of students (Dodson, 2014; The Economist, 2020) or moderates their views slightly, with liberals becoming slightly more conservative and vice versa (Dodson, 2014). The current data suggest that the psychology major also does not change the views of most students, though it may make the views of a few students more liberal or reinforce the already liberal views of many students. But assuming that the psychology major does not affect the political views of most students, is this because professors try not to indoctrinate their students, viewing such behavior as unprofessional (see Gross & Simmons, 2014a, b; Maranto, 2020)? Even if this is the case, students would still be exposed to the liberal political bias inherent in much of psychological research, theory, practice, and advocacy. It is likely, therefore, that students' political views are relatively set by the time they arrive in college (see Clarke & McCutcheon, 2009; Green & Palmquist, 1994; Polderman et al., 2015) and that liberal pedagogy simply does not change those

views very much, particularly since most of the students were already liberal when they began the psychology major.

We must end with an important caveat. Since 2014, anecdotal evidence (e.g., Lukianoff & Haidt, 2018) and empirical evidence (Goldberg, 2020) suggest a substantial shift left among educated elites, particularly on racial issues and particularly in academia and elite media, with significant implications for free speech and free inquiry (Downs, 2020; Maranto & Bradley-Dorsey, 2020). Our data ends in 2013 and thus cannot capture such shifts. Accordingly, our findings may be time-bound. We hope to secure new data to discern whether this is true.

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# Chapter 15

## Publication Suppression in School Psychology: A Case Study (Part 1)



Craig L. Frisby

No professional academic likes it when an article submitted for publication is rejected by a journal. In higher education, academics must rely on a steady stream of journal and book publications in order to build their professional reputations, secure tenure, earn promotions in rank at academic institutions, and build strong *vitas* that would convince granting agencies to fund their research.

Academic publishing entities have the right to publish whatever they want, using whatever internal editorial standards that they see fit to apply. To illustrate, a fictitious *Journal of Contemporary Astrology* has no obligation to publish articles that are critical of astrology – even if the article is judged by other entities to be worthy of publication in accord with a wholly different set of publishing standards. Thus, if the editorial policy of the fictitious *Journal of Contemporary Astrology* states that its general aims are to promote and defend the practice of astrology, then they are well within their right to reject articles that are at odds with this stated policy.

Manuscripts (even fabricated ones) are sometimes granted the honor of publication for reasons in which it is painfully obvious that scholarly standards have been substantially relaxed (Editors of *Lingua Franca*, 2000; Enloe, 2017). Conversely, high-quality publications may fail to see the light of day simply because the journal to which a manuscript has been submitted has a miniscule acceptance rate compared to other similar journals, or simply because a particular combination of reviewers is unusually strict. These are unavoidable by-products of the publishing enterprise in academia that nearly all academics encounter from time to time.

If an article, book chapter, or book is not published, then it is assumed that the manuscript has failed to meet the basic publication standards to which all respectable journals must adhere. Unfortunately, this is not always the case. Troubling ethical problems arise when a publishing entity explicitly advertises itself – or at least

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is generally perceived by its consumers – as promoting fair, objective, rigorous, and unbiased evaluation of a variety of viewpoints – yet blatantly contradicts such principles in its behind-the-scenes decision-making practices. This is particularly troubling when decisions to publish or reject submissions stem not from objective standards of scholarly merit in scientific writing, but from *sociopolitical or ideological biases* held by reviewers or the parent professional organizations and entities that they represent (e.g., see Gottfredson, 2007; Jensen, 1981; Lilienfeld, 2002; Warne, 2020). As one example, sometimes publication suppression occurs because author(s) take a position or pursue a line of research that would seriously upset or offend a large constituency of the journal's readers or the general public (e.g., Gottfredson, 2007). At other times, perfectly acceptable manuscripts are rejected because the editor is conflicted over his/her dual role as a fair and objective arbiter for peer-reviewed research – versus his/her role as a loyal representative of a professional organization. This can occur whenever professional organizations need protection from information that reflects poorly on the organization or seriously challenges its pet agendas (e.g., Lilienfeld, 2002).

Viewpoint bias stemming from ideological and/or sociopolitical considerations can easily lead to the suppression of books, articles, or technical papers from being published (Frisby, 2018). Many subdisciplines within psychology are known for adhering to particular orthodox narratives that are rarely challenged by alternative viewpoints (Crawford & Jussim, 2018; Redding, 2001; Stanley, 2007). When students within an applied psychology subdiscipline are not exposed to viewpoints that contradict orthodox narratives, they are prone to assume that few persons hold contrarian views – or such persons have not taken the time to write articles for journals on contrarian positions. They may even assume that such views must be morally or ethically “wrong” or perhaps consider such views as not empirically supportable compared to the prevailing wisdom of the times.

Undergraduate and graduate students in pre-service psychology training programs are generally inexperienced in the behind-the-scenes processes of journal article publishing. Their academic lives are carefully controlled and overseen by more experienced program directors, academic advisors, and classroom instructors – who are often held up as role models for what to believe in their chosen fields. Although professional mentors may advise students to be intellectually open to all ideas, students are genuinely shocked to encounter different perspectives from those to which they have been routinely exposed.

Consumers of journals – including impressionable students new to their field of study – may be unaware of biased publishing practices that are hostile to contrarian viewpoints. This is particularly alarming when contrarian viewpoints *are more empirically supportable* than “orthodox” viewpoints – but are nevertheless silenced for ideological or sociopolitical reasons. This not only undermines the credibility of the subdiscipline but also distorts reality for students in training.

These destructive trends can be openly challenged when the curtain can be pulled back and consumers can see what actually happens whenever sociopolitical biases operate to suppress research that is more empirically supported – yet is politically unpopular. The purpose of this chapter is to document one such incident experienced by this author that occurred within the subdiscipline of school psychology.

## Current Issues and Problems in the Education of Ethnic/Racial Minority Group Children and Youth

In order to understand the national context for this case study, an overview of important facts related to the education of non-White ethnic and racial minorities must first be established.

Between 2018 and 2019, the number of students between the ages of 3 and 21 who received special education services (in all special education categories) under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) was 14 percent (approximately 7.1 million) of all public school students. Among all students who receive special education services, the two largest disability categories are Specific Learning Disability (33 percent) and Speech/Language Impairment (19 percent; Digest of Education Statistics, 2019). There is a robust literature which promotes the narrative that African Americans are unfairly over-represented in identification rates for certain special education categories (Harry & Klingner, 2014; National Center for Learning Disabilities, 2020), but there is also an emerging literature which suggests that minority children may be either under- or over-identified as a function of how data is or is not aggregated (i.e., adjusted for family income and other student characteristics; Gordon, 2017; Morgan et al., 2017).

As of 2017, although approximately 10.1 percent of public school students were identified as English Language Learners (ELL; National Center for Education Statistics, 2019), a little over three-quarters of ELL students enrolled in public schools are Hispanic (de Brey et al., 2019).

America's long history of well-meaning national crusades such as Head Start, forced busing, school desegregation, increased state and federal funding for minority schools, and the establishment of cultural immersion schools and bilingual education, has produced some minimal to modest positive effects (e.g., Collier & Thomas, 2017; Morris et al., 2018). However, none of these movements has eliminated the school achievement gap between Whites and Blacks, Hispanics, or Indigenous peoples to any significant degree (Dynarski & Kainz, 2015; Hanushek et al., 2019; Mackowiak, 2014; Puma et al., 2010; Tate, 2002; Teasley et al., 2016; Wolters, 1984, 2009, 2015).

Racial subgroup differences in measured IQ appear as early as 2.5 years of age, average at around 1.1 standard deviation between Blacks and Whites, and are not in itself a matter of empirical dispute – although the causes of this difference are hotly debated (Rushton & Jensen, 2005). Black and Hispanic students score, on average, 2–3 years behind White students of the same age on standardized tests – regardless of how skills are measured (Auguste et al., 2009).

There are significant disproportionalities in many other school/education-related indicators. African American and Latino males are more likely than any other group to be suspended and expelled from schools, are more likely to drop out from school, and are less likely to enroll in, or graduate from, college compared to any other group (Schott Foundation, 2010). Of the percentage of students between ages 12 and 18 who reported that gangs were present at school (within all racial/ethnic

subgroups), Hispanics and Blacks in urban schools had the highest percentages for all years between 2001 and 2017 (Wang et al., 2020).

Indigenous people (Native Americans) have the highest poverty rates and the lowest labor force rates of any major racial group in the United States (Poverty USA, 2021; The Red Road, 2021). Only 19 percent of 18–24-year-old Native American students are enrolled in college compared to 41 percent of the overall US population (Postsecondary National Policy Institute, 2020). According to 2019 American Community Survey data, only 10.4 percent of American Indian and Alaskan Natives aged 25 years or older possess a Bachelor's degree compared to 22.6 percent in the comparably aged general population, and only 5.7 percent possess a graduate or professional degree compared to 13.4 percent in the comparably aged general population (United States Census Bureau, 2019, 2020).

## What Is School Psychology?

According to recent estimates, there are approximately 42,500 school psychologists currently working in the United States (T. Fagan, 2019, personal communication). As of 2007, there were estimated to be 76,100 school psychologists working in 48 countries worldwide, which includes America (Jimerson et al., 2009). Although school psychologists can be employed in community agencies, mental health centers, hospitals, and universities, the majority of school psychologists work in public schools (Merrell et al., 2012). According to a description published by the largest organization for school psychologists (National Association of School Psychologists or NASP), school psychologists:

*...are uniquely qualified members of school teams that support students' ability to learn and teachers' ability to teach. They apply expertise in mental health, learning, and behavior, to help children and youth succeed academically, socially, behaviorally, and emotionally. School psychologists partner with families, teachers, school administrators, and other professionals to create safe, healthy, and supportive learning environments that strengthen connections between home, school, and the community. (National Association of School Psychologists, 2019)*

School psychologists' "role and function" surveys conducted within the United States and internationally over the past 40 years consistently document that testing and assessment for special education placement (and attending Individualized Education Plan or IEP meetings) consumes the highest percentage of a working school psychologist's time (Hussar, 2015; Lacayo et al., 1981; Reschly & Wilson, 1995, 1997; Zins et al., 1995), with individual counseling, teacher consultation, and research being activities which occur with far less frequency.

School psychology is represented by two national professional organizations: Division 16 of the American Psychological Association and the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP). The former organization has an older history, beginning in 1945 (Fagan & Wise, 2007). The latter organization, begun in 1969, has the largest membership (approximately 13,270 members – see Walcott et al.,

2018). APA Division 16 requires the Doctoral degree as the minimum basic requirement for the title of school psychologist, while NASP advocates for the Education Specialist degree as the minimum entry level for the field (National Association of School Psychologists, 2018). The field of school psychology is predominantly White (approx. 87%), female (approx. 83%), and non-doctoral (approx. 75%; see Fagan & Wise, 2007; Merrell et al., 2012; Walcott et al., 2016).

## How School Psychology Deals with Issues Involving Race/Ethnicity

Of the seven major journals that publish school psychology research, (*School Psychology Review*, *School Psychology* (formerly *School Psychology Quarterly*), *Journal of School Psychology*, *Journal of Applied School Psychology*, *Contemporary School Psychology*, *Journal of Psychoeducational Assessment*, and *School Psychology International*), *School Psychology International* is the most consistent in publishing work that addresses racial, ethnic, country, and language diversity issues in client groups – in addition to issues related to the training and preparation of school psychologists in overseas countries.

### Position Papers

The “official” positions of school psychology (as represented by NASP) are succinctly articulated in its numerous published position papers (e.g., see [Position Statements \(nasponline.org\)](https://www.nasponline.org)). With respect to position statements related to multicultural issues, NASP has published position papers on *Effective Service Delivery for Indigenous Children, Youth, Families, and Communities* ([EffectiveServiceDeliveryforIndigenousChildrenandYouth.pdf](#)); *Prejudice, Discrimination, and Racism* ([RacismPrejudice.pdf](#)); *Racial and Ethnic Disproportionality in Education* ([Racial\\_Ethnic\\_Disproportionality \(1\).pdf](#)); *Recruitment and Retention of Culturally and Linguistically Diverse School Psychologists in Graduate Education Programs* ([Recruitment\\_and\\_Retention\\_of\\_CLD\\_Grad\\_Students.pdf](#)); *Students Who Are Displaced Persons, Refugees, or Asylum Seekers* ([PS\\_Students Who Are Displaced Persons.pdf](#)); and *The Provision of School Psychological Services to Bilingual Students* ([BilingualServices.pdf](#)).

As of this writing, APA Division 16 (School Psychology), Trainers of School Psychologists, Council of Directors of School Psychology Programs, the Society for the Study of School Psychology, the American Board of Professional Psychology, and the National Association of School Psychologists have joined forces to publish a *School Psychology Unified Antiracism Statement and Call to Action* (García-Vázquez et al., 2020). As an extension of this initiative, APA Division 16 is offering

Anti-Racism Action grants to fund research projects to fund “anti-racism action projects” ([Request for Proposals: Division 16 Anti-Racism Action Grants | APA Division 16](#)).

### *Alternative Assessment for IQ Testing*

School psychologists are arguably the only school-based professionals who are properly credentialed to administer standardized individual intelligence (IQ) tests for psychoeducational decision-making in schools. Ironically, however, the field has historically welcomed perspectives which malign IQ testing for minority children in preference for “alternative” forms of assessment presumed to be more fair and non-discriminatory (Feuerstein, 1979; Figueroa, 1979; GoPaul-McNicol & Armour-Thomas, 2002; Helms, 1997; Jones, 1988; Martines, 2008; Mercer, 1979; Pearson & DeMers, 1990; Valencia & Suzuki, 2001). As empirical research has accumulated which absolves IQ tests of bias when used with English-speaking, American-born children (see Brown et al., 1999; Clarizio, 1979; Jensen, 1980; Reynolds & Suzuki, 2013; Warne et al., 2014), the overt “IQ-tests-are-biased” message has gradually disappeared over the years in school psychology publications.

### *Cultural Competence/Social Justice Advocacy*

School psychology is no different from many other applied psychology disciplines in promoting the narrative that the increasing racial, ethnic, and language diversity of American society requires psychologists to be trained in cultural competencies (Graves, 2020; Harris et al., 2012; Lopez & Rogers, 2001; Miranda, 2008; NASP, 2020; Rogers & Lopez, 2002).

The dual constructs of cultural competency and “social justice” are intertwined within school psychology, in the sense that some feel that the cultural competence construct is naturally subsumed under social justice advocacy – while others feel that social justice is an unspoken but “core” principle embedded in the multicultural competency movement (Shriberg et al., 2008). At the time of this writing, social justice advocacy is aggressively promoted throughout all aspects of school psychology “best practices” documents, journal publications, and activities of school psychology professional organizations.

Instead of attempting to succinctly describe the particulars of this movement, direct quotes from a variety of different sources are reproduced in Table 15.1. These quotes are organized by the philosophical principles that give rise to social justice advocacy in school psychology; the articulation of social justice work as a professional mandate for school psychology; recognized challenges to defining social justice and its applications; attempts to promote specific/concrete definitions for the social justice construct and its applications to practice; as well as perceived obstacles to social justice work in schools.

**Table 15.1** The Tenets of Social Justice Ideology in School Psychology

<b>Evolution of the social justice construct</b>
<i>"...social justice is at the heart of multiculturalism" (Vera &amp; Speight, 2003, p. 254, quoted from Shriberg et al., 2008)</i>
<i>"Issues of cultural diversity often form the context from which social justice topics arise...social justice can be seen as the latest development in the evolution of multicultural psychology" (Shriberg &amp; Clinton, 2016, p. 327)</i>
<i>"From a US perspective, social justice can be seen as an extension of multiculturalism...and this is directly tied to legacies of slavery, desegregation, women's rights, special education rights, [and] gay rights" (Shriberg &amp; Clinton, 2016, p. 326)</i>
<i>"Social justice...is the natural aspiration of all democratic societies and remains the only long-term guarantee for developing and sustaining peace, tolerance, and harmony in the world" (Zajda et al., 2006, p. 15 quoted in Shriberg et al., 2008)</i>
<b>Social justice as a professional mandate</b>
<i>"Training psychologists to engage in advocacy and social justice is critical to professional development" (Pearrow &amp; Fallon, 2019, p. 30)</i>
<i>"...the goals of social justice are integrally linked with the goals of school psychology and therefore should be prioritized in graduate education" (Grapin, 2017, p. 173)</i>
<i>"As school psychologists, we have an ethical responsibility to engage in social justice and antiracist action" (Garcia-Vázquez et al., 2020)</i>
<i>"It [is] our position that school consultants should strive to be agents of social justice...[by] striv[ing] to bring their training, experiences, and talents to bear toward actively resisting the status quo in schools and institutions when these actions result in the perpetuation of injustice" (Shriberg &amp; Fenning, 2009, pp. 4–5)</i>
<b>Potential value for the profession</b>
<i>"Because the aims of both school psychology and social justice involve creating safe and accessible learning environments for all students, a focus on historical and contemporary social justice issues in graduate training is critical for preparing effective practitioners" (Grapin, 2017, pp. 173–174)</i>
<i>"...social justice has the potential to be a moral framework for training, research, and practice in school psychology" (Shriberg &amp; Clinton, 2016, p. 323)</i>
<i>"...the myriad [social] justice issues (e.g., resource allocation; overrepresentation of minority group members in special education; decisions related to student retention; school discipline procedures; evaluation of learning and mental health needs that are inconsistent with research and best practice; and institutionalized racism, sexism, classism, and homophobia...)...[creates] a natural connection between social justice and school consultation" (Shriberg &amp; Fenning, 2009, p. 3).</i>
<b>Challenges in defining the construct</b>
<i>"...social justice is an abstract concept that many find not only difficult to define, but also difficult to explain and to show how it manifests in the real world" (Miranda et al., 2014, p. 349)</i>
<i>"Social justice is a term that is not easily defined but is associated in education with the idea that all individuals and groups must be treated with fairness and respect and that all are entitled to the resources and benefits that the school has to offer" (Shriberg &amp; Fenning, 2009, p. 3)</i>
<i>"Social justice can be a challenging concept to define. Is social justice an aspirational goal, a vision for what one hopes a society can achieve...a set of invisible goggles that one wears, [or] a filter through which information is gathered ? (Jenkins et al., 2018, p. 63)</i>

(continued)

**Table 15.1** (continued)**Concrete definitions for the social justice construct**

*“For school psychologists, social justice is both a process and a goal that requires action... Social justice requires promoting non-discriminatory practices and the empowerment of families and communities...through culturally-responsive professional practice and advocacy to create schools, communities, and systems that ensure equity and fairness for all children and youth” (NASP Board of Directors, 2017)*

*“1000 randomly selected National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) member ...rated ‘ensuring the protection of educational rights and opportunities’ and ‘promoting nondiscriminatory practice’ as significantly more critical to the [social justice] definition than all other items...” (Shriberg & Desai, 2014, p. 4)*

*“...cultural diversity experts [in school psychology] most strongly endorsed a definition of social justice centered on the idea of protecting the rights and opportunities for all...these experts spoke to the importance of challenging institutional power structures via advocacy, most typically advocacy directly related to elements of cultural diversity (e.g., combating institutionalized racism and classism) ...when asked to identify key social justice action strategies, experts emphasized the importance of knowledge (e.g., knowledge of best practices and the law) and action (e.g., advocacy to support children and families)...Respondents rated promoting best practices in school psychology, conducting culturally fair assessments, and advocating for the rights of children and families as the most realistic actions practitioners can take to support social justice” (Shriberg & Clinton, 2016, p. 326–327).*

**Challenges in identifying social justice applications**

*“It is unclear how best to teach psychologists to engage in social justice work and advocacy..., but additional practical demonstrations are helpful to the field to form recommendations for best practice” (Pearrow & Fallon, p. 30)*

*“Social justice is an aspiration that most, if not all, school psychologists likely support, yet there is a lack of research delineating how this term translates to school psychology practice” (Shriberg et al., 2008, p. 453)*

*“...the notion of social justice sounds perfect in theory but is actually extremely difficult to access in schools” (Jenkins et al., 2018, p. 72)*

**Goals of teaching for social justice in school psychology training programs**

*“Teaching social justice require(s) (1) integrating social justice into courses, (2) engaging students in social justice scholarship and research, and (3) faculty and students collectively acting in concert with their core values and ethical standards for the purpose of improving the lives of others in real world settings” (Moy et al., 2014, p. 325).*

*“...a social-justice-oriented program emphasizes not only multicultural issues but also training in recognizing and challenging individual and systems-level inequities” (Gravin, 2017, p. 185)*

*“...faculty engage in socially just practice by working to recruit and retain diverse students to the field and by providing training with an urban specialty focus” (Miranda et al., 2014, p. 359)*

*“Social justice training encourages graduate students to develop a critical awareness of their personal worldviews, the views and beliefs of others, and the various inequalities that permeate learning environments for children from marginalized backgrounds (e.g., the overrepresentation of racial/ethnic minority students in special education and pervasive bullying of LGBTQ youth)” (Gravin, 2017, p. 196)*

**Concrete/specific applications of the social justice in school practice**

*“Social justice requires promoting nondiscriminatory practices and the empowerment of families and communities. School psychologists enact social justice through culturally responsive professional practice and advocacy to create schools, communities, and systems that ensure equity and fairness for all children and youth” (National Association of School Psychologists, 2019, p. 53)*

(continued)

**Table 15.1** (continued)

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*“School psychologists can have a positive impact...by ensuring discrimination is avoided when curricula teaching children to apply social justice principles...are utilized...school psychologists should be knowledgeable about evidence-based culturally adapted programs with a social justice orientation” (Shriberg & Clinton, 2016, p. 332)*

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*“...six principles of social-justice-oriented service delivery...include (a) engaging in ongoing self-examination, (b) sharing of power, (c) giving voice; (d) facilitating consciousness raising, (e) building on strengths, and (f) leaving clients the tools to work toward social justice change” (Gravin, 2017, p. 177).*

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*“There are many aspects of our work in schools that scream for social justice advocacy. From reducing the overrepresentation of minority students—and especially minority males—in special education and school discipline, to ensuring that our most marginalized students have access to prevention and intervention in their schools through the services that we provide (i.e., counseling, consulting, intervening)” (Miranda et al., 2014, p. 350)*

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**Obstacles/threats to social justice work**

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*“Although diversity is viewed as crucial to a social justice perspective,...research [suggests] that the lack of diversity among school psychologists is an obstacle to social justice work” (Miranda et al., 2014, p. 350)*

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*“In...situations where viewpoints differ, it is essential for the school psychologist to...create change that best aligns with social justice practices” (Jenkins et al., 2018, p. 74)*

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*“Consultants and graduate trainers must attend carefully to any academic and social barriers reported by students from traditionally marginalized groups as these barriers are a flagrant threat to the social justice agenda” (Gravin, 2017, p. 190)*

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## ***Meeting the Psychoeducational Needs of Minority Students (MPNMS; Frisby, 2013)***

This author has been immersed in school psychology for close to four decades, in multiple capacities as a graduate student, practitioner in schools, researcher, and university trainer. During this time, there was a growing realization that mainstream narratives in school psychology (1) grossly trivialize the tremendous diversity within racial/ethnic/language minority students in American schools, (2) mischaracterize the origins and causes of problems that certain groups disproportionately experience in their schooling, and (3) mischaracterize how vulnerable minority students are best served in order to maximize their potential for positive outcomes. In 2013, this author published a 662-page textbook entitled *Meeting the Psychoeducational Needs of Minority Students* (hereafter abbreviated as MPNMS; Frisby, 2013). MPNMS was primarily written to showcase principles, research, and practices proven to best meet the psychoeducational needs of minority children and youth in schools – as gleaned from “real world” empirical research and case studies. Secondly, the book was written to contrast these principles with what is judged to be largely ineffective and misleading narratives promoted by mainstream school psychology. A brief summary of the subtopics covered in MPNMS chapters, contrasted against “mainstream” narratives in school psychology, is given in Table 15.2.

**Table 15.2** Chapter Summaries and Key Principles From *Meeting the Psychoeducational Needs of Minority Students (MPNMS; Frisby, 2013)* versus Mainstream Multicultural Narratives in School Psychology

MPNMS chapter titles	Key chapter topics	Mainstream school psychology narratives
Chapter 1: Why the Need for This Book?	Traditional Writing on Multicultural Issues in School Psychology is Outdated Overemphasis on Minority Students as “Victims” and “Exotic” Professional Organizations Dictate “What to Think” Rather Than “How to Think” About Minority Issues in Education School Psychology Too Dependent on Counseling Psychology (for Multicultural Content) Rather Than Educational Psychology	Multiculturalism in School Psychology is Led by the Principle: “If you know a student’s race or ethnicity, you know how to help students in schools” Undifferentiated Characterization of all Minority Children as “CLD (culturally/linguistically diverse) Children” “Racism” and Cultural Insensitivity Viewed as the All Purpose Cause for School Problems of Minority Students School Psychologists Build Knowledge Base from Ideologically Driven Directives and Position Papers from Professional Organizations
Chapter 2: The Problem of Quack Multiculturalism	Multiculturalism Is a Sociopolitical Ideology, Not Science or (Necessarily) “Best Practice” Defining the Many Facets of Multiculturalism Ideology Elucidating Contradictions, Incoherence, Ironies and Double Standards in Ideological Multiculturalism Defining and Giving Examples of the Dark Side of (Quack) Multiculturalism Many Historical Examples of Multicultural “Solutions” That Have Failed	Multiculturalism Viewed as Synonymous with Virtue and Goodness Professional Organizations Dictate How Multicultural Realities Are Perceived and Are Selective in Determining Which Problems Deserve Attention

(continued)

**Table 15.2** (continued)

MPNMS chapter titles	Key chapter topics	Mainstream school psychology narratives
Chapter 3: Home and Family	Minority Groups Are Not Evenly Distributed Across or Within States Detailed Description of Educational/Home Implications of Different SES Levels Problems in Home Conditions Impact School Behaviors How Racial Disproportionalities in SES Status, Out of Wedlock Births, Single Parenthood, Neighborhood Crime, and English Language Learning Relates to Subgroup Differences Discussion of Empirically Supported Parenting Intervention Programs	Over-emphasis on Racial Status Alone as the Most Important Variable that Provides Insight for Interventions Little to No Acknowledgement of Large SES Differences <i>Within</i> Racial Groups Large Group Differences in Single Parenthood and Out-of-Wedlock Births Are Ignored Home Conditions Are Viewed as Largely Irrelevant to School Problems
Chapter 4: Contexts for School Learning	There Are a Wide Variety of Educational Contexts Other Than Public Schools Within Which Minority Children Are Educated The Quality of the Contexts in Which Educational Services Are Delivered Has a Large Effect on Educational Outcomes	Prescriptions for Educational Interventions for Minority Students Limited Almost Exclusively to Public Schools Educational Outcomes Attributed Almost Exclusively to “Exotic” Within-the-Child Cultural Variables
Chapter 5: General Cognitive Ability, Learning, and Instruction	Cognitive (IQ) Tests Accurately Assess General Cognitive Ability in American-Born English-Speaking Groups Individual Differences in Measured IQ Have Direct Implications for How All Students Benefit From Classroom Instruction Individual Differences in Measured General Cognitive Ability Are the Best Predictor of Academic Outcomes in Schools School Instruction Must Be Tailored to Individual Differences in General Cognitive Ability Closing the Achievement Gap Between Groups Is Unlikely Given Persistent Average Group Differences in General Cognitive Ability	Intelligence Is Ignored, Maligned or Downplayed as an Important Variable in Academic Achievement Subgroup Differences in Cognitive (IQ) Test Score Means Are Due to Problems (e.g., “Bias”) in the Tests Closing the Achievement Gap Is Achievable With the Correct Interventions

(continued)

**Table 15.2** (continued)

MPNMS chapter titles	Key chapter topics	Mainstream school psychology narratives
Chapter 6: Testing and Assessment	Standardized Tests for American-Born English Speakers Are Not Psychometrically Biased Understanding Test Accommodations for English Language Learners Classroom Techniques for Helping All Students to Prepare for Standardized Testing Guidelines for What Is/Is Not Ethical in Preparing Students for Classroom Tests	Racial/Ethnic Minority Students Are Better Served by Alternatives to “Traditional” IQ Testing
Chapter 7: School Discipline and Behavior Management	Principles for Effective Discipline Transcend Differences in Students’ Racial/Ethnic Status Addressing Serious Discipline Problems Sometimes Requires Significant Modifications in the Administrative Freedoms of Schools (e.g., Charter Schools) Effective Schools for Urban Minority Populations Are Paternalistic	School Psychologists Address Classroom Discipline Problems via Teacher Consultation Around the Problems of Individual Students Discipline Problems in Schools Are Best Handled by Packaged Programs (i.e., Positive Behavior Support, Restorative Justice)
Chapter 8: Crime, Delinquency, and Gangs	The Influence of Street Gangs in Schools Is a Significant Problem for Schools that Educate Large Numbers of Racial Minority Students Serious Delinquency/Crime in Schools Requires Understanding of Criminal Thinking Patterns Discussion of Gang Intervention Programs	Little to No Discussion or Research in Crime, Delinquency, and Gangs Among Racial/Ethnic Minority Students in Schools
Chapter 9: School District Resources	Minority Students Present Challenges for Schools via Higher Rates of Social Problems (e.g., Drug Abuse, Unwed Pregnancies, Low Graduation Rates) Discussion of Established Programs for Serving Minority Student Populations	School Problems Involving Minority Students Attributed to Lack of “Social Justice,” Cultural Sensitivity, Cultural Competence of Teachers, Administrators

(continued)

**Table 15.2** (continued)

MPNMS chapter titles	Key chapter topics	Mainstream school psychology narratives
Chapter 10: Where Do We Go From Here?	Recognize Important Distinctions Between Sociopolitical Ideologies and Objective Empiricism Minority Students Can Be Substantially Helped By Interventions that Are Not Inspired by Multiculturalism Ideology School Psychologists Develop Critical Thinking Skills for Evaluating Research Access State-Level Funding Opportunities that Enable School Psychology Programs to Assist Struggling Schools Important Knowledge Bases for Helping Minority Students in Schools “Cross-Cuts” Different Racial/Ethnic Groups Recognition of Schools that Have Implemented Effective Practices for Minority Children	School Psychologists Embrace Social Justice Ideology/Advocacy Only Select Training Programs Emphasize Service to Non-English Speaking/Bilingual Populations
Glossary	Defines Key Terms Relevant to Minority Psychoeducational Issues, Specifically, and School Psychology Research and Practice, Generally	

### *Solicitation of Commentaries on MPNMS*

Since the book’s content represented a major departure from books typically published on multicultural issues within the field, this author sought publishing outlets that would showcase debate and commentaries from leaders in school psychology on the various issues discussed within the text. Since publication of extensive commentaries on books is not a standing policy of the major journals within the field, this author was led to consider *School Psychology Forum* (SPF) as an outlet for commentaries. At the time, SPF advertised itself as a refereed journal published electronically by the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP, 2019). The following description was provided on its webpage under the heading “Purpose and Goals,” which read in part:

*The purpose of SPF is to provide readers an interactive forum to access, discuss and expand on critical, current issues related to children’s learning and mental health with the explicit goal of supporting school-based practitioners’ ability to improve outcomes for students, families and schools.*

At the time, the editor was a former student of this author during his tenure as a faculty member in a school psychology training program many decades earlier. This author contacted the SPF editor by e-mail in May 2013 and requested his assistance in hosting publication of a point-counterpoint interchange in SPF on MPNMS. This author offered to send the SPF editor a copy of MPNMS to review and from his reading to determine if the contents of the book were indeed appropriate for a published point/counterpoint commentary in SPF. The SPF editor claimed to have read the book and published the following comments on the book in a regular online blog for his school psychology students:

*I have read two books this spring that have challenged my professional thinking in uncomfortable ways. Both books were hard to read because some of my core beliefs were attacked. However, I hold another core belief even more central: well-designed data-based research, strong theory, and logic trump all assumptions, convenient beliefs, and entrenched practices...The first book is titled, "Meeting the psychoeducational needs of minority students: Evidence-based guidelines for school psychologists and other school personnel" by Craig Frisby (2013, Wiley)...This book attacks every assumption and belief about the value of traditional multicultural school psychology that many of us hold dear. The conclusion of this comprehensive and wide-ranging book is that all of the efforts to create multicultural competence, diversity, and a professional culture of multiculturalism have done nothing to improve the educational outcomes of minority students. And in some cases, multiculturalism has led to increased segregation, stereotyping, and creating an ideology that reduces the likelihood that effective interventions will be put in place. His point is that "quack multiculturalism" is an ideology and not a theory that is based on science or research. Effective education is based on science and logic and not ideology. Wishing, hoping, and creating a warm and fuzzy feeling is not the same as evidence-based practice. This book was hard to read, but compelling and a great professional challenge. (Shaw, n.d.)*

In a subsequent series of personal e-mail interchanges with the SPF editor, the following comments were made by the editor:

*The idea of 'fair and balanced' has no currency with me. Scholarship is not a democracy. The data support a position or they do not support a position...if one position is based on the data and the other side is based on hopes and wishes – then I see no need to give the hopes and wishes side any voice (no matter how much I may share those hopes and wishes). (S. Shaw, personal communication, May 3, 2013)*

*I found it very strong and a little sad that you had to end the book with an appeal to effective critical thinking and reminding folks of basic logical principles. We should not need to remind professionals of these basics. But your book makes it clear that we need to rediscover these core ideas and not abandon them to pursue something that feels good, but may be empty. (S. Shaw, personal communication, May 22, 2013)*

However, not all of the SPF editor's comments reflected unilateral and uncritical acceptance. Tactful but critical comments foreshadowed future "storm clouds" that would later play a significant role in subsequent problems:

*I expected this book to be...a dispassionate presentation of overwhelming evidence and airtight logic that lead to a conclusion that few reasonable people could disagree with.*

*Given the topic, there is simply not a lot of outcome data--but you reviewed major studies effectively. I was mostly shocked at the tone. This is a document that is passionate, harshly worded and even sarcastic in tone. It was much like a Fox-news critique of multiculturalism. As someone on the other side of the political aisle, it was hard to read this type of rhetoric. But the major theme that the emperor has no clothes (and is likely causing harm) was effectively communicated and compelling...Although I did not expect this harsh tone and do not really like it, it is also clear that the other side of the debate has dozens or hundreds of books in the canon that are worded at least as harshly as your book. So this is not my preferred style, but I understand that it is not uncommon in this field. (S. Shaw, personal communication, May 22, 2013)*

*I am certain to receive flak for publishing this topic...As an editor, I receive flak for the most innocuous of things that I publish...I have a few multicultural and social justice folks on the board and am sure to hear from them. I'm good with it. That is what happens when you make decisions. (S. Shaw, personal communication, May 22, 2013)*

We agreed that this author would submit a long list of possible commentators (from which the editor can choose a subset) to submit five to six papers to the series. Because their writings on the issues covered by MPNMS are well known, the list designated which commentators were likely to be supportive, neutral, or hostile to the book. The editor agreed to select commentators that represented a representative mix of these viewpoints.

In an e-mail exchange dated July 2, 2013, the editor suggested five well-known names to solicit for commentaries. Only one of these names was among the persons who eventually agreed to contribute to the series. Reasons for this varied. Most of the solicited authors turned down the opportunity to contribute to the series. One potential contributor who had initially agreed to contribute eventually dropped out due to deep offenses taken after reading the first two chapters. The final roster of commentators – four of whom which were not selected initially by the editor – nevertheless agreed to contribute to the series. One of these persons was a school psychology trainer who had his educational research seminar students read the book, and they in turn contributed anonymous comments about the book. The trainer then combined anonymous student comments with commentary on his own research.

### ***Editor Conditions for Publication of Commentaries***

The conditions for the series' contributors were stated by the editor via e-mail, which are summarized as follows:

1. SPF does not publish book reviews. Therefore, this author would need to write an initial article that summarizes the book's main points and its implications for school psychology. Then, commentators would comment on the initial article, followed by a final rejoinder to the commentaries written by this author.
2. There would be generous page limits (within reason) to commentators' contributions, as authors are provided maximum space to craft their points.

3. All contributions would be subjected to an in-house peer review process by the journal's editorial board.
4. Suggestions for editorial revisions would be sent to the editor by the in-house SPF editorial board, who in turn will filter the comments and share suggested edits with the author. While copyedited suggestions were expected to be taken seriously, authors were given some discretion to honor or ignore content-related editorial suggestions.

### *Sequence of Submissions and Reviews*

The introductory paper was written and submitted for editorial review in January 2015, with the final version being submitted in May 2015. In the interim time between these two dates, the manuscript was reviewed by the SPF editorial board and returned within a reasonable length of time with copyedited comments for revisions. The copyedited comments were well within the boundaries of appropriateness and involved (1) checking to see that citations referenced in the narrative were appropriately cited in the References list at the end of the manuscript, (2) asking for supporting citations to select statements made within the narrative, and (3) asking for clarification of statements within the body of the manuscript that were not written clearly. The final published version of this paper can be accessed at Frisby (2015). In the context of filtering comments from the in-house reviews by the SPF editorial board leading up to publication of this first paper, the editor made some interesting comments in a prior ongoing e-mail exchange:

*The reviews of your paper were interesting...but I did not find them helpful – mostly they simply made your case for you (that this is a sociopolitical and not [a] scientific discussion...) – so I am ignoring most of it. One stated that the paper should not be published and the other really wanted you to make very different arguments (that were not so strong)...As an editor...my views have changed on the topic. I have certainly learned about folks who are real honest and brave scholars...[versus those] who are either cowardly, lazy, or ideologues. I am more happy and excited to publish this issue than ever. (S. Shaw, personal communication, April 2015)*

In his published introduction to the commentary series, the editor made the following statements:

*This special issue presents the need for debate and discussion of multiculturalism in education...the groundwork for a long-term discussion of the value of multicultural competence is provided...the value of a research-to-practice journal is to apply science to all of our activities...every assumption, approach, theory, best practice, or priority must be held to scientific scrutiny. If this is ignored, then school psychology cannot be called a scientist-practitioner profession, but is operating instead as an advocacy group that is promoting social and political doctrine...Frisby will be given an opportunity to respond in a future*

*issue to the articles that appear in the current issue and may choose to respond to the commentaries that appear on the NASP Communities. (Shaw, 2015, pp. 71, 72, 73)*

This author was permitted to see first drafts of the invited commentators' contributions in May 2015 before the final drafts were published the following summer. These articles can be accessed at Li et al. (2015), Clark (2015), Lopez (2015), and Worrell/Educational Research Seminar (2015). A concise summary of the more negative criticisms of three of the four commentaries, as well as this author's rebuttals, is discussed in Part 2 (next article). A discussion of the more general implications for sociopolitical bias – of which these articles illustrate a specific instance – concludes Part 2.

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# Chapter 16

## Publication Suppression in School Psychology: A Case Study (Part 2)



Craig L. Frisby

In Part 1 of this case study series, the school psychology profession was briefly described, followed by a summary of how the profession typically addresses racial/ethnic/language minority issues in education. The publication and content of the book *Meeting the Psychoeducational Needs of Minority Students* (hereafter abbreviated as MPNMS; Frisby, 2013) was briefly summarized, and its topics were contrasted with traditional long-standing narratives in school psychology. A solicitation for published commentaries on MPNMS was accepted by the electronic journal *School Psychology Forum* (hereafter abbreviated as SPF), leading to publication of an introductory article on the issues addressed by MPNMS (Frisby, 2015a). This was followed by publication of four commentaries on MPNMS (Clark, 2015; Li et al., 2015; Lopez, 2015; Worrell/Educational Research Seminar, 2015) in the same journal issue.

In Part 2 of this series, the sequence of editorial decisions leading to publication suppression of a rebuttal to the commentaries is described, based on a series of e-mail exchanges between the SPF editor and this author. Specific elements of editorial malfeasance in the SPF editorial board are described. Part 2 concludes with a commentary on the sociopolitical elements of this case study and its implications for school psychology.

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## Point/Counterpoint Arguments in the Opening Debate

The opening Frisby (2015a) article summarized observations leading up to the writing of MPNMS, which consisted primarily of insights gleaned from publications describing outstanding schools for racial and ethnic minority children and youth. This was contrasted against what was described as a “scripted narrative” in school psychology that presumably explains the causes of, and solutions for, psychoeducational problems of the said children and youth in schools. The article made explicit the key implicit doctrines that undergird multiculturalism ideology (as traditionally manifested in school psychology) and discussed how the uncritical acceptance of these implicit doctrines in school psychology results in negative consequences for scholarship in the field. The article concluded with a discussion of insights for practitioners, trainers, and school psychology professional organizations for applying multicultural principles in a scientifically responsible fashion.

Of the four commentaries that were written in response to this opening article, three were primarily critical to hostile (although these included some positive comments), and one was primarily supportive. Since the written rebuttal to these commentaries was eventually suppressed from being published, a concise summary of the negative commentators’ main criticisms – followed by a concise summary of this author’s response to these criticisms in the unpublished rebuttal – is given below (Frisby, 2015b):

### *“Frisby Throws Out the Baby With the Bathwater”*

**Critique** One commentary conceded that there indeed exist valid criticisms of multiculturalism ideology. However, these critiques are accused of going too far, thus creating the danger of “throwing out the baby with the bathwater” (Li et al., 2015, p. 89). The critics then cite a wide variety of publications that argued for the necessity of multicultural competence training in school psychology.

**Rebuttal No. 1** The fundamental message of MPNMS was *not* that cultural competence training should be abandoned but that terms such as “multiculturalism” and “cultural competence” have not been adequately defined or empirically validated by applied psychology in the real world (see Frisby & O’Donohue, 2018).

**Rebuttal No. 2** The popularity of an idea does not camouflage its fatal conceptual, empirical, and practical problems. First, the approximately 50 citations used by this commentary (i.e., Li et al., 2015) to support the “knowledge-of-culture-and-cultural-differences-is-important-for-psychologists” message see individuals as little more than stock representatives of their group. Second, this message promotes the erroneous assumption that “culture” and “cultural differences” are the most important variables responsible for the school problems of minority group students (while

basic but vexing *social problems* disproportionately manifested among minority students are downplayed). Third, this message cannot explain how minority groups whose culture is considerably discrepant from the American mainstream (e.g., American-born and immigrant Asians) *exceed* the academic and social accomplishments of other racial/ethnic groups that have been American citizens for decades (Lilley, 2012).

**Rebuttal No. 3** It is not a forgone conclusion that all psychoeducational problems of racial/ethnic/cultural minority students in schools require specialized cultural competencies. This point was supported by a brief discussion of three racial/cultural minority students previously encountered in this author's school psychology practice decades ago – which highlighted how resolution of their psychoeducational problems involved no cultural elements.

**Rebuttal No. 4** Multicultural advocacy writing, more often than not, consists of dense and undecipherable verbiage, vague abstractions, and sweeping generalizations that provide little or no direction for specific practices in the real world of schools. This point was illustrated by reproducing a paragraph verbatim from a citation promoted in Li et al.'s (2015) commentary, in order to illustrate how writing on multicultural issues is often incomprehensible.

### ***“Frisby Ignores ‘Intersectionality’ in His Book”***

**Critique** One commentary (Clark, 2015) accuses the Frisby (2015a) article and MPNMS of using an oversimplified definition for multiculturalism. In particular, the commentary faults Frisby's discussion of multiculturalism as ignoring the concept of “intersectionality” from feminist theory.

**Rebuttal No. 1** The philosophy that undergirds this argument expects reality to conform to ideology and theory, rather than requiring ideology and theory to conform to reality. This point is developed further by showing how many features of this criticism can be traced back to the tenets of classical Marxism (Marx & Engels, 1888), which has failed in all of its applications.

**Rebuttal No. 2** This neo-Marxist rhetoric obscures the most basic and fundamental criticism of this commentary: How would an intersectional feminist perspective help Susie with her spelling problems?

As briefly mentioned in Part 1 of this series, one of the commentaries was written by a university professor and anonymous students from his Educational Research Seminar (Worrell/Educational Research Seminar, 2015). Each student was identified with a number (e.g., Student no. 6). Two of the most consistent negative criticisms shared by most of these students are listed below:

### ***“The Tone of Frisby’s Book Was Problematic”***

**Critique** Several anonymous students characterized the tone of the book as “emotional”; fraught with “disparaging metaphors”; “facetious”; leaving an unpalatable taste “making it difficult to take Frisby seriously at times”; “caustic”; “opinionated”; written in an “editorial” style; lacking “coherence”; characterized by an overreliance on “complaints” typically used by conservatives to “demonize political correctness and liberalism”; and “the structure of his arguments ends up calling the whole book into question.”

**Rebuttal No. 1** The verb *editorialize* is defined as “to set forth one’s position or opinion on some subject, or to inject personal interpretations or opinions into an otherwise factual account” (see <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/editorialize>). The purpose of university instructors is to discuss what factual information means and how information fits into the context of important issues in the field, to draw implications of information for the future development of the field, and to help students evaluate misleading or wrong ideas in their fields. There are several dozen articles to which school psychology students have been exposed on the topics of multiculturalism and schooling, many of which (in this author’s opinion) are contradictory or incoherent, fail to define important terms, provide no evidence for claims made, or provide *patently false* information. It is the task of authoritative sources in academia (i.e., books, university instructors, professional organizations, etc.) to “editorialize” as to whether or not writings on multiculturalism make sense in the real world or provide measurable solutions to real-world problems faced by minority students in schools.

If a book, instructor, professional organization, or any other authoritative source teaches that  $2 + 2 = 5$ , it is our professional responsibility as academics to strongly *editorialize* (i.e., promote an opinion) that this is indeed wrong and should not be taught to impressionable students in elementary school math classes. In the same way, MPNMS challenges popular but false and misleading ideas in multicultural school psychology and vigorously defends these challenges with reasoned arguments, data, and real-world examples.

**Rebuttal No. 2** Perceptions of tone rest in the eye of the beholder. Persons who disagree with the arguments made will generally find the tone problematic, while persons who agree with the arguments made will see nothing objectionable in the tone (although this rule is not always perfect). The important question is: *How can persons read the exact same material, yet have such widely different reactions?* The answer points, in part, to the truism that multiculturalism is a sociopolitical ideology, not a science. Different reactions are due, in part, to *individual differences in what readers bring to bear on writing about multicultural issues*, and not in the actual subject matter per se. Said differently, *the book’s content exposes philosophical fault lines that already exist in audiences.*

**Rebuttal No. 3** The observation that faculty and students in most colleges and universities around the country *overwhelmingly* favor left/progressive sociopolitical ideologies (particularly in the softer sciences) is no longer a matter of serious debate — but is well-documented in numerous books, journal articles, magazine articles, newspaper articles, and empirical surveys (Gross, 2013; Inbar & Lammers, 2012; Jaschik, 2012; Konnikova, 2014; MacDonald, 2011; Powers, 2015; Redding, 2001; Rothman et al., 2015; Rothman et al., 2011; Tierney, 2011). Chapter 2 of MPNMS (The Problem of Quack Multiculturalism) discusses the various features of multiculturalism ideology in detail and in some spots makes the argument that multiculturalism ideology is in turn influenced – either all or in part – by a deeper and more generalized left/progressive sociopolitical ideology that has its own implicit (unspoken) assumptions.

In response, one anonymous student dismisses the content of MPNMS as reflecting little more than a conservative bias that mirrors criticisms voiced in a book by Frank (2004). Unfortunately, for this student, accusing a work of “conservative bias” (instead of directly engaging the merits of an argument) is an indicator that MPNMS criticisms have “hit the bull’s-eye,” and they have no credible rebuttals. This debating tactic falters for two major reasons:

Fundamentally, the accusation of conservative bias is a criticism that eats itself from the inside. That is, if the knee-jerk reaction to a series of criticisms is that it originates from a conservative sociopolitical ideology, then this is an implicit admission that what has been criticized must indeed reflect a liberal/progressive sociopolitical ideology. Thus, this student is essentially (but incorrectly) framing debates over multiculturalism in school psychology as little more than a fundamental battle between a liberal/progressive sociopolitical ideology and a conservative sociopolitical ideology.

Although it is indeed true that a conservative is most likely to be sensitive to left/progressive bias in arguments (and vice versa), this does not mean that debates within multiculturalism can be trivialized as nothing more than a wrestling match between the political left and the political right. As examples, a person can self-identify as politically liberal yet be intellectually honest in supporting data that are not politically popular with progressives (e.g., see Snyderman & Rothman, 1988). In the same way, a committed liberal can buck against peer pressure by vigorously criticizing destructive examples of left/progressive bias (e.g., see Powers, 2015). If the students would have read MPNMS more carefully, they would have seen that nowhere in the text does this author advocate that school psychologists adopt a conservative sociopolitical ideology (as a replacement for left/progressive ideology) in understanding multicultural issues in the field. Rather, the text highlights *a fundamental disconnect between sociopolitical ideologies (in general) and facts, logic, and evidence* (see Frisby, 2013, pp. 57–71). MPNMS does not criticize ideas that flow from liberal/progressive ideology because they are not conservative. Rather, these ideas are criticized because *they have no credible evidence of working in the real world.*

**Rebuttal No. 4** All college-oriented texts published by major publishing companies are subjected to a rigorous editorial review before ever seeing the light of day. If there is a serious problem with the tone of a manuscript, then this will be aggressively flagged for editorial changes – as publishers have an obvious financial stake in making sure that a publication is suitable for the widest possible audience. When the 800+ page pre-publication manuscript of MPNMS was submitted to the publisher, there was *only one* instance in which a phrase was flagged by editors (and eventually changed) for being too “sharp” in tone. The bottom line here is that the tone of MPNMS falls squarely within what has been deemed by this publisher to be appropriate for public dissemination.

### ***“Frisby Provides No Data for His Claims”***

**Critique** The Worrell/Educational Research Seminar (2015) commentary states that the book lacked “appropriate citation support,” “personal opinions appear unsupported,” and it “dismissed entire theories and bodies of literature in a single sentence or phrase,” “does not provide enough references,” and failed to deliver “clear strategies,” “well-balanced evidence,” or a “synthesized list of evidence-based guidelines.”

**Rebuttal No. 1** There is ample empirical evidence to support claims made in MPNMS. As one among many examples (see Sidebar 2.10, pp. 55–56), an incident is described where a court desegregation order resulted in a Kansas City district paying a little over one billion dollars to create resource-rich state-of-the-art schools for black children. Besides creating widespread anger among parents in the district, these efforts resulted in no appreciable increase in academic achievement among black students and no narrowing of the white/black achievement gap. The problem is not that MPNMS lacks data, *but that these and other similar discussions in MPNMS do not reflect what the Education Seminar students wanted to hear.*

There are also many instances in MPNMS where it is pointed out that particular beliefs and practices within ideological multiculturalism have no supporting data. When Scholar A makes an assertion to Scholar B that an idea supported by Scholar B lacks empirical data, then in order to rebut this criticism, *the burden of proof is on Scholar B to provide the supporting data.* Yet, the Educational Seminar students provided absolutely nothing to rebut the various claims in MPNMS.

**Rebuttal No. 2** The accusation that MPNMS lacks evidence *provides no specific examples* of their claims to which this author could respond. MPNMS is a 662-page text that includes 10 figures, 36 tables, 79 sidebars, a 162-word glossary, approximately 927 references, and 106 citations to supplementary books, articles, movies, organizations, and websites from which readers can locate additional supporting points made in the book. Yet apparently, this was insufficient documentation for the Educational Research Seminar students. The reason for this is embarrassingly obvious and clear – *the students did not bother to read the book* (but limited

their supposed “review” to only one chapter – “The Problem of Quack Multiculturalism”).

As promised by the SPF editor (Shaw, 2015) and reinforced in this author’s unpublished rebuttal to these criticisms, a cordial invitation was extended to these students to write a follow-up article that includes specific examples of what they perceive to be unsupported claims in MPNMS.

### ***“Racial/Ethnic Identity Research Is Relevant and Important for Discovering Practices in the Real World that Help Racial/Ethnic Minority Children in Schools”***

**Critique** Approximately one half of the Worrell/Educational Research Seminar (2015) commentary is devoted to a defense of racial/ethnic identity research as an empirically supported research agenda which, in their view, provides promise for improving the academic achievement of minority students in schools. This portion of the critique was obviously written by Prof. Worrell, as this is a well-known aspect of his research publications. Secondly, this review of racial identity research is given as support for the importance of multiculturalism in school psychology.

**Rebuttal No. 1** Theories do not effectively solve problems experienced or caused by minority students in schools. *Tried, effective, and documented practices do.* Nothing in MPMNS addresses ethnic/racial identity research, for the simple reason that such research has no relevance for explaining the problems that minority students face or discovering practices in the real world that help racial/ethnic minority children in schools.

There are several problems with ethnic/racial identity research. First and foremost, racial/ethnic identity is but a small subset of a much larger body of research on identity as a generalized social/psychological construct (Leary & Tangney, 2012; Schwartz et al., 2011). Stated bluntly, human beings are much more than just walking billboards for their race or ethnicity. The totality of a person’s personal identity not only involves attitudes and perceptions about their race/ethnicity but also involves how identity changes as a function of developmental stages and how persons see themselves as members of gender groups, age groups, social groups (e.g., family, religious organizations, citizens of countries), and ability groups (e.g., academic ability, athletic ability), to name a few. This constitutes the fundamental error of politicized multiculturalism, namely, the gratuitous assumption that a person’s race or ethnicity is the centerpiece of how an individual interacts with the world around him or her.

Second, racial/ethnic identity is not a homogeneous construct, but it is often conceptualized as multidimensional within any one theory (Arbuthnot, 2012). Arbuthnot (2012) writes:

*...racial identity sentiments and attitudes are heterogeneous even among people of the same race, because individual's experiences and encounters differ. (p. 374)*

Third, there are many different instruments used to measure the same ethnic identity constructs, which naturally leads to difficulty in consensus interpretations. On the issue of black identity, for example, Arbuthnot (2012) states:

*Psychometric scales that are used to assess Black identity range from one question to sometimes over sixty questions, depending on how Black identity is operationalized. Furthermore, scholars use different measures to tap the same aspect of Black identity. (p. 374)*

Cokley (2007) states:

*In spite of the numerous studies conducted, empirical findings related to ethnic identity are difficult to synthesize and interpret because of the different conceptualizations and measures that have been used...A synthesis of racial identity research is also difficult because of findings that are sometimes counterintuitive to racial identity theory. (p. 226)*

Trimble (2007) states:

*...some scholars and researchers liberally change identity measures to accommodate their stylized theoretical and practical needs, thus distorting and eroding certain scales' original psychometric properties. Too often stylized and atheoretical amendments add to the pandemonium that already exists in the field. Part of the chaos originates with the reality that the multicultural counseling field is in need of solid theory built from well-defined constructs and concepts...the field is in desperate need of structure and order. (p. 247, 256)*

The psychometric integrity of some ethnic identity scales has been shown to suffer from variable and/or low reliability coefficients and social desirability effects (Cokley, 2007), as well as studies' failure to incorporate latent trait, cultural measurement equivalence, and item bias analyses of identity scales (Trimble, 2007).

Fourth, results from ethnic/racial identity research are almost exclusively correlational in nature, which places clear limits on interpretation. In a typical ethnic/racial identity research study, subjects fill out a barrage of questionnaires and scales, and the researcher conducts complex factor and/or regression analyses on the results. This, in turn, may lead to the following example of a hasty conclusion:

*The present study shows that Black students' racial identity could have an impact on their standardized [academic] test performance. (Arbuthnot, 2012, p. 382)*

This cannot be concluded, any more than one may conclude that shoe size has an impact on accumulated math learning. A basic principle taught in beginning statistics classes is that correlation does not imply causality. There are any number of reasons why two variables may be significantly correlated that have nothing at all to do with direct causality (see discussion in Jensen, 1980, pp. 193–196). As children age, they increase in shoe size and also increase in the amount of math learned. Thus, the positive correlation between shoe size and math learning is simply due to the presence of the third variable of age that both variables share in common.

Fifth, racial/ethnic identity research suffers from one particularly glaring flaw, which is the tendency to utterly ignore the negative consequences that occur when racial/ethnic identity interacts with the darker aspects of human nature. It is racial/ethnic identity that lies at the root of the formation of dangerous youth gangs within

schools in urban communities and violent gangs within US prisons. Failure to observe the proper manifestations of ethnic/racial identity often results in violence, injury, or loss of life (Lacy, 2014; Roberts, 2014; Skarbek, 2014; Zatukel, 2014).

An increasing number of American whites, feeling besieged at what they perceive to be their collective dispossession in an increasing nonwhite society, have discovered their “white identity” – which they argue has just as much of a right to be nurtured and celebrated as nonwhite identities (Harkinson, 2016; Taylor, 2011). Whites who have a more violent streak have sought white identity affirmation in various “white pride” groups such as the Ku Klux Klan, Aryan Nations, and Christian Identity movement (Duke, 2013; Quarles, 2004; Swain, 2002).

Finally, racial/ethnic identity is arguably among the top two or three reasons why terrorism, organized crime, and inter- and intragroup violence disrupt and destabilize entire regions of the globe, hamper social and economic development internationally in areas in most need of progress, and lead to untold misery and death in every continent on the globe (Horowitz, 2000; Wolff, 2006).

Advocates for racial/ethnic identity theory would most likely argue that the development of ethnic identity is intended to be a positive force that presumably helps to foster healthy development and academic achievement in children and youth (e.g., see Branch, 2014; Chavous et al., 2003). However, this argument overlooks an awkward truth – which involves the inconvenient presence of the dark side of human nature. Educators and psychologists can no more control how a given individual psychologically processes racial/ethnic identity advocacy, than a man who pours out a bucket of water from atop a 10-foot ladder can tell the water where to go before it hits the ground.

## **SPF Arguments for Publication Suppression**

This author’s written rebuttal to the negative commentators was then submitted and was returned with copyedits in August 2015. The first indication of future “storm clouds on the horizon” was prefigured when large swaths of text were marked for deletion by the editor, with no accompanying justifications. Most of the suggested text deletions were crucial for supporting the arguments being made, so this was indeed quite puzzling to this author. When the copyedited rebuttal was returned to the editor, some of his suggested edits were honored, but most were not (Frisby, 2015b). This was not a serious concern to this author, due to earlier assurances by the editor that authors would be given freedom to accept or reject suggested edits as they saw fit.

Nearly 3 months had passed with no word from the SPF editor. This author e-mailed an inquiry about the status of the rebuttal in November 2015, which was answered with an assurance that a response would soon be forthcoming. It was not until February 2016 that a five-page single-spaced decision letter, signed by the SPF editor, was e-mailed to this author. The letter was written in the form of a long laundry list of itemized complaints about the written rebuttal – concluding with a clear

message that the rebuttal would not be published unless it incorporated the massive deletions suggested by the editor.

Space does not permit a similarly itemized rebuttal to each point made by the decision letter. The SPF editorial board complaints are categorized and summarized below, followed by this author's reactions.

### ***“The Frisby Rebuttal Was Unscholarly”***

There were 14 instances in the SPF editorial letter that included the word “scholarly” which was used to either establish the editorial criteria for rejecting the rebuttal or to malign the rebuttal as being “unscholarly.” A few illustrative statements are reproduced below (S. Shaw, personal communication, February 12, 2016):

*The major problem is that you have not engaged in a scholarly discussion with the commentaries. You made a series of anecdotes and analogies that are not scholarly in tone or substance. (p. 1)*

*The use of italics is also not necessary. In high quality writing the emphasis is clear. The use of italics is rarely justified in a scholarly paper. (p. 1)*

*There are multiple examples of anecdotes and thought experiments that may be acceptable for a full-length book, but are convoluted methods of making a point for a scholarly journal article. (p. 2)*

*...I think...the preponderance of evidence is that you are correct in your core argument...To win such an argument in a scholarly setting, you must be better than those making false arguments. (p. 4)*

*In sum, your rebuttal does not constitute a scholarly paper and does not contribute to the argument. (p. 5)*

The SPF editor then cites several examples to support his claim that the rebuttal was unscholarly. Each of these examples is discussed, followed by this author's response:

### ***“The Tone of the Book/Rebuttal Was Too Harsh”***

This was a criticism heard throughout all phases of the SPF series, which spanned pre-publication planning for the series, the invited commentaries, to the justification used by the SPF editor to deny publication of the rebuttal. After the SPF editor received a copy of MPNMS, he lists the elements which were harsh according to his opinion. These were (1) calling multiculturalism an ideology, (2) using the term “quack” as a modifier for multiculturalism, (3) putting quotation marks around the word “equity,” and (4) calling equity a “near-sacred” word in multiculturalism ideology. He states “[...]these specific word choices are what I labeled as harsh” (S. Shaw, personal communication, May 22, 2013). He further opines:

*I was mostly shocked at the tone. This is a document that is passionate, harshly worded and even sarcastic in tone. It was much like a Fox-news critique of multiculturalism. As someone on the other side of the political aisle, it was hard to read this type of rhetoric. (S. Shaw, personal communication, May 22, 2013)*

Yet, before anything in the debate series was ever published, the editor expressed overall support for the book:

*But the major theme that the emperor has no clothes (and is likely causing harm) was effectively communicated and compelling...Although I did not expect this harsh tone and do not really like it, it is also clear that the other side of the debate has dozens or hundreds of books in the canon that are worded at least as harshly as your book. So this is not my preferred style, but I understand that it is not uncommon in this field...I found it very strong and a little sad that you had to end the book with an appeal to effective critical thinking and reminding folks of basic logical principles. We should not need to remind professionals of these basics. But your [book] makes it clear that we need to rediscover these core ideas and not abandon them to pursue something that feels good, but may be empty... (S. Shaw, personal communication, May 22, 2013)*

The point to be underscored here is that, as the series was being planned, the editor gave absolutely no indication that the ideas expressed in the book, or the manner in which they were expressed, were so beyond the pale of scholarly discourse that it needed to be suppressed. The SPR editor concludes:

*...good science means challenging everything. I have no need to stir up trouble for no reason, but if this debate helps NASP to develop a stronger empirical basis for its positions on multiculturalism then we will have a stronger profession and organization...Congratulations on a major accomplishment. Definitely a good read. (S. Shaw, personal communication, May 22, 2013)*

Contrast this cordiality expressed in the planning stage against his justification for denying publication of this author's rebuttal to the commentaries. Here, his assessment reflects a 180-degree turn that is considerably less measured and polite. All of a sudden, nothing written by this author was deemed acceptable:

*...[the harsh tone] is something that I have heard from every person who has read your book or article. You are correct that any perception of tone lies in the eye of the beholder, but every beholder that I have spoken with has perceived the same tone...The rhetoric is harsh and unusual to me and not academic. It is the tone of modern polemic discourse and not of academic discussion. It is this tone that chased two scholars I originally invited to contribute to the series from the project. Both scholars gave the exact same message: "The author's tone appears to be angry and personal. Although I welcome scholarly debate and disagreement, I do not have the stomach to engage in what would likely be personal attacks." (S. Shaw, personal communication, February 12, 2016)*

**Response** The SPF editor's responses are reminiscent of comments that typically follow presidential elections involving Candidates A and B – where one frequently hears: "I can't understand why Candidate A won, as everyone I talked to voted for Candidate B!"

As was stated in the unpublished rebuttal, Chap. 2 (The Problem of Quack Multiculturalism) "sucked all of the air out of the room" in the negative comments by commentaries and later by the SPF editor. None of the negative commentaries

showed the slightest interest in, or appreciation of, the positive interventions for minority students *that represented the majority of the material covered and documented in MPNMS*. All of the accusations by both the SPF editor, editorial board, and negative commentaries about “harsh tone,” “unscholarly writing,” etc. is rooted in their reactions to multiculturalism ideology being criticized (which characterized the bulk of only one chapter in a ten-chapter book).

Multiculturalism is a sociopolitical ideology, and is not science – nor does it *necessarily* constitute “best practices” for the profession (i.e., some practices are, but many practices are not). As argued in MPNMS, multiculturalism is “big business” in the social sciences and can often degenerate into racialism (i.e., the obsession with and elevation of race as the source and explanation for all problems) and rank racial opportunism. Multiculturalism ideology is often logically incoherent, empirically inadequate, and experientially invalid (i.e., its high-sounding promises do not materialize into tangible benefits in the real world). It often is little more than a protest movement against real-world observations that ideologues find objectionable or embarrassing, and it is rarely held accountable when its predictions prove to be wrong.

At no time in the history of school psychology has multiculturalism been critiqued this intensely. It comes as no surprise, therefore, that criticisms of multiculturalism ideology are met with shock, hurt, anger, and hostility – which is understandable given the fact that multiculturalism ideology is all that the school psychology profession has been exposed to.

At this juncture, this raises a perfectly reasonable question in the minds of readers: Given the reverence that applied psychology holds for multiculturalism ideology, wouldn’t it have made better sense to publish a book for school psychologists that contained only Chaps. 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10 (on positive interventions for minority students) and omitted Chaps. 1 and 2 (which were critical of ideological multiculturalism) – since this would have certainly prevented future headaches?

The answer is “No.” Basic scholarship requires *skepticism* (the willingness to question established ideas and practices in the face of opposition; Lilienfeld & Waldman, 2017; TBS Staff, 2020), as well as the willingness to “connect the dots” (drawing obvious linkages between disparate topical areas). The fact that real-world effective interventions for minority students have nothing at all to do with sociopolitical multiculturalism is a linkage that desperately needs to be made – particularly for school psychologists. On this point, this author finds inspiration in the words of Gottfredson (1994):

*This requires no particular heroism. All that is required is for scientists to act like scientists – to demand, clearly and consistently, respect for truth and for free inquiry in their own settings, and to resist the temptation to win easy approval by endorsing a comfortable lie. (p. 59)*

## “The Use of Quotation Marks Around Words Is Unscholarly”

To support his argument that this author’s rebuttal was unpublishable, the editor argued that the use of quotation marks around select words was unbecoming:

*The use of quotation marks is somewhat confusing. There are only three acceptable uses for quotation marks: when directly quoting someone else’s words, when coining a new word, or when intentionally being ironic...Quotation marks are not necessary. (S. Shaw, personal communication, February 12, 2016, p. 1)*

**Reaction** The claim that quotation marks are not necessary in scholarly writing is patently inaccurate. To illustrate, select titles of psychology papers that include quotation marks around one or more words are listed in Table 16.1. Literally 100 times this number of titles exist in published scientific research articles even when the scope of such publications is limited to the past 10 years – which is multiplied even more quotations used in the actual body of articles are considered.

The editor neglects to mention that quotes are often placed around colloquial words or phrases that have a quite different meaning from the surface evaluation of words (e.g., “it is raining cats and dogs”; “the cat is out of the bag”; “she attacked the task like gangbusters”; the argument was like “putting lipstick on a pig”; etc.).

There is, however, a deeper issue around the use of quotation marks that is directly relevant to this case study. Many writers have underscored the truism that sociopolitical ideologies (whether they be from the political left or political right) gain a foothold in influencing thinking and behavior (on a societal scale) by first *manipulating language* – particularly the meaning of words (Allen, 2020; DC Shorts, 2020; Kalb, 2013; Knowles, 2018; Orwell, 1949; Powell, 2003).

**Table 16.1** Select Published Article Titles That Include Quotation Marks Around One or More Words

Dennis, M.J., Sternberg, R.J., & Beatty, P. (2000). The construction of “user friendly” tests of cognitive functioning: A synthesis of maximal- and typical-performance measurement philosophies. <i>Intelligence</i> , 28(3), 193–211
Gottfredson, L.S. (2004). Intelligence: Is it the epidemiologists’ elusive “fundamental cause” of social class inequalities in health? <i>Journal of Personality and Social Psychology</i> , 86(1), 174–199
Gottfredson, L.S. (2007). Applying double standards to “divisive” ideas. <i>Perspectives on Psychological Science</i> , 2(2), 216–220
Harkness, A.R., & Lilienfeld, S.O. (2013). Science should drive the bus of clinical description: But how does “science take the wheel”? A commentary on Markon. <i>Journal of Personality Disorders</i> , 27, 580–589
Warne, R.T., Yoon, M., & Price, C.J. (2014). Exploring various interpretations of “Test Bias”. <i>Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology</i> , 20(4), 570–582
Sternberg, R.J. (2002). The “Janus Principle” in psychometric testing: The example of the upcoming SAT-I. <i>APA Division 5 Newsletter</i> , 24(2)
Zhang, L.F., Sternberg, R.J., & Fan, J.Q. (2013). Revisiting the concept of “style match”. <i>British Journal of Educational Psychology</i> , 83(Pt. 2), 225–237

In ideological doublespeak, words are used as softer and more polite euphemisms for ideas or concepts that – if stated directly – may offend others (e.g., “undocumented immigrants” means illegal immigrants; “persons of color” means any person who is not white; “justice system-involved persons” means criminals). In the new doublespeak, words can mean *the exact opposite* of what they claim to represent (“affirmative action” means racial discrimination; “inclusion” means exclusion; “hate speech” means free speech; “tolerance” means intolerance; “anti-racism” means racism; “sensitivity” means insensitivity; “social justice” means social injustice; and so on).

Often writers have to critique trendy ideas and language about which the writer disagrees. When quoting the writing of ideologues, the writer has to repeat words that have a connotation that is at odds with its straightforward and nonpoliticized meaning. When this happens, quotes must be placed around words to indicate that the word is not being used according to its traditional meaning. Due to the highly politicized and ideological nature of the subject matter being critiqued, the frequent use of quotes in this author’s rebuttal was necessary and unavoidable.

### ***“Certain Arguments You Make Are Inherently Unscholarly”***

In a strange twisting of logic, the editorial letter claims that certain arguments made in the rebuttal are inherently unscholarly and therefore were forbidden to be made. For example, in describing the roots of social justice thinking, the rebuttal cited its origins in classical Marxism – which is a frequent argument made by critics of social justice ideology (Allen, 2020; Campbell & Manning, 2018; Church, 2017; Lindsay, 2022; Pluckrose & Lindsay, 2020). Yet to the SPF editor, this was belittled as nothing more than a cheap strawman:

*Some strawman techniques used include the characterization of Clark’s intersectional concepts as neo-Marxism, and then simply stating that Marxism has failed; is not a strong argument. It is simply restating and labelling an argument as a strawman and then dismissing it without any rationale. The citation for rejecting Marxism is your own book. (S. Shaw, personal communication, February 12, 2016, p. 1)*

One of the commentaries extolled racial identity theory as a promising avenue for offering possible solutions to black underachievement in schools (Worrell/Educational Research Seminar, 2015). In this author’s rebuttal, the roots of racial identity pride made by black identity psychologists were traced back to the 1960s rhetoric of Malcolm X. According to the SPF editor, this argument was deemed to be little more than an inappropriate rhetorical device:

*[You used] convoluted methods of making a point for a scholarly journal article...these rhetorical devices are not providing evidence or presenting data...Some examples of the superfluous anecdotes are...a discussion of Malcolm X...These stories are not scholarly argumentation or evidence presentation. (S. Shaw, personal communication, Feb. 12, 2016, p. 2)*

To counter the narrative that interventions for the school problems of racial/ethnic minority students must necessarily require cultural modifications, this author described three situations personally experienced during his employment as a working school psychologist where a variety of racially/ethnically different minority children *did not* require culturally modified interventions in order to successfully address their problems. This was dismissed by the editorial letter as insufficient for supporting arguments made. The editor writes:

*Uncontrolled case studies and anecdotes do not disprove anything. They illustrate. Were the multicultural models considered causal or explanatory, then you may have a case for disproof through counter-example. But the models are fairly weak in claimed explanatory or causal effects. (S. Shaw, personal communication, February 12, 2016, p. 4)*

This is nonsense. Nearly every article or textbook for psychologists on serving culturally different populations includes case studies and anecdotes to illustrate its main thesis that cultural factors in clients' presenting problems play an important role in delivering interventions (e.g., Jones, 1988; Lewis-Fernandez et al., 2015; Sue et al., 2014). In fact, even NASP markets a video that features case studies of pupils belonging to different racial/ethnic groups to illustrate the supposed role of culture in the solving of special education referral problems (National Association of School Psychology, 2003). In fact, one prominent scholar on multicultural issues in school psychology states the following (Miranda, 2008):

*[I]t is equally important to infuse [diversity] issues throughout school psychology coursework. This can easily be done by using case studies that incorporate issues of diversity... (p. 1742)*

If a manuscript or training video did not include case studies or anecdotes of this type, it would be aggressively marked for revisions by the book publisher or sponsoring professional organization, as it would not be considered useful for practitioners seeking to buy the book. This author's use of anecdotes and case studies in the rebuttal does not claim to "prove" or "disprove" anything. These are used merely to illustrate that aggressively hyped multicultural narratives do not always apply to many real-world situations.

### ***“Use of the Term ‘Quack Multiculturalism’ Is Hurtful”***

The SPF editor claimed that usage of the term “quack multiculturalism” inadvertently criticizes individuals who are supporters of multiculturalism and thus constitutes an ad hominem attack on individuals that is unseemly for a scholarly article. He writes:

*...referring to a field of study as “quack multiculturalism” is name-calling because you are implying that those who support such methods are quacks. (S. Shaw, personal communication, February 12, 2016, p. 4)*

This criticism reflects what is fundamentally wrong with so much of the negative commentaries and the editor's decision letter, as none of these bothered to read Chap. 2 carefully (The Problem of Quack Multiculturalism) – in which this term is most heavily used. First and foremost, the term “quackery” is clearly defined in the glossary of MPNMS as follows:

*In its more general application to education and psychology, quackery refers to an aggressively hyped or marketed fad (e.g., intervention, treatment procedure, or education philosophy) that promises dramatic results if implemented or adopted, but in the final analysis is not supported by quality research and/or ultimately fails to deliver on its promises. (Frisby, 2013, p. 571)*

Great effort was taken within MPNMS to carefully define the many subtleties, nuances, and applications of the “multiculturalism” concept – all of which were unilaterally ignored by the negative commentaries and the SPF editorial letter. There are clear instances in MPNMS where the term “quack multiculturalism” is defined as referring to a *subset of research and beliefs* (under the broader term “multiculturalism”) which may be wildly popular but in reality are empirically bankrupt:

*It needs to be said clearly at the outset that not all multiculturalism is Quack Multiculturalism. Multiculturalism serves as a broad umbrella term for a heterogeneous mixture of approaches that differ substantially in both quality and intent. Multiculturalism is a heterogeneous entity that includes one part high-quality rigorous research, one part inconsequential or mediocre research, one part highly effective practices, one part shameless sociopolitical advocacy, and one part pure ideological gibberish. All of these elements are mixed together into one large gumbo called “multiculturalism”. Unfortunately, it becomes increasingly difficult to separate the wheat from the chaff. (Frisby, 2013, p. 57)*

This passage is then followed by a citation from a writer that was made over 15 years earlier from the publication of MPNMS, who essentially made the same observation (Lynch, 1997, pp. 17–18). The faulty belief system represented by the term “quack multiculturalism” is indeed aggressively critiqued in numerous places within MPNMS, but *absolutely nowhere in the book are specific individuals called quacks*.

There is a more serious problem, however, with the SPF editor's claim that criticizing a belief system is tantamount to an ad hominem attack on advocates of the attacked belief system. That is, the entire scientific enterprise would cease to exist if researchers were forbidden to attack unsupported theories because it may upset researchers who are passionately committed to such theories. Consumers have an unassailable right to laugh at flat earth theory, even though doing so may hurt the feelings of flat earth theorists. It is entirely understandable when advocacy for particular theories is tied to professional reputations, peer recognition/status, and research funding. However, the possibility that one's work will be critiqued by other scholars is an unavoidable by-product of participating in the scientific enterprise. There is always a risk of personal embarrassment in the scientific world when better supported theories supplant weaker theories that eventually are debunked (Ritchie, 2020).

Within this context, it takes focus and resolution for scholars to defend points of view that are unpopular yet are better supported than popular theories. On this point, Sir Francis Galton writes (as quoted from Pearson, 1914, p. 297):

*General impressions are never to be trusted. Unfortunately, when they are of long standing they become fixed rules of life, and assume a prescriptive right not to be questioned. Consequently those who are not accustomed to original inquiry entertain a hatred and horror of statistics. They cannot endure the idea of submitting their sacred impressions to cold-blooded verification. But it is the triumph of scientific men to rise superior to such superstitions, to devise tests by which the value of beliefs may be ascertained, and to feel sufficiently masters of themselves to discard contemptuously whatever may be found untrue.*

### ***False Accusations Not Supported by Evidence***

In several spots, the SPF editor accuses this author of actions that were clearly contradicted by the written evidence. For example, consider a totally innocuous factual statement made in the rebuttal (Frisby, 2015b):

*The Worrell (2015) commentary...contains joint critiques from a university faculty trainer/scholar in school psychology and a group of 13 graduate students (at various positions in their doctoral studies) enrolled in an educational research seminar. It is not known from the Worrell commentary if all or some of these students were doctoral students in school psychology at the time of the writing.*

The clear point of this statement is that *it is unknown* if the students who contributed to the commentary *were school psychology students* (as opposed to being students representing other majors). The SPF editor then seized on this statement to accuse this author of an inappropriate ad hominem attack:

*Dismissing Worrell's contributors as perhaps not being doctoral students...is condescending and unnecessary. (S. Shaw, personal communication, February 12, 2016)*

In closing this section, what has made this experience extremely frustrating is the incessant drumbeat – particularly from the Worrell/Educational Research Seminar (2015) students and the SPF editorial letter – that this author's rebuttal was filled with wild and “unscholarly” arguments that lack no serious and scholarly support or evidence (which in turn warrants rejection for publication). There is no way to demonstrate for readers the utter baselessness of these claims, except to report a simple citation count of the references in each of the documents referred to in this case study. Although simple citation counts are not in and of themselves ironclad indicators of the “scholarliness” of a manuscript, they give readers one piece of objective information from which to evaluate the editor's arguments. In order of least citations to most citations, these are:

SPF Editorial Rejection Letter	0
Shaw (2015)	2

Lopez (2015)	4
Clark (2015)	8
Li et al. (2015)	50
Worrell/Educational Research Seminar (2015)	72
Frisby (2015a)	91
Frisby (2015b)	176

## Elements of Editorial Malfeasance

At this juncture, an obvious question arises: Why not just “bite the bullet,” and make the revisions as requested by the SPF editor as countless academics must regularly do in the journal publication process? The answer is simple. This author had no desire to be a willing participant and victim of *blatant editorial malfeasance* where the editor did not honor his previous promise that this author could write a rebuttal as he saw fit. Ultimately, this author had absolutely no desire to turn a perfectly reasonable manuscript into an incomprehensible (but “NASP approved”) pile of mush. To elaborate:

### *SPF Reneged on Its Promises*

The SPF editor claimed to have read the book before overseeing the published commentaries and claimed to have a clear idea of the controversial nature of the positions taken, the arguments made, and the manner in which arguments were communicated. Despite the fact that some members of the SPF editorial board vehemently objected to the proposal (based on their hostility toward MPNMS), the editor communicated to this author that the book, its topics, and solicited commentaries were worthy of publication.

In initial pre-publication discussions, the editor made assurances that this author would be permitted the freedom to communicate arguments as he sees fit, with no censorship (beyond reasonable copyediting procedures) by the editorial board. If this were not clearly communicated and understood, this author *would not have agreed to the project*.

After the expected round of revisions suggested by the editorial board were made, the first article in the series was published (Frisby, 2015a) as mutually agreed. This clearly suggests that the editor had no objections to its publication. The written rebuttal was not qualitatively different from either the original book or this initial Frisby (2015a) commentary in the arguments made, the evidence presented, or its writing style. *Yet in stark contrast to what the editor communicated about MPNMS*

*privately*, he blasts both the book and the initial Frisby (2015a) piece to justify publication suppression of the rebuttal:

*[Your] rhetoric is harsh and unusual to me and not academic. It is the tone of modern polemic discourse and not of [an] academic discussion...To me, this is the flaw in your book, the first paper, and the rebuttal. (S. Shaw, personal communication, February 12, 2016, pp. 2–3)*

It is not known whether these comments represented the editors' sincere opinions or if the editor had "a gun to his head" and was merely channeling opinions from the editorial board. Regardless of the answer, the bottom line here is that these comments contradicted what was privately communicated to this author in the planning stages of the series.

### ***SPF Employed Blatant Double Standards in the Review Process***

Both the editor and the editorial board employed blatant double standards in how the commentaries were treated relative to this author's rebuttal. These double standards are fleshed out by Gottfredson (2007) in her paper on the application of double reviewing/publication standards to divisive ideas. Here, politically popular ideas face lax review/publication standards, while politically unpopular ideas are subjected to unreasonable (and sometimes unattainable) review/publication standards. What were these double standards?

1. **None of the commentaries (including the positive one) showed any evidence of having read MPNMS in its entirety.** In a revealing incident from this author's past, a nationally known scholar was solicited to write a review of Herrnstein and Murray's (1994) *The Bell Curve* for a miniseries to be published in *School Psychology Review*. The scholar readily agreed to write a review but added the proviso that she/he would not read the book. This scholar seemed to lack any self-awareness of the utter absurdity of this position (from both an ethical and professional standpoint). Needless to say, no further interaction with this scholar – in relation to the series – occurred.

None of the commentaries (including the positive one) showed any evidence of having read the MPNMS in its entirety. Even the one chapter that was read (The Problem of Quack Multiculturalism) was done so only superficially and with no effort to engage with the many arguments provided therein. As previously discussed, some school psychology scholars refused to participate after having read Chap. 2 (The Problem of Quack Multiculturalism). Instead, the negative commentaries engaged in extended discussion of their own personal research or viewpoints that had no relationship to the topics covered by MPNMS.

The fundamental purpose of book reviews is for commentators to actually *engage* in the arguments made by the books/articles that they are reviewing. Using the analogy of a baseball game, batters must actually stand at the home plate and swing their

bats at balls thrown by the pitcher. The Worrell students didn't even do this, as their responses were analogous to one team simply sitting in the dugout to make fun of the other team's shoelaces.

The Worrell/Educational Research Seminar (2015) students accused MPNMS of having no data, when in fact this was simply a rhetorical device that, ironically, demonstrated that they did not even bother to read the book. Data was clearly provided within MPNMS in the form of actual quantitative data, literature reviews, meta-analyses, and case studies. Apparently, this was of little concern to the SPF editorial board.

**2. Double standards in editorial board responses.** Recall that throughout this process, this author had access to commentators' first drafts (provided by the editor so that this author could write the rebuttal), as well as the final published version of the commentaries (available to all). Thus, if the final published versions were substantially different in writing style or content from the first drafts, then the review standards of the editorial board can be inferred from any discrepancies between the commentators' first drafts and the manuscripts that were eventually published. If there are no differences between the first drafts and the final published versions, then it can be inferred that the editorial board had no problems with the manuscript. If there are differences, then it can be inferred that these originated from suggestions made by the editorial board.

How can these changes be summarized? First, all published manuscripts (including this author's) were "polished" for relatively minor grammatical/syntax issues – which is common in the editorial process. Second, all published manuscripts (including this author's) added necessary citations to select passages when requested, which is also common. Third, the first draft of the Worrell/Educational Research Seminar (2015) did not include any positive reactions to MPNMS. In contrast, the final published version included some of the authors' positive reactions to MPNMS. Thus, it can be inferred that the SPF editorial board instructed the authors to "say something positive about the book." Fourth, the final draft of the Worrell/Educational Research Seminar included a brief overview of the topics covered by all chapters in MPNMS, whereas the first draft did not. Thus, it can be reasonably inferred that the Worrell/Educational Research Seminar students were requested by the editorial board to demonstrate (albeit superficially) that they had some knowledge of the scope of the entire book (when in fact the content of their first draft clearly indicated that they had not read the book in its entirety). The wording of this content suggested that Prof. Worrell – not the students – authored this content. Overall, it can be inferred that there were no substantive disagreements in the eyes of the SPF editor or editorial board with the content of the negative commentaries.

**3. Squid-ink argumentation.** The mode of argumentation and debate reflected in the negative commentaries can be accurately described as being reflective of the "squid-ink argumentation strategy." In the natural world, sea squids (cephalopods) have a built-in biological mechanism that enables them to evade predators. When in danger, squids release a blackish colored ink substance – which creates

a dark, diffuse cloud (smoke screen) into the water. This accomplishes two goals: (1) it obscures the predators' view and (2) allows the squid to make a rapid retreat through the cloudy water.

When this analogy is applied to this case study, none of the negative commentaries addressed (head-on) any of the serious substantive content raised by MPNMS (or the one chapter against which they had the most objections – Chap. 2; see Part 1). Instead, critics spread black ink into the water by diverting attention to superficial and unrelated issues that had no relevance to the book (e.g., intersectionality, feminism, racial identity theory) or to superficial stylistic complaints that they had about this author's writing.

In contrast to what was allowed for the negative commentaries, unusually large portions of this author's rebuttal were marked for deletion – with the proviso that it would not be published unless the deletions were honored. Each jot and tittle of any argument put forth was micromanaged by the editor and denigrated with subjective, arbitrary arguments to justify nonpublication. No matter what argument or evidence was put forth in the rebuttal, the editor claimed that the argument/evidence was “unscholarly” and not convincing to him personally. In contrast, the Worrell/Educational Research Seminar (2015) students were permitted to engage in name-calling (“Frisby is a crank”), objectively false accusations (“Frisby has no data”), and ungrounded speculations about this author's emotional state when writing MPNMS (“Frisby is angry and political”). At some points in his editorial letter, the SPF editor justified his opinions by openly stating that he agreed with the seminar students.

*All of this invective can ultimately be traced back to the unforgivable sin of criticizing multiculturalism ideology.* Reading the commentary series that was eventually published, school psychologists would not have the foggiest idea of empirical and case study data related to the lack of effectiveness of Head Start, problems resulting from school integration, the epidemic of family breakdown in minority communities, how to reverse disastrous graduation rates among minority students, charter schools, cultural immersion programs, IQ testing, curriculum-based assessment interventions for improving classroom instruction, accommodations for ELL (English Language Learner) students on standardized tests, classroom management and school discipline, the presence of gangs in schools, how educators handle school crime, school-based programs for addressing difficult social problems, or the presence of actual schools that document positive outcomes for minority children.

In short, the negative commentaries in this case study were permitted a relatively unrestricted forum to criticize MPNMS as they saw fit, *but this author was not permitted to respond to these criticisms as he saw fit – contrary to the editor's original promise.* Both the SPF editor and editorial board transgressed proper professional boundaries by ignoring their roles as fair and neutral arbiters of vitally important debates within education. Instead, they put their “thumb on the scales” by actively protecting one side and handicapping the other. Their behavior in this case study can be likened to watching a boxing match – when at the start of the fifth round, the referee dons boxing gloves and joins one combatant in fighting the other combatant.

The entire experience can also be likened to a pet owner who removes all of the teeth, fangs, and claws of his pet dog, then expecting the dog to successfully defend itself after being thrown out into a wilderness of predators. If the dog gets killed, then the pet owner can simply shrug his shoulders and claim that the dog was constitutionally weak. Readers will note the eventual outcome: popular but unsubstantiated ideas and ideologies in school psychology are protected and thus allowed to flourish – while unpopular but more empirically supported ideas, facts, and arguments are prevented from seeing the light of day.

## **Social Science and the Nature of Reality**

As a profession, school psychology is currently in the grip of social justice ideology in its approach to multicultural issues in education (see Part 1, this text). In this regard, the profession is no different from other applied disciplines that train professionals to serve students in schools (Atkins & Oglesby, 2019; Holcomb-McCoy, 2007; Joseph et al., 2012; Lima-Fiallos, 2015; Obiakor & Rotatori, 2014). MPNMS was written to showcase real-world interventions for minority children that typically do not receive widespread attention in school psychology publications. By publishing a debate on these issues, it was hoped that this would inaugurate much needed dialogue within the field that would allow teaching, research, and training to be freed from sociopolitical indoctrination and move forward for the ultimate benefit of minority students in schools.

I had been naïve.

This experience, though painful, has revealed a useful insight that there exist *two opposing philosophies* that are competing for the hearts and minds of pre-service graduate students, in-service educators, and practicing school psychologists. These two philosophies fundamentally differ on the basic nature of reality.

### ***Philosophy No. 1***

One philosophy holds a worldview that subdivides persons by rigid categories of race, ethnicity, language, gender, sexual orientation, and social class – and then treats these characteristics as fundamentally prescriptive for psychoeducational interventions (Jones, 2009). In this worldview, the cause of all problems in the education of minority students can be laid at the feet of white people. Here, whites must be enlightened, shamed, blamed, browbeaten, or compelled to become “woke” (Browne et al., 2020; Eddo-Lodge, 2019), recognize their white privilege (Rothenberg, 2016) and white fragility (DiAngelo, 2018), fight the inherent racism that comes with whiteness (Kendi, 2019; Weekes, 2009), recognize their unconscious bias (Benson & Fiarman, 2019), immerse themselves in the learning of minority group culture (Gay, 2018; Hale, 1986; Wages, 2015), stop using (or at least

alter the interpretation of results from) culturally biased standardized cognitive tests (Armour-Thomas & Gopaul-McNicol, 1998; Ford, 2004; Helms, 1992; Suzuki & Aronson, 2005), embrace social justice and anti-racism as a way of life (Black, 2020; Shriberg et al., 2013; Singh, 2019), and engage in mandatory pre- and in-service diversity/sensitivity training (Benson & Fiarman, 2019; Florell, 2018). All of this is based on the fundamental assumption that “cultural misunderstanding” is the root cause of problems that minority students face in schools. If culturally sensitive educational prescriptions are carried out to the exact specifications of their advocates, this will “close the achievement gap” (Gallagher, 2020) and bring social justice, fairness, sensitivity, equity, inclusiveness, and cultural competence to schooling (Adams et al., 2016; Melloy & Murry, 2019).

### ***Philosophy No. 2***

In contrast, a second philosophy (as represented by MPNMS) holds that simple knowledge of racial/ethnic/language membership status is not – by itself – fully prescriptive of psychoeducational interventions. This is because variations in psychological traits, skills, abilities, and educational outcomes *within groups* are considerably wider than mean differences *across groups* (Ashton, 2018; Boyle & Saklofske, 2013). At the same time, however, this second philosophy does not shrink back from acknowledging the reality of mean group differences in psychological and educational variables that are important for schooling outcomes (e.g., Gottfredson, 2005). In this view, basic research in human learning (Mayer & Alexander, 2017), human intelligence (Sternberg, 2018), and the teaching of academic skills (e.g., Carnine et al., 2017; Stein et al., 2017) is sufficient for understanding and shaping educational outcomes for all children. Differences between racial and ethnic groups in the frequency of vexing social problems better explain why schools experience a higher degree of challenges related to the education of minority students (Barrett et al., 2018; Carson & Esbensen, 2017; Eden, 2019; Knab et al., 2019; National Gang Center, 2020; Wiltz, 2015). Promising effective interventions for educational problems can be found in empirical research in effective classroom teaching practices (Archer & Hughes, 2011), as well as case study research on differences between educational settings in school-level organization, administration, policies, and leadership (Lezotte & Snyder, 2011; Whitmire, 2014).

Each worldview is based upon incompatible assumptions, has incompatible objectives, is exposed to audiences through different journals, and leads to different interventions for solving problems in schools. Each philosophy’s adherents read different books and attend different conferences. Rarely do their supporters communicate with each other (for noble efforts to forge common ground, see Hess & Noguera, 2021).

This author argues that the ultimate goal of dispassionate science is to discover truth and the *nature of reality* (Ritchie, 2020). Unfortunately, constructivism, post-modernism, and cultural relativist views within education argue that there is no such

construct as an external reality that exists independently of subjective individual thinking and experience (Kozloff et al., 1999). A quote from MPNMS opened the unpublished rebuttal, *which was vigorously marked for deletion by the SPF editor and editorial board*. This quote read as follows:

*Reality has no superordinate authority to which it is obligated to conform. It is not beholden to the opinions of professional organizations or to the dictates of politically correct orthodoxy. Reality is not impressed by fancy degrees or professional titles, pretentious-sounding theories, the earnestness and resolve of professional “task forces”, nor is it impressed by millions of dollars poured into the latest social engineering agendas. Reality cares nothing about the prickly sensitivities of special interest groups, the pet agendas of political pressure groups, or the hardened ideological beliefs of political parties. Although clever thinkers throughout history have exerted much effort in convincing themselves (and others) that reality is optional, reality always ends up making a complete mockery of man’s most brilliant theories. As such, reality will not be denied. Reality waits quietly and patiently behind the scenes, and inevitably exposes itself at the most inopportune times – often causing embarrassment, pain, denial, and much frustration for those who try desperately (and in vain) to erase it from existence. Whereas social fads come and go with predictable regularity, reality remains constant, intractable, firm,...and inescapable. (Frisby, 2013, p. 497; quoted in Frisby, 2015b)*

The inescapable principle flowing from this quote is that (1) ideas that are not rooted in objective reality – no matter how popular – *will not work* and (2) *bad ideas have bad consequences*. The SPF editorial board and negative commentaries may have strongly objected to this author’s use of the term “quack multiculturalism” for philosophical reasons, but changing the terms that are used (simply because it offends social justice advocates) does not change the disastrous consequences of bad philosophies that have no accurate view of reality.

If it can be assumed that the actors in this case study were representative of the broader profession, then it is not unreasonable to assume that school psychology has little interest in the serious problems commonly observed in the public education of minority children. Read any published professional guild materials in school psychology, and one will endlessly hear noble-sounding sentiments about helping all children in schools and being fervent warriors against racism and discrimination (e.g., see National Association of School Psychologists, 2019). Yet when confronted with a book specifically designed to showcase real examples of educational success stories for minority students, rank hostility was the overwhelming response from a professional organization that claims to be the “friends of minorities.” There are three useful lessons that observers can take away from the events detailed in this case study.

### **1. School Psychology Cannot Defend Quack Multiculturalism**

This author has spent most of his career researching multicultural issues related to assessment and minority education – as these relate to school psychology. As clearly stated in MPNMS, there are elements of multiculturalism ideology that are empirically sound, but many other elements that are not. Elements falling within the latter category have been labeled *quack multiculturalism*. Incidentally, this is not the first time that a moniker has appeared for labeling bad ideas that are camouflaged by

the thin veneer of science. The terms “pseudoscience,” “sham science,” or even “bu\*\*\*\*\*t” are used in scientific papers (Lawson, 2007; Lilienfeld et al., 2012; Moberger, 2020).

As outlined in the SPF editor’s rejection letter, the editorial board took great offense at the “quack multiculturalism” moniker. This reflects the utter *tone deafness* of a field that styles itself as experts on the psychology of schooling yet shows zero awareness of what is happening with racial issues in the real world. Mainstream school psychology depicts minority students as hapless victims of racial bias from non-minority teachers, racial/cultural bias in tests, and a general insensitivity to nonwhite cultures – all of which supposedly has the combined effect of undermining educational outcomes for minority students. According to social justice advocacy, only when racism, discrimination, and cultural insensitivity are banished from the hearts and minds of (typically white) educators and school practices will minority students be freed to flourish educationally and academically. That is, once properly trained school psychologists take newly infused “social justice goodness” that resides in their hearts – and uses it to fight the “social justice badness” found in schools – then psychoeducational problems for minorities will most assuredly melt away. This belief has no basis in objective reality.

When one steps outside of the insular bubble of school psychology, one is immediately confronted with literally dozens of books and articles that document, in chilling detail, the palpable damage to organizations, schools, students, educators, and families caused by militant social justice, anti-racism, and “critical race theory” ideology (Abrams, 2021; Burke et al., 2022; Hess & Addison, 2020; Lindsay, 2022; McWhorter, 2021; Rowe, 2021).

Quack multiculturalism establishes a strictly enforced racial etiquette which binds audiences to a complex catalogue of unspoken rules that can strike many as entirely arbitrary (e.g., see Glanton, 2020; McWhorter, 2016) – the inadvertent violation of which can bring dire consequences for individuals working in schools. Racial etiquette then morphs into totalitarian pressures for ideological conformity (Goldberg, 2021). This is why, for example, an Afro-Latina teacher was fired for refusing to join her peers in giving a “black power” salute during a school superintendent meeting and a former school superintendent was demoted for criticizing the district’s racial “equity platform” as divisive (Deese, 2021).

Quack multiculturalism enables the existence of “zombie facts” – a term coined to explain why some beliefs about multicultural issues continue to have a persistent shelf life long after being decisively debunked. As one among many illustrations, two decades into the twenty-first century, some academics still maintain that practitioners should be suspicious of standardized test usage for native-born English-speaking minority groups (e.g., see Special issue on “Testing and Assessing African Americans,” in Vol. 81, No. 3, 2021, of *The Journal of Negro Education*), despite mountains of empirical evidence debunking claims of test bias (Brown et al., 1999; Jensen, 1980; Reynolds & Suzuki, 2013). Quack multiculturalism explains why theories of “racial learning styles” continue to occasionally appear in modern books and articles (e.g., Hale, 2016), despite their conceptual and empirical bankruptcy (Frisby, 1993a, b; Kane & Boan, 2005; Pashler et al., 2008).

Quack multiculturalism is the petri dish out of which racial victimization is promoted as the “go to” explanation for nearly all problems experienced by racial minority students in schools. Quack multiculturalism explains why otherwise level-headed professionals now assert that “racial bias” and “white supremacy” are inherent within mathematics content (Zeisloft, 2020a, b) and are the reason why one professor called for a ban on home schooling by claiming that it promotes “white supremacy” (Zanotti, 2020). Quack multiculturalism is why researchers will bend over backward to explain away serious behavioral problems, academic deficiencies, and higher levels of general mayhem among black students in both integrated and predominantly black schools – by blaming these on teachers’ subconscious implicit bias (Young, 2016), cultural insensitivity (Parker, 2007), bad teaching skills (Kaplowitz, 2003), or white racism (Flaherty, 2015).

Quack multiculturalism gives rise to the “Equity Doctrine” (see Frisby, 2013, p. 19), which is obsessed with numerical proportionality statistics as the sole indicator of the presence or absence of racial discrimination. As examples, public schools throughout one state will no longer suspend students for disobeying teachers, simply because too many nonwhites get suspended (Kersey, 2020). Quack multiculturalism is why race-neutral admissions standards for selective public schools are deemed “racist” and “discriminatory” simply because not enough blacks and Hispanics make the cut (Bader, 2020; Bielski, 2020).

Quack multiculturalism is the reason why all problems involving minority students are instantly “racialized” – where it is uncritically assumed that school problems involving racial groups must, by necessity, have racial explanations. As one among many examples, one predominantly black school – despite immersing its curriculum and students in black history and black role models – still cannot demonstrate improved academic achievement on state tests (Watson, 2020).

Quack multiculturalism forces impressionable students to interact with politicized curricula that are developmentally inappropriate and potentially damaging to underdeveloped minds (that are not equipped to emotionally process such material). To illustrate, one elementary school in a different state asked third graders to create an “identity map” – which is used as a basis for the assertion that white children live in a “dominant culture” that subordinates other cultures for the purposes of gaining and maintaining privilege and power (Rufo, 2021, January 13). Quack multiculturalism energizes the coalition of “anti-racist” students in one school district to demand the firing of any teacher who fails to report instances of racism, discrimination, or harassment – or who may comply with such reporting *too many times* when a BIPOC (black, indigenous, and people of color) or LGBTQIAP+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, questioning/queer, intersex, asexual, pansexual) student is the perpetrator (see Demand 4a; Southlake Antiracism Coalition, 2020). Quack multiculturalism explains why one of the biggest television networks aimed at children – the “Cartoon Network” – released an anti-racism public service announcement that teaches young children that a colorblind approach to interacting with others can impede work toward curing racism (Mastrangelo, 2021).

Quack multiculturalism leads to hasty, ill-conceived solutions for problems – where the solution is far worse than the problems that they were meant to address.

This is why objective admissions standards for highly selective middle and high schools will be abolished in the name of promoting diversity (Asian Dawn, 2020; Natanson, 2020; Shapiro, 2020) – and why numerous school systems across a variety of states want to abolish honors classes, teach how math is “racist,” and admit truant students into gifted schools – all in the name of promoting “diversity and inclusivity” (Rosiak, 2019a). Quack multiculturalism is the force behind the ideologically based removal of classic literature from school curricula (Gurdon, 2020), as well as proposals for removing school names of US Presidents, writers, and generals – presumably because they are deemed to be “racist” (Tucker, 2020). Quack multiculturalism is the reason why there are efforts at the highest levels of state and national government to provide incentives for schools to ban their disciplinary policies under the pretext that it unfairly discriminates against “students of color” (Agrawal, 2019; Green, 2020; Ruiz-Grossman, 2019). This is done despite consistent evidence that students of color disproportionately commit higher rates of disciplinary infractions (MacDonald, 2018).

Quack multiculturalism is the reason why integrated school districts engage in incremental efforts to “dumb down” their grading and evaluation systems for minority students as a pretext for “fighting racism” (Edelman & Kennedy, 2020; Soave, 2021). As a natural outcome of such policies, a black valedictorian of a Detroit high school struggled with low-level math classes taken during her first semester at a state university (Rosiak, 2019b). Quack multiculturalism explains why, in the name of “equity,” parents in one school district were advised against hiring tutors or organizing local study groups because it would be unfair to families who cannot afford to do so (Lifson, 2020). Quack multiculturalism explains why one large school district implemented “racial equity” practices in its school discipline policies – which subsequently unleashed unprecedented levels of mayhem and chaos (Eden, 2017; Kersten, 2017; Kersten & Anderson, 2017).

The negative effects of quack multiculturalism extend to any educator whose work involves close contact with minority students in schools. Quack multiculturalism is the reason why teachers in school districts overtaken by critical race theory activism are required to engage in anti-racist pedagogy and activism both inside and outside of the classroom. In these activities, it is mandatory for teachers in some school districts to attend “white privilege training” where they are told that they are inherently racist and must commit to becoming “anti-racist” in the classroom (Rufo, 2020). Training materials urge teachers to divide the world into “enemies, allies, and accomplices” and work toward the “abolition of whiteness” (Rufo, 2020a). One middle school must endure diversity training where teachers are forced to define white heterosexual males as the privileged social group and women, minorities, transgender, and LGBT people as “oppressed social groups” – as well as defining colorblindness as a form of white supremacy (Rufo, 2021, January 19). In these racially toxic environments, school officials can literally lose their jobs from simply criticizing some of the more radical elements of racial extremism (Associated Press, 2020).

The negative consequences of ill-conceived practices rooted in quack multiculturalism can be devastating. Numerous lawsuits are being brought against school

districts for infusing “white fragility,” “critical race theory,” “white privilege,” and “anti-racist” curricula into public school classrooms (Murawski, 2020; Paslay, 2021). Teachers are beginning to bring lawsuits against school districts for lowering discipline standards for black students in the name of fostering “racial equity” in suspension rates (Kolls, 2019), and white parents are bringing lawsuits against school districts – charging prejudice against whites fostered by the adoption of critical race theory in school curricula (Berry, 2021; Dorman, 2020).

***Advocacy on Life Support*** Without a doubt, this case study represents an extremely egregious example of editorial malfeasance. Throughout this author’s career, however, milder forms of behind-the-scenes editorial shenanigans have been experienced, which reveal a disturbing pattern among school psychology’s “publishing elite” as it grapples with contrarian perspectives on multicultural perspectives. Three such events are briefly described below:

***Learning Potential Assessment*** First, there was a time in school psychology’s history when the concept of “alternative assessment” was all the rage. During this time, IQ tests were thought by many to be “culturally biased”; biased tests were considered to be the cause behind IQ score differences between American-born English-speaking racial groups; the Larry P. court case banning the use of IQ testing in California was a painful memory for many; and many school psychology and special education scholars were advocating alternatives to IQ testing that were part of their personal programs of research (Frisby & Henry, 2016).

The Learning Potential Assessment movement was pushing the “Learning Potential Assessment Device” (or LPAD) as a solution to these problems (e.g., see Hilliard, 1987) – although some concerned school psychology and special education scholars were urging caution due to serious psychometric problems with this method (e.g., see Glutting & McDermott, 1990; Reynolds, 1986). One prominent LPAD researcher, who was also the guest editor of a special series of articles on “interactive assessment” published in a special education journal, asked this author and a colleague to write a critique of the LPAD in the series (see Frisby & Braden, 1992). In his solicitation to us before publication, the guest editor promised that there would be no published rebuttal to our paper in the series (due to the journal’s space limitations).

However, our critique turned out to be much more devastating to the dynamic assessment movement than he initially realized. Hence, without consulting us, he solicited and published a rebuttal to our paper in an attempt to salvage the reputation of the LPAD – *contrary to his initial verbal agreement with us*. True to our predications, however, the LPAD has all but vanished from the current scene since its introduction nearly 45 years ago.

***Different Perspectives on Truth?*** In a second illustration, school psychology has a tradition of publishing a *Handbook of School Psychology* (at the time of this writing in its fourth edition) that is updated with new editions roughly every decade (on average). The general purpose of this handbook is to inform and educate new gen-

erations of school psychologists by providing comprehensive literature reviews in all of the academic subareas that contribute to the development of school psychology research and practice. The long-standing tradition is to solicit one chapter for each academic subarea discussed in the handbook.

This author was asked by the editors to write a chapter summarizing multicultural issues, problems, and interventions in school psychology. However, knowing this author's reputation of publishing data-based conclusions and/or arguments that *contradict* social justice ideology, the editors elected to publish a second chapter that would better harmonize with social justice advocacy. The editors privately admitted to this author that there are established, empirically undeniable conclusions on multicultural issues that blatantly *contradict* core social justice principles and practices. Yet, they sheepishly admitted that publication of a chapter that "stuck close to the data" – without publication of a "counterpoint" chapter – would likely offend and anger highly vocal social justice ideologues within the field. In short, the editors were willing to deviate from established tradition by publishing *two different chapters for the same topic* (e.g., see Clare, 2009; Frisby, 2009) – for the sole *political* purpose of avoiding criticism from the social justice wing of the field.

This incident illustrates the pernicious existence of a blatant lie believed by many. This lie holds that when it comes to contentious issues related to race, ethnicity, and schooling, there is *no objective truth*, but only *different (but equally valued) perspectives on the truth*. That is to say, there is no *absolute truth* based on standard principles of empirical investigation.

***Fear of Anticipated Protests*** In a third incident, this author submitted for publication to *School Psychology Review* an article that essentially argued that the concept of "black cultural learning styles" – as an explanation for black school failure – was conceptually and empirically bankrupt (Frisby, 1993a). The article was accepted for publication following the normal manuscript peer review process. Before publication, however, the editor worried that the article would offend the militant multicultural wing of school psychology. As a pre-emptive strike, the editor solicited commentaries from scholars known for their support of black learning styles (as a viable construct for explaining school failure among black students) – despite its utter failure to gain any serious traction among educational psychologists (e.g., see Kane & Boan, 2005; Lilienfeld et al., 2012). Although the editors permitted this author to publish a reply to these commentaries (e.g., see Frisby, 1993b), it does not negate the fact that the intent of publishing such commentaries in the first place *was not because of their substantive merit in their own right*, but merely to placate the anticipated anger of multicultural ideologues within the field.

## 2. Glib References to "Scholarly Standards" Are Little More Than a Rhetorical Device

In the initial stages of negotiations about the special series (as discussed in Part 1), the SPF editor portrayed himself as a hard-nosed empiricist that was not easily

swayed by social justice advocacy – even going so far as to reject negative comments from ideologues on the editorial board against this author’s target article.

Unfortunately, these turned out to be hollow and empty words. When all was said and done, and the editor found himself under the pressure of a hostile editorial board, he condemned this author’s rebuttal to the negative commentaries as “unscholarly.” This provided the cover needed to justify nonpublication of a manuscript against which the board and negative commentaries had no rebuttals. When evaluated in light of double standards in how the negative commentaries were handled, the charge of being “unscholarly” was laughable. To wit, what is “scholarly” about multicultural leaders in school psychology refusing to “step up to the plate” to defend their writings in print when solicited for the series? What is “scholarly” about publishing commentaries from students who did not even bother to read the book they were assigned to critique? What is “scholarly” about allowing graduate students to write a commentary on content about which they had no expertise or documented publications? What is “scholarly” about permitting graduate students to accuse a book of “having no data,” when in fact it does? What is “scholarly” about an editorial board not holding these graduate students responsible for providing concrete examples of these accusations? What is “scholarly” about writing a review of a book that is nothing more than a summary of one’s own research that had nothing to do with the book’s content? What is “scholarly” about an editor arbitrarily dictating to one side of a debate what arguments and data they are not allowed to use? What is “scholarly” about the editorial board basing their negative evaluation of a book on the observation that it offends students’ “woke” sensibilities?

At the time of this writing, it has been roughly 10 years since MPNMS was initially published, and the book *still has not been reviewed by anyone in school psychology*. In making this statement, this author does not mean “still has not been positively reviewed.” Whether or not a reviewer gives a positive or negative review of a book is not the main point of what is problematic about this case study. This statement simply means that school psychology, as a profession, has provided no evidence that *it takes seriously* the full range of relevant issues that are implicated in serving minority students in schools.

When a journal editor is assigned the task of putting together commentaries for a target book or article, *the minimum* that is required is for authors to actually read the target article or book, demonstrate that they understand the arguments/data provided by the target article or book, and then provide arguments/data in agreement or disagreement in response to what has been read (for an excellent example of this process, see *Brain and Behavioral Sciences*, vol. 38). Nothing even remotely resembling this process occurred in this case study.

### **3. On Sensitive Racial Matters, Posing and Posturing Is a Poor Substitute for Actual Investigative Research**

The membership of school psychology, like all organizations devoted to training school support personnel (e.g., school speech and language therapists, school social workers, school counselors), is predominantly white. As a result, these organizations must be extra careful not to upset its nonwhite constituencies by doing anything on behalf of the organization that would run the risk of being accused of

“racism” or “cultural insensitivity” (see Warne chapter 17, this text). To do so, they must raise a moistened finger to the prevailing social winds to identify (and jump on board with) current fashionable social narratives involving racial issues. In current times, “social justice” and “critical race theory” are the hot and trendy topics that everyone seems to be talking about (National Association of School Psychologists, 2021; Tanaka et al., 2022; Woods et al., 2021). This causes organizations to outdo one another in making ostentatious pronouncements of how they are vehemently against racism (García-Vázquez, n.d.), are tireless supporters of anti-racism and social justice efforts (e.g., see Crowell et al., 2017), and support diversity/equity/inclusion advocacy (Akbar & Parker, 2021).

Hence, a large part of what organizations label as “multicultural training” is little more than an extensive program of *posing and posturing on racial matters* – not because its content contributes anything to helping actual children in schools but because its content serves as a strategic public relations move necessary for cultivating the perception of being “one of the cool kids at the popular lunch table” on racial issues.

The SPF editor’s charge of “unscholarliness” toward viewpoints that challenge this posturing easily provides the convenient cover needed to deflect attention away from the fact that the SPF board (and the negative commentaries) were *unable to refute this author’s arguments*. Such tactics are not new, but seem to occur whenever the subject matter involves inconvenient truths about race and education from which practitioners need protection.

A school psychology colleague, who was privy to the particulars of this case study, opined that the hostile reaction of the SPF editorial board can be attributed to the fact that the school psychology profession is made up of predominantly “dogooder white females.” Although this author understands the intent of this colleague’s statement, this opinion is more descriptive than it is explanatory. That is to say, adherence to truth (in the face of opposition) is an intellectual and character trait that is not, in principle, necessarily correlated with gender or skin color. For example, Professor Linda Gottfredson and writer Heather MacDonald are both world-class intellectuals – one a scholar on intelligence research and the other a researcher and writer on contentious topics surrounding racial disproportionality statistics. They both are also white females. Throughout her career, Prof. Gottfredson has tirelessly defended the integrity of intelligence research in the face of vicious critics who have attempted (unsuccessfully) to block her academic promotions, shut down her grant funding, and label her work as “racist” (Gottfredson, 2010; Southern Poverty Law Center, n.d.). Heather MacDonald’s numerous writings have brought much-needed clarity and clear thinking on highly contentious and racially polarizing topics involving policing, crime statistics, and diversity issues in higher education (MacDonald, 2016, 2018, 2020).

The preference for posing and posturing on racial issues, instead of paying attention to actual investigative research, is the reason why informative outcomes from quality field research are blocked from being translated to schools. As an example, Thomas Sowell, the eminent economist ([Thomas Sowell: Common Sense in a Senseless World – Full Video – YouTube](#)), published a book in 1986 that provided

details of his field study of high-achieving black schools of the time. His study involved personal visits to schools and the study of archival data dating before the turn of the century. He writes:

*What are the 'secrets' of such successful schools? The biggest secret is that there are no secrets, unless work is secret. Work seems to be the only four-letter word that cannot be used in public today. Aside from work and discipline, the various successful schools for minority children have had little in common with one another – and even less in common with the fashionable educational theories of our times. Some of these schools were public, some were private. Some were secular and some were religious...Some of these schools were housed in old rundown buildings and others in new, modern facilities. Some of their principals were finely attuned to the social and political nuances, while others were blunt people who could not have cared less about such things and would have failed Public Relations One. None of these successful schools had a curriculum especially designed for blacks...For all I know, there may be some Afrocentric schools that are doing well. The point here is simply that this has not been an essential ingredient in the successful education of minority students...The point is that the social visions of the day have not been essential ingredients in educational success. (Sowell, 1986, 87–89)*

How was this research received once these results became public? Sowell (1986) writes:

*When I first published this information in 1974, those few educators who responded at all dismissed the relevance of these findings by saying that these were 'middle class' children and therefore their experience was not 'relevant' to the education of low-income minority children. Those who said this had no factual data on the incomes or occupations of the parents of these children – and I did. The problem, however, was not that these dismissive educators did not have evidence. The more fundamental problem was that they saw no need for evidence. According to their dogmas, children who did well on standardized tests were middle class. These children did well on such tests, therefore they were middle class. (p. 80)*

As reported in Frisby & Reynolds (2005), educational anthropologist John Ogbu received a similar reaction to his field research. Ogbu and his research team were invited to study factors behind the low academic performance of black students attending public schools in the affluent Ohio suburb of Shaker Heights (Ogbu, 2003). Their results were startling in their simplicity and common sense. Although black students (from elementary to high school) verbally endorsed the importance of high educational aspirations, many admitted that they did not work hard to achieve academic goals (and attributed similar behaviors to their black peers). In addition, many admitted having attitudes and behaviors that were disruptive and not conducive to school success. Although black students' parents were middle class and professional, they lacked adequate involvement in their children's education (e.g., they did not supervise homework closely, failed to teach their children appropriate uses for time, failed to shield their children from negative peer pressures, as well as adopted poor methods of motivating their children).

The response to this conclusion by the National Urban League (one of the nation's oldest civil rights organizations) was swift, dismissive, and defensive. The Ogbu data were dismissed outright and maligned as "blaming the victims of racism" and replaced with the assertion that lower black achievement rates can be attributed

instead to the “racist attitudes of teachers” and their “lowered expectations” for black students (National Urban League, 2002).

Nothing has changed in the kneejerk reactions from the “education establishment” in the 40+ years since Sowell conducted his field research. This author pointed out to the Worrell/Educational Research Seminar (2015) group the disconnect between the psychological theories they believed to be the mark of serious scholarship and the stark reality of public schools in their own backyard – as excerpted below is a verbatim passage from the unpublished rebuttal (Frisby, 2015b):

*If these students were to simply look in their own back yard, then they would readily see that educators in the Berkeley public schools struggle from the same real-world racial problems as vividly discussed and documented in [MPNMS]. Like other schools around the country, Berkeley schools fret over the overrepresentation of black students being suspended (Oakley, 2013). The school achievement of blacks is so low, that back in 2009 district officials actually considered a proposal to shut down Berkeley High School’s science labs because too many white students (and not enough black students) attended them (Klein, 2009). Despite being one of the most liberal/progressive cities in the country, the Berkeley schools experience the same racial academic achievement gaps, racial tensions, racial conflicts and political overtures for racial appeasement as any other city in the country (Dugdale, 2015; Hoge, 2005; Levin, 2009; Noguera & Wing, 2006; Varon, 2014). If the Berkeley graduate students suddenly found themselves in positions as paid consultants to the Berkeley Unified Schools, how would knowledge of “cultural bias theory”, “cultural mistrust theory”, “cultural ecological theory”, or “cultural identity theory” solve these problems in any practical sense?*

Although this author did not collect his own actual field research for MPNMS, the next best strategy was to include several published examples of first-person accounts of dismal conditions that are commonplace in many troubled schools. These were openly mocked by the seminar students – being derisively dismissed as “distracting,” having “no real purpose,” resembling little more than “various complaints that political conservatives have used to demonize political correctness and liberalism,” “petty unrelated beefs with the world,” and illogical and only “loosely connected to his arguments” (Worrell/Educational Research Seminar, 2015, pp. 112–113).

There is a painful reality that is revealed by this case study. That is, those who yell most loudly about their deep concern for finding successful interventions for the problems of minority students in schools are the very same persons *who couldn’t care less about real-world solutions* – particularly when those solutions contradict sacred sociopolitical ideologies and philosophies.

#### 4. Editorial Dishonesty Usually Backfires

Suppression of scholarship related to controversial topics or unpopular ideas is well-documented all throughout human history (Stevens et al., 2020). Stevens et al. (2020) articulate a useful distinction between *rejection* of scholarship and *suppression* of scholarship. The process of rejecting scholarship (in the form of an article, book, or grant proposals) occurs when an idea has been explored and the evidence has been found to be substandard or wanting or when there is overwhelming counter-evidence that refutes ideas. In contrast, suppression occurs when there is a fear of

certain ideas or empirical findings from being explored and presented in scientific or public forums.

MPNMS is the first text of its kind, oriented toward school psychologists, that has aggressively challenged multicultural orthodoxy in the field. Upon its publication, it was roundly ignored by the school psychology elite. When the school psychology elite was eventually confronted with having to respond in print to its contents, nearly all of the responses (save one) indicated that they had no awareness as to the content of the other chapters. Based solely on one chapter – that is, the chapter critiquing multiculturalism ideology – many students and scholars within the field were shocked, appalled, and angered – which left them embarrassed, flat-footed, and tongue-tied.

As detailed in Part 1, school psychology (viz., *School Psychology Forum*) was given a fair opportunity to respond to MPNMS with a scholarly defense of the various ideas and practices challenged by the entire book (not just one chapter). As detailed in this case study, most of the solicited commentators did not bother to read and digest the book's arguments in its entirety. They preferred instead to respond with a recitation of their own research (which bore no relationship to the contents of the book), viewing the book through the lens of cultural Marxist concepts, or responded with derision and outright mockery. Even though the editor initially agreed to publish this author's rebuttals to the commentaries in the planning stages for the series, the editorial board – contrary to their role as neutral arbiters of a debate – sided with the negative commentaries and prevented the rebuttal from being published. According to Stevens et al. (2020), this process illustrates “suppression masquerading as rejection” – where an editorial board uses rejection of a manuscript as a cover for the fact that it wants ideas/arguments to be suppressed from consideration by school psychologists. This is dishonesty.

Dishonesty is unfortunately a frequent but unwelcome part of science, since it is unavoidable as a universal shortcoming of human nature. Thus, dishonesty can rear its ugly head during all phases of the scientific process – from theory generation, to hypothesis generation and testing, to applying statistical methodology to results, to interpreting results, to submitting work for editorial review, to the application of standards for accepting/rejecting manuscripts, and finally to how scientific results are hyped/not hyped in the popular press (Ritchie, 2020).

Despite this fact, dishonesty tends to eventually be exposed, thanks to the self-corrective nature of science. As examples, in the nature vs. nurture wars in psychology, dishonesty and fraud were eventually exposed from researchers on both sides of this debate (Jensen, 1989, 1991). In more extreme cases, the exposure of academic dishonesty has led to researchers having their reputations destroyed and losing their jobs (Ritchie, 2020).

For persons who are likewise victims of editorial malfeasance in the publication process, the immediate and natural first response would be to lodge a formal complaint with the ethics board for the guild that sponsors a journal. In this particular case, however, NASP is a small, insular, and ideologically homogeneous guild where everyone knows each other and has served, at one time or another, on each other's boards and internal committees. In such contexts, SPF was undoubtedly sure

to touch base with the “powers-that-be” before composing and issuing the publication rejection letter – making sure in its wording that SPF would be protected and complainants would have a difficult time receiving a fair hearing. Expecting NASP to fairly recognize the editorial dishonesty in this context would be analogous to expecting the mafia to bring Al Capone under citizen’s arrest.

In the long view, the better response is to approach an honest publication outlet that “says what it means and means what it says.” Following the principle that sunlight is the best disinfectant, audiences can see with their own eyes, without spin, how political corruption works in the journal publishing process. If SPF had been honest in its publishing practices, the rebuttal would have been published (pursuant to its original agreement with this author). This would have given SPF readers the opportunity to evaluate the merit of all arguments, contribute their own thoughts, and spur greater discussion within the field on ideas related to meeting the psycho-educational needs of minority populations in schools. At worst, the series would have been read by few within the field, and the discussion would simply have died a slow death. In this author’s opinion, the biggest losers in this debacle are future generations of school psychologists, who will be more ignorant and uninformed (on issues related to race and education) after graduating from their training programs than when they entered their programs.

Due to their editorial dishonesty, however, the eventual consequence is that the debate has been exposed to a much wider psychological audience – serving as an example to other publication outlets of *how not to handle controversial ideas in psychological science*. Airing this case study also serves to inform graduate students of what often happens “behind the scenes” in the editorial process that attempt to control ideas to which students are exposed. The unfortunate lesson here is that school psychology students must search outside of school psychology publishing outlets for obtaining accurate research on controversial content areas.

## Conclusion

There is nothing strange, elusive, or exotic about what is needed to assist American-born, English-speaking minority children to succeed in educational settings. If children develop mental health or special education problems, school psychologists (as well as other school support professionals) are trained to deliver services directly to children, work with teachers on behalf of their students, and refer children to outside services if they are not available in schools.

There are no secret “racialized” prescriptions for school success, as success in the standard curriculum requires only a minimum level of cognitive ability, the discipline to control one’s behavior in the classroom, consistency in comprehending and completing homework and in-class assignments on a regular basis, and school-wide supports for students who are not adept at speaking standard English. The school climate needs to be reasonably free of danger, chaos, and mayhem; and students need to feel safe while inside school and traveling between home to school

and back. If these conditions are significantly compromised in racial, language, or ethnic minority populations, the special education, school psychology, educational psychology, and curriculum/instructional literature is more than adequate in providing material for instructional and mental health interventions. There are several dozen published examples of regular and charter schools who have defied the odds to provide exemplary academic experiences for vulnerable minority children in troubled communities.

Unfortunately, educators, school counselors, and psychologists (as well as the entities that train them) are seduced by the siren song of Philosophy no. 1 (see Material under previous heading “Social Science and the Nature of Reality”) – which teaches as its central tenet: “If you know a student’s race, you know the student and how they are to be served.” Philosophy no. 1 promises to be the key that unlocks the mysteries of minority school failure – while supposedly bestowing on its devotees “cultural competence.”

In reality, however, Philosophy no. 1 is an intellectually lazy and destructive ideology that has led to massive lawsuits (Murawski, 2021; Rufo, 2021; Scott, 2021), teacher resignations (Fox News, 2021; Gregson, 2022), parent protests (Anderson, 2021; Brown, 2021; McClallen, 2022), blowback from minority parents (DeGregory, 2021; Sky News Australia, 2021), increased racial strife in schools (Klein, 2021), the relaxing of fair school discipline practices (ostensibly for the sake of racial “equity”) leading to *increased* discipline problems (Flanders & Goodnow, 2018; Kersten, 2017; Kersten & Anderson, 2017; MacDonald, 2018), and state legislatures passing laws to ban the teaching of its tenets (CRT, “anti-racism”) in schools and classrooms (Dutton, 2021; Greene, 2022).

At the time of this writing, the electronic journal *School Psychology Forum* has ceased publication (General Issue ([nasponline.org](https://nasponline.org))). Whether or not readers view this as a cause for celebration or regret most likely varies as a function of how the journal has addressed various topics over its publishing life. No doubt there are some controversial debate topics that have received a fair airing in the journal. *Controversies related to racial issues and schooling are not one of them.* As Inbar and Lammers (2015) write:

*Individual scientists will be biased by their values, but this bias is mitigated as long as there is a diverse scientific community that critically examines their conclusions...But when some views are systematically excluded, a scientific field is likely to pursue biased research questions and produce biased conclusions. (p. 30)*

Inbar and Lammers are correct, but this important principle falls on deaf ears in school psychology.

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# Chapter 17

## Censorship in an Educational Society: A Case Study of the National Association for Gifted Children



Russell T. Warne 

Socrates vs. his Athenian accusers. Galileo vs. the Inquisition. Famous tales of censorship of scholars can fall into the pattern of an enlightened mind fighting against an evil, oppressive society that wishes to silence them. These stories are vivid, and the dramatic image of one person standing before a tribunal to defend their ideas provides a kind of folklore that reinforces the scientific community's ideal that its members should fearlessly pursue and defend truth.

Retellings, though, often overlook the perspective of the opponents, who sincerely believed that they were doing good for their society. If Meletus really was concerned that Socrates was corrupting the youth of Athens and introducing false gods, then stopping the philosopher would be a moral duty. To do otherwise would be to risk the wrath of the gods or permit Athens to slide into degeneracy. The officials of the Catholic Church saw Galileo's heliocentric teachings as contradicting Biblical teaching and undermining faith in scripture, thereby weakening Christian society during the critical period of the Counter-Reformation. Rather than playing a stereotypical role of a villain, these opponents of free inquiry were real people who acted out of concern for the perceived negative consequences of these ideas. What these examples have in common is these actions met the definition of censorship: "...the suppression of words, images, or ideas that are 'offensive,' [and this] happens whenever some people succeed in imposing their personal, political, or more values on others" (American Civil Liberties Union, 2020, para. 1).

Unfortunately, the moral impulse to protect society from dangerous ideas is a persistent characteristic of human psychology. From an evolutionary perspective, moralistic thinking is not dependent on religious belief, nor is it a quaint characteristic of past societies that were unenlightened by modern science and technology. Moral thinking is the product of evolutionary mechanisms that foster cooperation,

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enforce conformity with a group, and strengthen communities in their Darwinian competition against other communities (Haidt, 2012). If this is correct, then moralistic thinking is a deeply engrained part of human nature that leads to—among other ills for society—dichotomous “us vs. them” thinking that can lead to strong and emotionally driven opposition to ideas that threaten one’s values (Lukianoff & Haidt, 2018).

Moralistic thinking may explain the recent visceral reactions on secular college campuses to people, actions, and ideas that do not provoke such a reaction in broader society. The mere presence of libertarian or conservative speakers has generated controversy, such as the riot at Middlebury College in response to Charles Murray’s visit and the mob at Claremont McKenna College that prevented people from attending a talk by Heather Mac Donald (see Mac Donald, 2018). The inciting incidents of some of these controversies seem trivial to outsiders. At Yale University, a faculty member’s email stating that students did not need guidance from the school’s diversity staff to make choices about their Halloween costumes led to 150 students confronting the faculty member and her husband in an incident that was caught on video and went viral (Lukianoff & Hadit, 2018). At Evergreen State College, biology professor Bret Weinstein wrote an email questioning a university request for white students and faculty to stay off campus for its Day of Absence, resulting in students storming his class and later marching on the university administration building to confront the university president, preventing the latter from leaving the room—even to use the bathroom. Later armed bands of students freely roamed campus in search of “white supremacists” (Lukianoff & Haidt, 2018).

These controversies are baffling at first glance. After all, the vast majority of people with similar political beliefs or social backgrounds to these students do not engage in such illiberal responses to ideas with which they disagree. These incidents make much more sense if they are seen as driven by a deeply felt impulse to guard against violation of the protesters’ moral code, secular though it may be (Lukianoff & Haidt, 2018). The frequent ties between a moral code and political views in modern American discourse merely mean that politically charged topics can trigger an underlying moral revulsion or rabid support in some people. The result is censorious behavior through intimidation, threats, or the “cancel culture” strategy of using social media pressure to damage the reputation or employment prospects of targets who hold differing beliefs (Haidt, 2012).

I encountered moralistic, emotionally driven thinking in my own experience of combating censorship in the National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC). This is not a Galilean or Socratic courtroom drama where I was forced to defend scientific findings to hostile, powerful authorities. Rather, this is a more mundane story of well-intentioned members of a scholarly community—driven by moralistic thinking—to pressure an association (with a membership that includes teachers, parents, and scholars) to undermine free inquiry and engage in censorship. The end result—after several twists and turns—was that the organization censored some of my work to keep it out of NAGC’s flagship journal. But it was a Pyrrhic victory for the activists, because it exacted a high cost from the organization and the journal in question as NAGC chose to embrace ideology over science.

I present in the next section an account that is drawn from my email records, publicly available documents (e.g., meeting minutes), audio recordings of meetings, emails obtained from open records requests, and documents and information passed to me from confidential informants. Although I was not privy to all the conversations and decisions of the activists who engaged in the censorship of my work, I believe that this account is sufficiently complete to reveal (1) who opposed open scholarly inquiry, (2) the tactics they engaged in, and (3) some of their motivations for doing so.

## Events

### *The Calm Before the Storm: November 2017–October 2018*

As a target of censorship, I am a quantitative psychologist by training who often publishes substantive research in gifted education and intelligence. I also have an interest in the history of my substantive fields, having published works on the history of gifted education and intelligence research (e.g., Gibbons & Warne, 2019; Warne, 2012; Warne et al., 2019, 2020; Warne & Liu, 2017). On November 11, 2017, I presented at NAGC's annual convention about the complicated and controversial legacy of Lewis Terman. Afterward, I met Dr. Jennifer L. Jolly for the first time. Together, she and I decided to pitch an idea for a special issue to the editors of *Gifted Child Quarterly* (*GCQ*), the premier journal in gifted education.

The topic of the proposed special issue was an examination of the work and legacy of Lewis Terman. Over 60 years after his death, Terman is recognized as a pioneer in gifted education, psychometrics, and educational psychology. A former president of the American Psychological Association (APA), he translated and revised Alfred Binet's intelligence test and expanded its difficulty range so that it could be used to identify highly intelligent examinees (Terman, 1916). This test development laid the foundation for his best-known work, the Genetic Studies of Genius, a longitudinal study of 1528 gifted children whom he labeled as "geniuses" after the children obtained high scores on the intelligence tests of the time (Seagoe, 1975). Lasting for 78 years, the study remains one of the longest-running longitudinal studies in the social sciences and is a landmark in gifted education, psychometrics, developmental psychology, and other disciplines (Hodges et al., *in press*; Warne, 2019). The target publication date for the special issue on the legacy of Terman was 2021, coinciding with the 100th anniversary of the commencement of the Genetic Studies of Genius. The goal in this proposal was to critically examine Terman's work and legacy and allow scholars with modern perspectives to explore and interrogate a critical chapter in the history of gifted education.

The editors were enthusiastic about the proposed special issue, and all seemed to be well. In the meantime, I developed my presentation into a paper and, on January 7, 2018, submitted it to *GCQ*, where it was accepted on August 15, 2018, after three

rounds of peer review. The article appeared online on October 14, 2018, and in the January 2019 print edition of *GCQ*. The message of the article (and the November 2017 presentation) was that Terman's scientific work has relevance in the twenty-first century but that his strong opinions on scholarly topics were often supported by weak data—or no data at all.

### ***Initial Storm: November 2018–January 2019***

The reaction to the advance online publication of my article (Warne, 2019) “An Evaluation (and Vindication?) of Lewis Terman: What the Father of Gifted Education Can Teach the 21st Century” provided the first signal that something was amiss. The article drew controversy because of Terman's involvement with the early twentieth-century eugenics movement.<sup>1</sup> My article condemned Terman's eugenic beliefs in no uncertain terms, but some members of the scholarly community took umbrage of the publication of an article that portrayed any aspect of Terman and his work in anything less than completely negative terms.<sup>2</sup> Multiple activist-scholars stated that the fact that my article (Warne, 2019) could be published showed that there was something deficient in *GCQ*'s policies and/or the review process (e.g., D. Y. Ford, personal communication, November 28, 2018; R. Islas, personal communication, November 28, 2018). Special exception was taken with the word “vindication” in the title even if a question mark was included (J. L. Davis et al., personal communication, November 18, 2018; D. Y. Ford, personal communication, November 28 & 29, 2018; R. Islas, personal communication, November 28, 2018). The text of the article clearly indicated that it was some of Terman's scientific ideas—not his social beliefs—that were often vindicated by later research. Despite the controversy the article sparked, no one has ever claimed that there were factual inaccuracies in the article or that I misinterpreted the historical record.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>The early twentieth-century eugenics movement was an international social movement that attempted to use the new principles of Darwin's theory of evolution to make actions that beneficial traits would encourage humans to pass on beneficial traits to their offspring at higher rates than unfavorable traits. The goal was to improve the genetic heritage of future generations. In every country where it took root, socially and politically powerful groups claimed that they had beneficial genes, and marginalized groups (often racial or ethnic minorities or people living in poverty) had traits that should not be passed on (Broberg & Roll-Hansen, 2005; Stepan, 1991). Eugenic actions took a variety of forms in different countries, including forced sterilizations in the United States. In Chap. 32 of my book *In the Know: Debunking 35 Myths About Human Intelligence* (Warne, 2020), I provided a brief introduction to how the twentieth-century eugenics ties to the history of intelligence research; Kevles (1995) has a description of the broader history of the American eugenics movement.

<sup>2</sup>At the time of this writing in December 2020, the article has been cited 22 times (according to Google Scholar), making it the third most cited article published in *GCQ* in 2019. All the citations are neutral or positive in tone.

<sup>3</sup>It is not clear why my perspective on Terman's life and legacy was acceptable to NAGC for its convention in 2017 but not acceptable for publication in *GCQ* in 2018. Possibly *GCQ* was a more

As the process to announce and plan for the special issue was underway, nobody objected initially. The *GCQ* editors, Jill Adelson and Michael Matthews, issued their written report to NAGC's publications editor and the NAGC board of directors regarding the special issue in October 2018 (J. L. Adelson & M. S. Matthews, personal communication, November 12, 2020), and at the in-person board meeting (which Jolly attended) on November 14, 2018, during the NAGC national convention in Minneapolis, Minnesota, no one raised concerns about the special issue. The attendees at the *GCQ* editorial board meeting held 2 days later also expressed no objections to the special issue at the time (J. L. Adelson & M. S. Matthews, personal communication, November 26, 2018; M. S. Matthews, personal communication, November 28, 2018). The same day the NAGC publications committee also discussed the special issue and voiced support for the special issue (J. L. Adelson & M. S. Matthews, personal communication, November 12, 2020).

The progress toward the special issue came to an immediate halt on November 18, 2018, when 14 individuals called the Diversity and Equity Alliance<sup>4</sup> that sent a memo to NAGC president Sally Krisel, the then-NAGC executive director Rene Islas, and the NAGC association editor Scott Peters. In the memo, the signatories denounced my article (Warne, 2019) and called for NAGC to:

actively address an equity, diversity, and inclusion agenda throughout all of the organization's work....such an agenda is the ONLY agenda that can be promoted or endorsed by a national dues-paying organization that openly and appropriately states that giftedness exists in all communities. (J. L. Davis et al., personal communication, November 18, 2018)

The proposed special issue of *GCQ* about Terman's work was not mentioned explicitly in the memo. But at a subsequent meeting that this group had with the NAGC board less than 2 weeks later via conference call, one vocal member of the Diversity and Equity Alliance confirmed that the special issue was one of the reasons they wrote the memo promoting more equity initiatives (D. Y. Ford, personal communication, November 28, 2018), and the proposed special issue dominated discussion in several later NAGC conference calls and meetings.

At the two conference calls held on November 28 and 29, 2018, some non-board members (*GCQ* editors and the members of the Diversity and Equity Alliance) were invited to attend and voice their views. On November 30, the board and NAGC leaders met via conference call to discuss the Terman special issue further and vote about how to handle the *GCQ* special issue. After further discussion, the NAGC board voted to support a motion that read: "The Board opposes the *GCQ* Special issue that deals with the launching of the first longitudinal study in the field of gifted education that was led by Lewis Terman." The vote was unanimous.<sup>5</sup>

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prominent forum for this work than a presentation at the convention.

<sup>4</sup>The memo, including the full list of signatories, is available from our document repository at <https://osf.io/csg3f/>.

<sup>5</sup>Jolly, who had begun a term on the NAGC board in September 2018, recused herself from voting on this motion and any other regarding the special issue because of her conflict of interest as co-guest editor on the special issue.

The board's motion upset some senior scholars in the field, and they wrote letters in support of the special issue and asked the board to reverse itself. The first of these was the school psychologist (and future APA president) Frank Worrell, whose four-page letter dated December 10, 2018, was a defense of academic freedom. Worrell also wrote about the importance of studying and learning from the past, and he noted that the call for papers for the special issue clearly welcomed different perspectives (F. Worrell, personal communication, December 10, 2018). The next month, three former editors of *GCQ* sent letters protesting the NAGC board's decision (C. Callahan, personal communication, January 9, 2019; D. B. McCoach, personal communication, January 8, 2019; A. Robinson, personal communication, January 7, 2019). Additionally, there was confusion among board members about what, exactly, they voted on. It was not clear whether the vote was a statement of opposition or that the vote was merely a statement that the proposed special issue lacked support (e.g., J. Jolly, personal communication, December 17, 2018; J. Plucker, personal communication, November 30, 2018), and the consequences of the vote were not clear.

In response to the letters and to resolve the ambiguity, the NAGC board reconvened via conference call on January 10 and 11, 2019. At these meetings, the majority of the NAGC board voted on a resolution expressing their lack of support for the special issue but—in accordance with written NAGC policy—leaving the decision of the special issue's fate in the hands of the *GCQ* editors. A few days later, one of those editors informed me and Jolly that the special issue would proceed (J. L. Adelson, personal communication, January 14, 2019).

As a result of the *GCQ* editors' decision, the then-NAGC president met via a conference call with the *GCQ* editors and others. Among the topics was a request for a blog post by the special issue's guest editors explaining the purpose of the issue and why it is important to investigate Terman's work over six decades after his death (J. L. Adelson, personal communication, January 22, 2019). The call for papers (with minor revisions to emphasize my and Jolly's desire to receive manuscripts critical of Terman's work) was re-issued publicly on January 30, 2019, 1 day after most of the *GCQ* editorial board learned of the *GCQ* editors' decision.

### ***The Eye of the Hurricane: February 2019–Mid-May 2020***

All seemed resolved for a time, but remnants of the controversy lingered. The blog post that the then-NAGC president had requested from the *GCQ* special issue guest editors failed to be published on NAGC's website (a decision she made with NAGC then-president-elect Jonathan Plucker and NAGC interim executive director at the time, Jane Clarenbach). In contrast, three opponents of the special issue were allowed to publish a blog post about their opposition to what they called "the 'un'special issue.'" The authors of the piece not only had their work published by NAGC with minimal changes, but the organization allowed them to misrepresent the nature of the special issue. For example, the issue was billed as "devoted to the

commemoration of Lewis M. Terman’s longitudinal study” and a “resurrection of Terman’s work” (Trotman Scott et al., 2019, para. 2), even though these authors had been informed several times that the special issue’s purpose was—according to the call for papers—to “interrogate a number of issues and topics in relation to the longitudinal study over the past century and to interpret Terman’s complicated legacy” (“The Terman Longitudinal Study: A Century of Findings, Questions, and Controversy,” 2019, para. 1). Contrary to this public call for multiple perspectives, Trotman Scott et al. (2019) also claimed that in the special issue, “only one perspective is shared and promoted and that perspective is biased because it focuses on and promotes the status quo.”

Trotman Scott et al. (2019) also negatively characterized the special issue’s content *even though not one proposal or manuscript had been submitted*. The blog post authors continued to make assertions that misrepresented the call for proposals, including the idea that the special issue “supports the notion of superiority of one race. Does not take into account the lived experience of students from culturally different backgrounds” or “blames and places the burden on the victim/accused and denies and diminishes the negative impact of discriminatory practices” (Trotman Scott et al., 2019, paras. 15, 17). This “battle of the blog posts” showed not only NAGC’s decision to censor me and the other guest editor but also to host and promote opponents of the special issue—even as the latter stated falsehoods.<sup>6</sup>

A related controversy was in relation to my (Warne, 2019) article. As is typical for *GCQ* authors, I received an invitation in November 2018 to make a video summarizing his article about Terman’s legacy, which I did quickly. After 3 months, I was informed by phone on February 21, 2019, that *GCQ* would not use my video to publicize the article because of the controversy surrounding the article.<sup>7</sup> Moving forward, NAGC decided that it would not publish *any* videos about *GCQ* articles (even articles unrelated to Terman), a policy that remains in place as of this writing.

Another point of contention arose from my decision in March 2019 to file open records requests to access emails concerning the special issue and my article (Warne, 2019) in an effort to understand the full extent of the controversy. At no point did anyone at NAGC invite me to any meetings in which the special issue or my article was on the agenda, nor did anyone contact me to inquire about my goals for exploring Terman’s work. Additionally, no one with concerns about my (Warne, 2019) article contacted me directly to inform me of their viewpoints about my work. Instead, I was forced to get all my information secondhand and was never given the opportunity to explain my position to decision-makers. The open records requests

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<sup>6</sup>The blog post has an undercurrent of unintentional comedy. In the text, Trotman Scott et al. (2019) make an acrostic of the word “unspecial” to describe the special issue with the words “unhelpful/unusable,” “negligent,” “separatist,” “polemic,” “eugenics,” “culturally unresponsive/assaultive,” “ill-informed research,” “accusatory,” and “lies.” This is the first acrostic that I have ever seen from adults, let alone adults who think they are making a serious scholarly argument. The blog post’s publication on April Fools’ Day seemed appropriate.

<sup>7</sup>I uploaded the video to my own YouTube account on the same day. It can be viewed at [https://youtu.be/ieX35r0\\_zHU](https://youtu.be/ieX35r0_zHU).

went nowhere, and as the special issue seemed to be on track, I declined to pursue the issue. Building on a discussion about the open records requests during the March 2019 meeting, the NAGC board held a meeting via conference call on July 11, 2019. Neither I nor the *GCQ* editors were informed of or invited to participate in this call. According to the minutes for the meeting posted on NAGC's website, one of the actions that occurred was a discussion of these open records requests. The NAGC board voted whether "to request GCQ editors to review the Warne's [sic] actions taken related to multiple open records requests of the Board of Directors and others, and to consider removal of Dr. Warne as special guest editor." The motion failed 6–5, with 1 abstention.

Despite actions by the NAGC board and people opposed to the special issue, by the May 15, 2019, deadline, scholars had submitted 12 abstracts for consideration.<sup>8</sup> The authors ran the gamut from graduate students and early career scholars to experienced researchers from inside and outside of gifted education. The proposals included a range of topics and methodologies. Because the abstracts were all of high quality, Jolly and I invited the authors of all 12 abstracts to submit full manuscripts. Ten of these abstracts developed into manuscripts that were submitted by September 2019 and sent out for peer review. Five of them were eventually accepted, with the last author notified of acceptance by May 15, 2020. Postproduction continued apace, and the first article (Simonton, 2020) appeared online on May 22, 2020.

### *Brunt of the Storm: Late May 2020–July 2020*

However, everything changed on May 25, 2020, when the tragic death of George Floyd occurred during his arrest in Minneapolis, Minnesota. The horrific scene of an African American man dying while a police officer's knee was on his neck as he states repeatedly, "I can't breathe," galvanized the nation. Protests against police brutality—especially when aimed at African Americans—and social inequalities erupted, and many organizations announced support for racial justice, equity, and Black Lives Matter. Among these was NAGC, which released a statement on June 5, 2020, condemning racism and announcing that the organization was "committed to diversity, equity, supporting underserved populations, and have advocated the giftedness knows no boundaries" (Plucker & Segota, 2020, para. 3). The statement also said, "But we need to do much more. The time for action is now" (para. 4), and pledged that the organization would develop resources to address racism and further social justice.

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<sup>8</sup>An academic affiliated with York College of Pennsylvania who was opposed to the special issue wrote in an email to Trotman Scott about the "unspecial issue" blog post saying, "This is awesome!! It was really well written! I'm looking forward to seeing the impact it has on submissions" (K. Lewis, personal communication, April 1, 2019). The blog post did little—if anything—to discourage submissions to the special issue; the number of proposals was typical for special issues at *GCQ*.

Indeed, NAGC had taken action already by moving against the special issue. Before they released their statement, the organization contacted *GCQ*'s publishing company, SAGE. Per the request of NAGC executive director John Segota,<sup>9</sup> SAGE was instructed not to release the special issue's final four accepted articles online. The *GCQ* editors only learned about the decision when a SAGE staff member was confused about the publication of another manuscript (about a different topic and not related to the special issue) and asked whether the manuscript's online publication should also be delayed. The editors contacted Segota, who stated that it was a "misunderstanding" and that he had been unaware that all manuscripts are initially published online before being published in a print issue of *GCQ* (J. L. Adelson & M. S. Matthews, personal communication, July 25, 2020). But 2 weeks later, the special issue's remaining articles remained unpublished. Eventually, three introductions would be requested with the understanding that the remaining articles would not be published online without these introductions to provide context (J. L. Adelson & M. S. Matthews, personal communication, July 25, 2020). The special issue guest editors were to provide one, as were Worrell and the NAGC board. Only the introduction that I co-authored with the other guest editor (Jolly & Warne, 2020) was ever finished and submitted.

On July 14, 2020, the NAGC board released an "expanded vision" document (Plucker et al., 2020a) that fulfilled the June 6 statement's promise to do more. As an action plan for advocacy, it has much to admire. But there were several red flags to scholarly inquiry and free thought. The document pledged that all NAGC publications would be aligned with "anti-racism" and that content "adheres to anti-racist principles and guidelines for inclusivity as is free of implicit or explicit biases as a consequence of scientific racism and culturally responsive beliefs." While cloaked in virtuous language, this document was clear that only one perspective about social inequalities would be permitted at NAGC and that the organization would enforce conformity in its publications and stamp out anything that had the slightest whiff of what the organization called "scientific racism." Additionally, critical terms were nowhere defined in the document; it seemed that the meaning of "anti-racism" or "scientific racism" or "equity" would be whatever the NAGC board declared, and the board deputized itself to enforce its new guidelines. I immediately expressed my alarm privately. Still a board member at this time, Jolly expressed concerns to Plucker (who had by this time assumed the role of NAGC president) in an email, regarding the draft statement that the language opened the door to censorship (J. Jolly, personal communication, July 9, 2020). Jolly and I then waited to see what this new July 14 document would mean for the special issue.

I did not have to wait long. Just 3 days later, the *GCQ* editors were informed that there would be a NAGC board meeting on July 21, 2020, that would discuss the special issue and its alignment with NAGC's new equity goals (J. L. Adelson & M. S. Matthews, personal communication, July 25, 2020). Two weeks earlier, the

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<sup>9</sup>The NAGC executive director at the beginning of this odyssey had left the organization in December 2018.

*GCQ* editors sent the five accepted manuscripts to the NAGC president and executive director, who failed to forward them to board members. Realizing the day before the meeting that board members did not have the manuscripts or the guest editors' introduction, the *GCQ* editors took the initiative to share these with the NAGC board members. Of those board members who were able to read the manuscripts in the limited time before the meeting, none expressed any concerns about the content of the accepted special issue manuscripts (J. L. Adelson & M. S. Matthews, personal communication, July 25, 2020).

At the board meeting, the NAGC president cut off discussion of the special issue after 45 minutes and moved the board into a closed executive session to hold a vote, removing the *GCQ* editors from the conference call (J. L. Adelson & M. S. Matthews, personal communication, July 25, 2020). The vote did not permit a secret ballot; each member had to disclose their vote to all present. At the end of the meeting, the NAGC board voted to stop publication of the special issue—a decision in direct violation of ethical guidelines from the Committee on Publication Ethics (of which *GCQ* is a member), NAGC's own written policy, and the written contract between NAGC and the *GCQ* editors (J. L. Adelson & M. S. Matthews, personal communication, July 25, 2020). The vote was unanimous, except for Jolly's abstention.

The next day, NAGC announced the decision publicly, stating:

As we move forward, we must think hard about whom we honor, and both the direct and implicit messages sent by our actions. As NAGC strengthens its vision for equity and social justice, the Board believes that publishing a special issue of our academic journal on Terman's work does not appropriately represent our organizational values. (Plucker et al., 2020b, para. 5)

Jolly resigned from the NAGC board in protest the next day, and she and I allowed our NAGC memberships to lapse at the end of the month. I announced my departure from NAGC in my blog (<https://bit.ly/2X9QYVI>) and in an email to dozens of gifted education scholars (R. T. Warne, personal communication, July 30, 2020). In leaving, I warned my colleagues that NAGC was unlikely to use its censorship power only once and that the actions regarding the special issue were a dangerous precedent in the use of power to enforce ideology in NAGC publications (R. T. Warne, personal communication, July 30, 2020). I would be proven right very quickly.

### ***The Aftermath: August 2020–October 2020***

In the immediate aftermath of the board's vote, several developments occurred. It was determined that the accepted articles would appear in *GCQ* but spread out across three issues, instead of bundled in one. The legal counsel for the publisher (SAGE) recommended that a note should be appended to each article stating that it had been accepted under the purview of the guest editors for a special issue but that NAGC had cancelled the issue. The introductions that were to provide context for

the articles—including the completed one (Jolly & Warne, 2020)—would not be published. The remaining four articles were published online by July 29, 2020.

As I feared, though, the interference with editorial independence at *GCQ* continued. In August, the NAGC president requested that special issue articles should not be the “lead article” (i.e., first article) of the issue that they appear in (M. S. Matthews & J. L. Adelson, personal communication, August 31, 2020), with the exception of an article by David Lubinski and Camilla P. Benbow (in press). In response to the *GCQ* editors, I wrote in an email:

I really don't care what order the articles are published in, and I'm astounded that anyone does. On the other hand, the triviality itself makes me concerned about editorial independence at *GCQ* in the future. If the NAGC board and [the NAGC president] are willing to interfere with the order of publication of articles within an issue, then nothing is too trivial for them to interfere with. (R. T. Warne, personal communication, September 5, 2020)

Indeed, article order is a trivial matter, but my worries—unbeknownst to me or the *GCQ* editors—had already been vindicated. While the NAGC board was canceling the *GCQ* special issue on Lewis Terman work, another special issue was underway at *Teaching for High Potential (THP)*, NAGC's publication for practitioners. Under the guest editorship of Trotman Scott and Emily Mofield, this special issue's topic was curriculum for gifted learners from special populations. The issue was planned since January 2020, and by July, all the manuscripts had been submitted. During the process of review, one of the special issue editors exercised NAGC's new censorship power over two manuscripts. In an email to Mofield, she stated:

I do a lot of heavy editing...In this case, I was trying to help the authors because we have a message we want to share. In the case of Hahn, et al., [sic] I used this as a learning tool for her...the tone of the article has completely changed (and you know her) Do I think the authors will have a problem with the changes???? No. But they will certainly learn that their thought process was of deficit nature, and it really needs to be pointed out to them so that they are cognizant of their mindset. (M. Trotman Scott, personal communication, August 2, 2020, original punctuation retained)

The same day, Mofield emailed the article's first author, explaining that, “Some parts were edited to reflect a more strengths-based perspective toward CLD [culturally and linguistically diverse learners] as we are trying to shift away from deficit-based thinking around CLD.” While well intentioned, rather than have authors make changes based on feedback or defend the original wording, the guest editor used her power to change the text to ensure it would conform to the regnant ideology at NAGC.<sup>10</sup> The article was published in this altered form (Hahn et al., 2020).

Another example of censorship in *THP* was in an article written by Angela Novak and Myriah Miller (2020). The two cited sociologist Anna Rachel Terman. Despite the context making it clear that this was a scholar of Appalachian poets of color and definitely was not Lewis Terman, Trotman Scott objected on June 12, 2020, writing, “We cannot have Terman's name in this paper, especially since the

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<sup>10</sup>This censorship happened with the full knowledge of the regular *THP* editor, Jeff Danielian, though it is important to note that he is an employee of NAGC, whereas the *GCQ* editors are not.

SPN [Special Populations Network within NAGC] took such a hard stance against the special issue.” She added, “We cannot have the article” cited in the paper (M. Trotman Scott, personal communication, June 12, 2020). Novak quickly explained that she and her coauthor were citing a different Terman (A. Novak personal communication, July 12, 2020), but they still revised their text to refer to Anna Rachel Terman by her full name so no confusion with Lewis Terman could occur. While this is a minor example of censorship and no substantive ideas were dropped from the final article, such actions illustrate that even Lewis Terman’s name (regardless of the context in which it is used) has no place within NAGC publications, and there is no hesitation to require authors to conform to that position.

From the first inklings of controversy in November 2018 to this writing (in December 2020), it has been a long journey for me and for others involved in NAGC’s censorship controversies. As I look back, I am pleased that five excellent articles exploring different aspects of Lewis Terman’s work have and will be published, providing an opportunity for twenty-first-century scholars to grapple with the difficulties of the past. On the other hand, I am disappointed by the censorious turn that NAGC has taken, and I lament the organization’s rejection of free scholarly inquiry. The next section builds on the facts of the case and is an analysis of the documented motivations of the opponents to Terman special issue. In the final section, I offer the lessons that I learned from being a target of censorship in twenty-first-century academia.

## Analysis

In my analysis of hundreds of emails and documents, several hours of recordings, and the discussions I had with informants, a few recurring themes were apparent. These can be divided into two broad categories: (1) conflicts arising from the context of the mission of NAGC as it relates to controversial issues in the society and (2) strategies opponents used to limit free inquiry.

## Context

**Science vs. Advocacy** Some of the conflict between the proponents of unfettered scholarly inquiry and the censors in this story arises from the dual nature of the organization. NAGC is both an advocacy organization and a scholarly organization. Often, these two components of the organization work well together, such as when scholarly research informs policy positions or when NAGC lobbies the federal government for research funds.

But advocacy and science sometimes conflict. This is because activists start with a particular goal in mind—such as reducing racial inequalities in gifted

programs—and value activities that they believe will effectively achieve that goal. Scientists, however, are supposed to follow the data wherever it may lead them, and sometimes the results contradict activists’ motivating beliefs. Science does not always find perfect alignment with one’s ideological and social beliefs.

Moreover, the culture of ideological activists is at odds with the culture of science. Among other characteristics, ideological movements work to spread the ideology, accomplish social goals, suppress dissent, enforce conformity, and consider some ideas as off-limits to debate or critical investigation. In contrast, the culture of science values reasoned debate, empirical investigation of central beliefs, disinterested scholarship, and persuasion via logic and data (Frisby, 2013, p. 519). The process-oriented practices of science and the result-oriented goals of activism are also at odds with one another. Having activists and scientists in the same organization may make conflict inevitable.

One particular difference between the culture of scholarship and the culture of advocacy is highly relevant to the situation I describe in this chapter: the degree of comfort with nuance and contradictions. The activists who opposed the special issue all characterized Terman, my (Warne, 2019) article, and the special issue in a straightforward, simple manner. For the activists, some or all of these things were unequivocally bad, which is consistent with the tendency of ideologies to oversimplify the complexities of reality (Frisby, 2013). For example, in an email, one NAGC board member stated that Terman “was a known racist, point blank” (K. Collins, personal communication, June 10, 2020). Another NAGC board member wrote that the special issue would give “more air time to (vindicate) an eminent outspoken racist scholar whose research paved the way for and gives current credence to racist policies, biased use of instruments, and discriminatory practices” (T. Grantham, personal communication, November 11, 2019). In a conference call with the NAGC board, two participants called the special issue “toxic” (D. Y. Ford, personal communication, November 29, 2018; R. Islas, personal communication, November 29, 2018), one of whom also stated, “This is egregious. It is problematic” (D. Y. Ford, personal communication, November 29, 2018).

In contrast, those who supported the special issue had more nuanced views about these things. My (Warne, 2019) article on Terman acknowledged his eugenic beliefs, condemned them, but highlighted the man’s contradictions, including his opposition to racial discrimination in the United States. Warne (2019) likewise had a complex view of Terman as a scientist: criticizing him for his willingness to take a vocal position about a scientific topic without strong data to support his theories, but noting that some (though not all) of his views were supported by later research. In regard to the special issue, it was clearly explained to the activists multiple times that it would not be a celebration of Terman’s life. For example, in one of the conference calls, it was stated that the purpose of the special issue was to “interrogate” Terman’s work and legacy and that it was an opportunity to discuss the field’s history, progress, and current challenges (J. Jolly, personal communication, November

29, 2018). All four senior scholars who wrote letters to support the *GCQ* special issue (all of whom were current or former academic journal editors) also took similarly nuanced stances regarding these topics (C. Callahan, personal communication, January 9, 2019; D. B. McCoach, personal communication, January 8, 2019; A. Robinson, personal communication, January 7, 2019; F. Worrell, personal communication, December 10, 2018).

This controversy provided many more examples than can be detailed here. In hindsight, I am surprised that there are not more conflicts between the organization's two camps. I see NAGC's attempts to serve its multiple constituencies—parents, teachers, administrators, activists, and scientist-scholars—as one of the causes for the censorship attempts against the Terman special issue.

**Race Relations Context** More important to the genesis of the controversy regarding the Terman special issue of *GCQ* was the wider context of the history of race and current race relations in the United States. It is inevitable that discussing Terman in an open fashion would result in a conversation about his racist views. Jolly and I have both previously discussed Terman's views about racial and ethnic minorities in our scholarly writings about his works (Jolly, 2018; Warne, 2019) openly and unapologetically. Moreover, I strongly believed that discussing the legacy of Lewis Terman was incomplete without a discussion of his views regarding racial and ethnic minorities. These views are part of the wider history of both race relations and eugenics in the United States (Minton, 1988; Warne, 2020), and it is a disservice to ignore them when examining Terman's work or the early history of gifted education in general.

But race is one of the most divisive topics in American culture, and I discovered that sober analysis of a topic adjacent to one chapter of America's ugly history of racism cannot be disentangled from modern discussions. While the battle lines between opponents and supporters of the *GCQ* special issue about Lewis Terman were not drawn strictly along racial lines, it is true that opponents were disproportionately African Americans, while the majority of supporters were white. Some individuals couched their opposition to the special issue in terms of the broader fight for racial justice. I acknowledge this context. Many of the opponents of the special issue have a long track record of fighting for racial equality in gifted education and other spheres of society. Some of these individuals feared that discussing the scientific work of Terman would lend respectability to the man's racist beliefs, a perspective that is not unusual with scholarly topics adjacent to race (see Jensen, 1981, p. 487, for an exploration of this theme).

It is telling that Terman's now-obsolete views about sexuality (Minton, 1988), his support for an IQ-based meritocracy, or his proposal that low-IQ individuals should be denied the right to vote (Warne, 2019) did not spark a firestorm at NAGC. These views, too, are regressive today, but modern concerns about gender, economic inequality, and voter suppression were not the mobilizing force against research related to Terman's work. Concerns about race were.

## *Strategies to Block Free Inquiry*

Opponents to the special issue used several arguments and strategies to impede and block free inquiry, including (1) appeals to the political and cultural context, (2) unsubstantiated claims about harm, (3) appeals to emotion, (4) a refusal to engage in the scholarly process, and (5) unsupported assertions.

**Appeals to Context** I previously touched on how context is an important cause of the controversy I experienced. Research does not happen in a vacuum, and the opponents of the *GCQ* special issue were correct that context matters. Publishing scholarly work on controversial issues requires balancing freedom to come to unpopular conclusions with a duty to be diplomatic and sensitive to social context when reporting findings (Haier, 2020). People may have legitimate disagreements about how to achieve an appropriate balance between the two demands, but neither should be absolute. While free speech is a legal right in the United States, neither free speech nor the principle of academic freedom is a blank check to communicate findings in scholarly reports using rude, offensive, or derogatory language. Conversely, norms of civility and sensitivity do not make any topics off-limits to scholarly inquiry, nor should they inhibit uncomfortable findings from being disseminated.

It is this balance that my opponents rejected in favor of erring on the side of caution. Throughout the controversy, there were repeated claims that the social and political context of 2018–2020 made publishing about Lewis Terman inappropriate. In the November 28 and 29, 2018, conference calls, at least five people—some repeatedly—made assertions that “the tenor of our time” or “this day and age” meant that the special issue should not be published. This was also the justification that then-NAGC president provided for the board’s opposition to the special issue in its first (confusing) vote: “we reached consensus that the proposed special issue, even with the reframing you have proposed, is not appropriate at this time” (S. Krisel, personal communication, November 30, 2018).

Why was a special issue about Terman inappropriate at the time? Usually, people asserting this did not explain so clearly. Apparently, they thought it was obvious. When opponents did explain, it was usually in vague terms of recent political events. One conference call participant, for example, stated, “we talked about being in a time and date, being moments like Brexit, moments like Brazil and moments like Germany and the U.S. with a new president. I think that heightens our tensions around these issues” (G. Whiting, personal communication, November 28, 2018). Likewise, another opponent of the special issue stated:

in these times...with—I don’t want to call it ‘white nationalism.’ I want to call it a resurgence of white racism in this country around the world. When we look at what we’re going to do—Any press is good press, whether it’s honoring or just dealing with his legacy. (M. Gentry, personal communication, November 29, 2018)

But the connection between Lewis Terman’s work and contemporary political events is nonexistent. There is absolutely no evidence that white nationalists,

right-wing leaders, or prominent political reactionary figures are drawing on his work to further their causes, nor is there any evidence that these people are reading *GCQ*.

The argument that current events or social context is relevant to scholarly inquiry is an argument that there is some knowledge that is dangerous and must be withheld from society. There are problems with this censorious argument. The first is that it is not clear what the right time for forbidden knowledge should be. The people who made this argument in our controversy merely asserted that the time was not right for a special issue about Terman and never bothered explaining when the time would be right or how the scholarly community would recognize such a time if it came. Only one individual who made this argument mentioned the future, saying to the *GCQ* editors during a conference call:

Now we're talking about a special issue that you still want to defend when you hear many others—not everyone—say this is not the right time. And it's not going to be the right time two years from now, four years from now, fifteen years from now. (D. Y. Ford, personal communication, November 29, 2018)

These words underscored that, from this perspective, no time was the “right time.”

When making this argument, some opponents worried that information in my (Warne, 2019) article or the proposed Terman special issue would provide information that would fuel racist sentiments. (This is apparent in the above quote about white nationalism.) The problem with this argument is that it holds society and researchers hostage to racists and gives these extremists an indirect veto on scholarly knowledge (Warne, 2020). If every controversial topic that draws attention from some group of extremists in society is banned from scholarly inquiry, then many topics in law, biology, psychology, humanities, anthropology, and sociology would soon be forbidden.<sup>11</sup>

While appeal to context is logically weak, it was the argument that won out in this controversy. The only thing that changed from January 2019 (when the NAGC board voted to allow the editors to proceed if they desired) to July 2020 (when the issue was cancelled) was the eruptions of protests surrounding racial issues in cities across America. When the context changed, this became the tipping point for NAGC's board to change its mind and decide to engage in censorship.

**Appeal to Emotion** Probably the most common tactic that opponents of the Terman special issue used was an appeal to emotion (see Wrisley, 2018, for a brief analysis of this strategy). One board member often teared up during board meetings and conference calls when discussing the special issue. For example, in such a moment, she stated, “Where's the heart of it?...It's painful. It hurts, and there's no way around it. It's going to hurt so many people.” The next day, she stated, “Why publish it at all?...It's about real experiences and that pain.... You just have to have empathy...There's no way that I can even quantify the ramifications of this.”

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<sup>11</sup> If this logic had been applied in the technology industry 35 years ago, then the manufacture of computers would have stopped, lest a new technological advance upset the Unabomber and provoke him to engage in another attack.

Another scholar stated, “To mark the anniversary [of the beginning of Terman’s longitudinal study] is painful, to say the least, to a number of scholars” (J. L. Davis, personal communication, November 28, 2018).

I believe that these emotions were real and originated from an authentic place. However, the belief that a person’s emotions should dictate someone else’s actions is difficult to reconcile with scholarly inquiry. This practice can only lead to negative consequences for scholarly inquiry because it allows emotion to dictate what research can occur and what ideas can be published. Operating by this principle grants power to those claiming emotional hurt or trauma, thus incentivizing offense taking and discouraging resiliency and open, sincere communication (Lukianoff & Haidt, 2018). I recognize, though, the negative affect, frustration, and anger that come with having one’s feelings hurt, especially when long-standing racial inequality and related actions persist.

**Moral/Ethical Appeals** One pattern I noticed in sorting through the documents regarding this controversy was an appeal to moral and/or ethical principles that were never defined. One particular board member used this tactic most frequently, and in emails or meetings, he would often use the phrase “moral and ethical” as if it were a talisman that defeated all counterarguments. For example, in a letter arguing that the NAGC board’s original vote should stand because it would show the organization taking a stand against racism, he stated that his opposition to the special issue was “a response to a moral and ethical standard driven by equity and anti-racist principles that guide my work with NAGC...” and that “the Board of Directors’ leadership must be consistent and principle-driven, making moral and ethical decisions on behalf of NAGC that take into historical and contemporary contexts and their impact” (T. C. Grantham, personal communication, January 7, 2019).

I do not doubt this board member’s strong moral code. What I do take issue with is the assertion that his personal moral code should take precedence over anyone else’s. I also doubt that his moral code or a vague appeal to unwritten ethical rules should override any written code of ethics that already has relevant rules for decision-making. The decision of NAGC’s board to cancel the special issue of *GCQ* violated NAGC’s own written policies regarding *GCQ* editorial independence, multiple COPE ethical standards for how professional organizations should govern scholarly journals, and the written, legally binding contract that NAGC had signed with the *GCQ* editors.

Written ethics codes are valuable because they protect all people involved in an ethical conflict from the capricious whims of others. They also establish clear courses of action *before* problems arise so that the fervor of a controversy has minimal influence over decision-makers. Written ethics codes also have the advantage of being public and allowing individuals affected by decisions to understand the philosophical principles governing these decisions. Personal moral and ethical codes lack these features, which alone make them unsuitable for making group decisions in a professional context. Moreover, humans are excellent at making self-serving

decisions first and then afterward finding a moral justification for their actions (Haidt, 2012). Written ethical codes do not have this weakness.

**Refusal to Engage in the Scholarly Process** Ideally, scholarly disputes are resolved through the public examination of evidence and the exchange of ideas in scholarly journals and other public forums. Scientific journals have published thousands of exchanges between scholars engaging in disputes large and small. Repeatedly, Jolly and I and the *GCQ* editors invited—sometimes implored—the individuals who opposed us to submit manuscripts for consideration for the Terman special issue or in response to my (Warne, 2019) article.

With the exception of one individual, all failed to do so. Instead, these opponents preferred to use covert back channels, including private group emails, informal off-the-record planning conversations, invitation-only meetings,<sup>12</sup> and at least one secret meeting to put pressure on the NAGC board to force their views on the organization and *GCQ*. Almost none of these people ever made a public argument in writing about their views of Lewis Terman and subjected it to scholarly scrutiny.

The only exception was a person who—with graduate student coauthors—submitted a manuscript to the special issue for consideration. Because Jolly and I were eager for viewpoints that criticized Terman’s actions, we were excited to receive this manuscript. It was very disappointing that after two rounds of feedback, the authors did not choose to continue to revise it sufficiently to meet the concerns of two of the peer reviewers. The authors withdrew the manuscript from consideration, and it was not published. Thus, the only authors who attempted to engage in public scholarly debate failed to see their efforts through to the end.

I recognize that the scholarly process is slow, and it can be uncomfortable to submit one’s ideas to a public forum for criticism. This process goes against the impulse for quick change that is common among activists. But this is the most effective way to ascertain the strength of arguments. From my perspective, a scholar who truly believes that logic and empirical evidence support their beliefs—and not beliefs that they disagree with—should be eager to engage in the scholarly process. Thus, I am disappointed that, despite many opportunities, almost all of the opponents of the *GCQ* Terman special issue refused to do so.

**Assertions Without Evidence** Given that most of the opponents to the Terman special issue were scholars and all were educators of some sort, the strangest tactic they used to fight the proposed special issue was making unsubstantiated assertions. These took many forms, including:

- The assertion that it was “a conflict of interest, from my perspective, to have Russell Warne as...a guest editor” (T. C. Grantham, personal communication, November 28, 2020).

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<sup>12</sup>Some of these meetings didn’t even have all relevant individuals invited. I was never invited to a meeting about the *GCQ* special issue that he was a guest editor for, and often the *GCQ* editors were not invited to meetings where the journal and the editors’ decisions were discussed.

- Several opponents of the special issue claimed that it would somehow cause harm to NAGC’s reputation or to marginalized communities.
- The frequent claim that NAGC endorses every article published in *GCQ* or that people perceive the organization as endorsing authors’ opinions.
- Seemingly endless assertions that the special issue was “problematic,” without stating what this word means or why scholarly inquiry is a problem.

All of these assertions were made without evidence, which is a tactic that has been reported in other attempts to quash academic freedom (e.g., Gottfredson, 2010). As the late Christopher Hitchens (2007, p. 150) famously stated, “What can be asserted without evidence can also be dismissed without evidence.” Therefore, I have nothing more to say about these claims.

## Lessons Learned

In the intervening months, I have had time to reflect on the circumstances that fostered the conflict and tactics employed to stop the special issue. I now impart lessons to readers that I hope can be used to successfully combat censorship attempts in their fields. I list these in no particular order.

### *Collateral Damage of Censorship*

**Censoring Legitimate Scholarship** The goals of those opposed to the special issue were to stamp out scholarly work that they thought would be harmful. But censorship is a blunt tool, and inevitably, it targets legitimate work. The controversy provides multiple examples of how censoring “dangerous” ideas leads to censoring legitimate ideas that are connected—sometimes tangentially—to the target of censorship.

When one NAGC board member—in her anti-Terman zeal—stated unequivocally that “We cannot have Terman’s name in this paper” (M. Trotman Scott, personal communication, June 12, 2020), she was targeting an innocent scholar who coincidentally shared Terman’s last name. Luckily, the manuscript’s lead author was aware of the controversy, could explain the mix-up, and edited the manuscript to eliminate the possibility of confusion. But what if the authors had not been aware of the controversy? Or what if the authors were junior researchers or graduate students who felt obliged to comply with every request from an editor? The scholarly contributions of Anna Rachel Terman would have been removed from the paper, thereby robbing her of a citation and the readers of a relevant insight from a modern researcher.

More drastic would have been the consequences of a successful cancellation in late 2018 of the special issue. I am proud of the five manuscripts that were accepted for the special issue (Bergold et al., 2020; Hodges et al., [in press](#); Holahan, [in press](#); Lubinski & Benbow, [in press](#); Simonton, 2020). They are all interesting and informative, and—contrary to the fears of the people who opposed the special issue—none contained any threatening or divisive ideas.<sup>13</sup> But had the initial attempts at censorship been successful, much or none of the content would have been written. Even as events unfolded, two of the three introductions were never written, and their perspectives about Terman’s legacy remain unknown in this context.

**Ignorance Is Not Bliss** Ironically, the censors themselves were one of the audiences most hurt by the censorship of research about Terman. As I read documents or listened to recordings of meetings, I noticed how misinformed many of the opponents of the Terman special issue were about their own field’s historical past. Some opponents based their opposition on their ideas about Terman—many of which were simply false. For example, in an email, one board member wrote:

The beliefs espoused by Terman that homosexuals were in some way defective and were better left dead is horrific. In a time when we are fighting to end the practice of conversion therapy, I am baffled why we would choose to in any way honor a man who would have, in all likelihood, supported such a dangerous practice. (M. Fugate, personal communication, December 1, 2018).

I know of no evidence that Terman ever said that LGBT individuals would be better off dead; instead, he took great care to protect the identity of over a dozen male subjects of his longitudinal study who revealed their homosexuality to him. Terman was also one of the first psychologists to study homosexual behavior in humans, breaking a taboo that paved the way for others (Minton, 1988). An investigation of Terman’s late-career sex and gender research could have made a valuable contribution to the special issue, resulting in a better understanding of this portion of Terman’s research. (See Stern, 2016, for an analysis of Terman’s research on homosexuality through a twenty-first-century lens.)

Likewise, I saw no evidence that any of the opponents of the special issue were aware that Terman opposed racial discrimination in the United States (Hilgard, 1957) or that he believed that, “No race or nationality has any monopoly on brains” (Terman & Oden, 1947, p. 14). Dismissing him as “a known racist, point blank” is an oversimplification (Warne, 2019). All these examples demonstrate one of the problems of censorship: *We don’t know what we don’t know*. Censorship keeps everyone ignorant—especially the censor. This fact is particularly true when censoring research that has not been conducted yet.

Cogent critiques of an idea require knowing correct information about it. Intellectual critics should encourage access to information about an idea so that they

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<sup>13</sup>Indeed, according to a letter sent by the *GCQ* editors, “The NAGC Board members who did report having read the five articles for the special issue [before the July 22, 2020, meeting to cancel the special issue completely] did not object to the content of any of them, even in the current climate” (J. L. Adelson & M. S. Matthews, personal communication, July 25, 2020).

and their allies can marshal the best arguments against it. Arguments based on ignorance are easy to counter and quickly fall apart when readers eventually encounter factual information.

### *Actions Speak Louder than Words*

**Undermining Academic Freedom** From the very first document—the November 18, 2018, memo from the Diversity and Equity Alliance—to NAGC’s announcement on July 22, 2020, that the special issue would be cancelled, the censors in my story recognized the importance of academic freedom. “While we understand and respect academic freedom...” says the memo (J. L. Davis et al., personal communication, November 18, 2018). The announcement states, “We are committed to the principles of editorial independence both now and in the future” (Plucker et al., 2020b, para. 4). There were many other examples of acknowledging the importance of academic freedom in scholarly inquiry.

Yet while paying lip service to academic freedom, the opponents of the special issue were undermining it at the same time. Thus, I perceived a contradiction between their message in support of academic freedom and the actions they were taking. If they really did value academic freedom, there would have been no interference with the *GCQ* editors’ decisions, no protests against the proposed Terman special issue, and no votes about how to handle the *GCQ* issue; this whole controversy could have been avoided. All these things occurred precisely because a critical mass of individuals (though small in number—fewer than 20 out of a membership of roughly 2000) at NAGC worked to undermine academic freedom. Furthermore, the meddling in article order in *GCQ* and the censorship of *THP* authors shows that NAGC continues to ignore academic freedom. All the claims of honoring academic freedom and editorial independence mean nothing while people are fighting to limit these principles and to engage in censorship.

This view is further substantiated by occasional willful disregard of academic freedom that I occasionally saw in the documents I reviewed. In one letter written to the then-NAGC president, in response to a letter of support for the special issue (which included a defense of academic freedom; F. Worrell personal communication, December 10, 2018), some of the opponents of the special issue claimed that, “The principles of academic freedom and liberties that are held by scholars in higher education do not necessarily apply to publications of the NAGC as a member driven, advocacy organization, supported by dues” (J. L. Davis et al., personal communication, December 27, 2018). If this is true, then why should NAGC have a scholarly journal at all? Another example was an email to other opponents of the *GCQ* special issue after reading a former *GCQ* editor’s letter in support of the issue (D. B. McCoach, personal communication, January 8, 2019). The email author stated:

Perhaps the most glaring issue is the “positionality of privilege” [sic] that the letter takes in its discussion of objectivity and academic freedom. These terms are loaded with

micro-aggressive and micro-invalidating [sic] commentary. The old argument about standing firm to protect the integrity of the field in the name of science has very real historical and racial undertones. Thus, we need to have serious conversations with McCoach. (F. Bonner, personal communication, January 8, 2019)

None of the 15 recipients of the email voiced any objection to this claim.<sup>14</sup>

The most explicit rejection of academic freedom came from one of the leaders of the opposition to the special issue, who stated during a conference call:

I've been an editor...and there have been manuscripts that come here peer reviewed, and they have all, say, been accepted. And as an editor, I said, 'No. This is not the right time. This is not the right topic. This will have a negative impact.' And I rejected it. And I think that [GCQ editors] Jill [Adelson] and Michael [Matthews] could have done the same thing [to the Terman special issue proposal]. Despite the process, this could have still been rejected, thinking with empathy and compassion about the damage it would do.... (D. Y. Ford, personal communication, November 29, 2018)

**Inclusion for Me, but Not for Thee** Another hypocritical stance of opponents of the Terman special issue was regarding inclusion. Again, claims of the importance of inclusion and diversity were common throughout the controversy, but the people who most frequently made pleas based on inclusion were the ones who were most exclusionary. True inclusion and diversity mean valuing *everyone* who is trying to contribute to a scholarly community. Thus, inclusion and diversity go beyond non-discriminatory policies and actively recruiting people from underrepresented groups (as important as those efforts often are). True diversity and inclusion mean being ideologically inclusive and tolerating a diversity of empirically supported ideas. Chasing people out of an organization because they have different—but legitimate—beliefs is not inclusive and robs a scholarly organization of the most important type of diversity: ideological diversity.

In addition to their hypocritical actions regarding inclusion and diversity, the opponents of the Terman special issue also engaged in exclusionary language in private. When one supporter, a school psychologist of Afro-Caribbean descent, expressed support for the special issue, one board member privately wrote in an email that he was a “Negropean!!” (T. C. Grantham, personal communication, December 13, 2018). This does not convey inclusivity.<sup>15</sup> Similarly, another opponent of the special issue wrote the same day:

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<sup>14</sup>I wonder how Bonner feels about the strong academic freedom policy at his institution, Prairie View A & M University, one of America's historically black colleges and universities. Has he informed them of their policy's “racist undertones” and lobbied to eliminate it?

<sup>15</sup>According to Lane (2020), Ford frequently uses this term for people of African descent who do not fully act in accordance with her race-based social activism. Ford's editorship of the book in which Lane's work appears provides credence for this claim. A search of her tweets also produced five uses of the word (e.g., Ford, 2019a, b) during the course of this controversy. One tweet (Ford, 2019c) also includes the slur “Oreo,” which similarly applies to people of African descent who do not “act Black” in Ford's view.

Do any of you remember a novel by Bebe Moore Campbell entitled: ‘Your Blues Ain’t Like My Blues?’ [sic] If you do, good. [The *GCQ* special issue supporter’s] ‘Black Ain’t Like Our Black.’ KNOW THAT! He comes from a whole different jar of paint. All brothers are not richly melaninated. [sic] Some may look rich in melanin, but in actuality are poorly melaninated, [sic] particularly if their ethnic background is influenced other than what we know about here on the mainland. Fight this. Win this. (K. Dickson, personal communication, December 13, 2018)

Thus, while trumpeting inclusivity and diversity, some of these people were disparaging—with racist language—a fellow black scholar who happened to hold a different scholarly position than they did. Again, this does not represent inclusiveness.

### *Ineffectiveness of Censorship*

**Censorship Does Not Destroy Ideas** One striking lesson I learned in this experience was that censorship does not make ideas go away. Because of their weak reasoning and refusal to engage in the scholarly process, the censors did not change my mind about the scholarly value of investigating Terman’s legacy. Their efforts to make the issue controversial did not reduce authors’ enthusiasm for contributing to the special issue. It is apparent that NAGC’s censorship did not destroy the ideas that the activists disliked. The ideas still persisted and now include this chapter and other follow-up scholarship.

**Censorship Is Not Worth the Cost** Indeed, surveying the controversy regarding Terman’s legacy shows how little the activists and NAGC gained. My 2019 article on Terman’s legacy article still remains in *GCQ*’s archives and available to download. Both the introduction to the planned *GCQ* special issue (Jolly & Warne, 2020) and the video describing my (Warne, 2019) Terman article are online, freely available to the world. The five articles accepted for the special issue have been available online for months, and some have already appeared in print (Bergold et al., 2020; Hodges et al., *in press*; Holahan, *in press*; Lubinski & Benbow, *in press*; Simonton, 2020). In the end, the activists were only successful in preventing (1) the five articles from being packaged together in one print issue with the words “special issue” on the cover and (2) the writing and publication of the two unfinished introductions.

In exchange for this negligible victory, they harmed *GCQ*’s reputation as a venue for scholarly research. I know of multiple scholars who do not intend to submit manuscripts to the journal again. I also suspect that it will be difficult to attract good editors when the current editors’ term is finished. Who would want to be the editor of an academic journal where one’s decisions can be second-guessed, debated, and overruled to satisfy the sponsoring organization’s ideological whims?

NAGC’s reputation is similarly harmed. With the organization now pledging to align all of its publications with social justice activism (Plucker et al., 2020a), it cannot credibly make claims that its work is based on the best scholarly research.

There is no reason to trust that NAGC's recommendations and policies are anything other than ideological, politicized activism. Finally, individuals' reputations were harmed in advocating for censorship. Each act of attempted censorship was an illiberal attempt to limit inquiry and value ideology over science, which is not behavior in which scholars should engage.

**Censorship Does Not Further Social Goals** The opponents of the *GCQ* special issue claimed to have been working toward equity and to help children. But there is no evidence that cancelling the special issue did either of these things. Gifted programs did not magically start having exact proportionality of all racial and ethnic groups in them after the special issue was halted. No child who had been previously rejected for a gifted program was suddenly admitted. While NAGC has now publicly committed itself to equity and social justice, the cancellation of the special issue is a consequence of this decision—not a cause. If anything, the damage that this censorship did to the organization's reputation will undercut its activism.

### *Be Vigilant*

**Always Defend Academic Freedom** The most important lesson I learned from this experience is to be vigilant at all times for threats to academic freedom and free scholarly inquiry. Even the most minor infringement should be immediately countered and shut down (Gottfredson, 2010). Had NAGC's then-president quickly responded to the November 18, 2018, memo that *GCQ*'s editors were fully independent in selecting what they published and that NAGC's own policies tied the board's hands, this controversy may have died quickly. Instead, it was up to others—the *GCQ* editors and a handful of non-board members, along with Jolly in her capacity as a board member at the time—to defend academic freedom when even some scholars on the NAGC board would not (and in the end, they did not). None of the defenders of academic freedom agree with Terman's social views; many also disagree with many of his scientific views. But that is what made it so important to defend free scholarly inquiry. If academic freedom only exists when a scholar agrees with an idea, then it does not really exist at all.

The vigilance to defend academic freedom and combat censorship is important because—as my experience taught me—censorship is not a one-time event. The fact that the NAGC board and its president interfered with the *GCQ* editors' decisions even after publicly claiming to value editorial independence (Plucker et al., 2020b) shows this. Trotman Scott's censorship at *THP* is another, as is Ford's admission that she had previously censored articles as an editor. Book burners do not stop with the first book.

**Strategies for Combatting Censorship Attempts** Playing Monday morning quarterback is easy, but there were so many choices that could have strengthened the resolve to defend free scholarly inquiry at NAGC. None of the players in this

controversy had all the information (I still do not), and none could have predicted the impact of the tumultuous events of 2020 in the United States. Yet, I think that my analysis of the tactics of those who advocated censorship, coupled with my hindsight, has given me ideas for combatting censorship in the future.

First, it is important to look beyond virtuous language and to actions and intent. If somebody says, “Free speech is important, but...” or “Academic freedom is valuable, but...” then they probably do not really believe anything before the “but.” Likewise, if the impact of a decision or policy is censorship or limits on scholarly freedom, then no lip service to the ideals of scholarship should be believed. Free academic inquiry, free speech, and editorial independence should always take precedence over political or social expediency in scholarly journals owned by societies.

Also, assertions without evidence should be challenged relentlessly. As I sorted through the information I received about the controversy, I noted the many reasons that people gave for opposing the special issue. While most of them are poorly reasoned, I could read in the emails and hear in the recordings people reject one argument for censorship and then find another more convincing.<sup>16</sup> The opponents of censorship only had to convince NAGC board members with one argument—which argument it was did not matter. Thus, fighting censorship requires challenging *all* claims and assertions.

While this may seem daunting, the arguments against censorship are well known and can be adapted to many contexts. Familiarization with free speech resources, which contain ideas that are useful for making philosophical arguments against censorship, is essential. I recommend becoming familiar with public materials and websites provided by free speech advocacy groups, such as the American Civil Liberties Union (<https://www.aclu.org/issues/free-speech>), the First Amendment Center (<https://www.freedomforuminstitute.org/first-amendment-center/>), and the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education (<https://www.thefire.org/>).

But those resources are not helpful for challenging the unsubstantiated assertions that censors may make because these will often be dependent on the situation or topic being subjected to censorship. Asking for evidence, data, or examples to support assertions can show how flimsy they are (Gottfredson, 2010). For the controversy at NAGC, this could have required asking opponents of the special issue to explain how they could see the future and know that the special issue would harm NAGC’s reputation or why being “problematic” disqualifies an issue from inquiry. (Sometimes the most important topics to research are the problematic ones.) I do not blame people who resisted censorship or who were part of meetings where the special issue was discussed. I merely give these as examples of the basic challenges to censors’ assertions that put them on the defensive and require them to justify their claims.

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<sup>16</sup>As an example, NAGC’s president was against the censorship in November 2018 (J. Plucker, personal communication, November 30, 2018) before signing the document announcing it in July 2020 (Plucker et al., 2020b)—after the social context changed.

Finally, be fearless and bold. One of the main reasons why it was so hard to fight censorship at NAGC was the desire for people to be collegial (especially in a small scholarly field, like gifted education), and normally it is beneficial to work to maintain collegiality in dealing with professional disputes. But when censors threaten free scholarly inquiry, they are undermining one of the foundations that make worthwhile scholarship possible. Censorship is an existential threat to the quest for truth, and uncompromising boldness is essential in defending the free exchange of ideas.

### ***Don't Mix Scholarship and Activism***

The final lesson I have is that activism and scholarship—defined as the search for the truth—do not mix. For all my disagreements with those who opposed the Terman special issue in *GCQ*, I think they were correct in one claim. In the December 27, 2018, letter to the then-NAGC president, the authors stated that NAGC was “a member driven advocacy organization” (J. L. Davis et al., personal communication, December 27, 2018). NAGC confirmed this in their July 14, 2020, document (Plucker et al., 2020a) when it announced that all its activities and publications would promote equity and social justice.

There may be valid reasons to support some of NAGC's goals. But—as stated earlier—advocacy and science will eventually conflict. I do not think that an advocacy organization has any business owning and running a scholarly journal, nor should scholarly organizations engage in advocacy outside of work that clearly supports scholarly inquiry (e.g., lobbying for funding to support research, engaging in public relations for the field, community engagement). If organizations do attempt to support both advocacy and scholarship, I encourage them to have a strong division between the two activities so that one cannot systematically influence the work of the other. If this is not possible, then decision-makers need to have written policies for handling these conflicts and adhere to them strictly. When no written policy exists because a situation is unforeseen, then knowing in advance whether the organization's primary allegiance is to social change or to scholarship needs to be clear.

### **Conclusion**

This act of censorship is not on the scale of book banning or as dramatic as what Socrates and Galileo experienced, but it is illustrative of a type of censorship that occurs in the twenty-first century. Most of the goals with the special issue were met, and I did gain new perspective about the values of my colleagues. I also saw first-hand the schisms within gifted education and specifically within NAGC. I also learned several important lessons about censorship and ways to combat tactics used to suppress ideas and empirical investigations.

Despite the positive aspects, this was an exhausting, drawn-out experience that never should have happened. The controversy was also part of a wider process of events that solidified NAGC as an activist organization and tarnished its reputation—though not the way that the activists anticipated. As a long-time member of NAGC, leaving was not an easy decision. But I hope that this chapter provides me with closure and others with the motivation and lessons needed to prevent other organizations from making the same mistakes as NAGC.

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**Part IV**  
**The Scope of Political Bias**

# Chapter 18

## The Political Process: Critically Important for Behavioral Health



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Having been involved in the public policy arena (i.e., the political process) for most of our professional careers at clinical, administrative, and federal legislative levels, we have come to appreciate that the vast majority of our colleagues in psychology, nursing, and the other behavioral health professions possess very little understanding of the nuisances or fundamental elements of that world. Advanced practitioners in behavioral health come in all shapes, sizes, degrees, and backgrounds, from psychologists, advance practice registered nurses, social workers, psychiatrists, licensed professional counselors, and marriage and family therapists. Most recently, physician assistants and clinical pharmacists with specialized behavioral health postdoctoral expertise have been introduced. Each of these disciplines, at some level, are competent to evaluate, diagnose, and treat patients with psychological disorders, emotional problems, and substance use issues through counseling and a variety of behavioral health (and for some, psychopharmacological) therapies. And each of

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the non-physician disciplines has experienced administrative and/or legislative barriers to functioning to the full extent of their education and training.

Doctoral-level mental health practitioners, in particular, are trained to focus intensively upon the presenting symptoms and underlying needs of their individual clients/patients. They are attuned to the scientifically based clinical “best practices” of their specialty; for example, a growing subset of psychologists focus on neuropsychological assessment and are nicely positioned to translate between science and practice and back. We would further suggest that the vast majority of our colleagues entered a health-care profession primarily because they wanted to make a difference in the individual lives of those who would ultimately depend upon their clinical skills. Which profession they ultimately selected would most likely depend upon what role models they had encountered or perhaps the manner in which they learned to conceptualize the world around them. Did they enjoy developing and testing abstract concepts, memorizing, building interpretive skills, or solving practical life problems, using their interpersonal skills/emotional IQ, or having flexibility in spontaneous decision-making? These different orientations tend to suggest different undergraduate paths, leading to different mentors and peers. However, only rarely, in our opinion, during their training have they stepped back and focused upon the broader context or environment in which they practice and in which they and their patients live. And until recently, very few have been systematically exposed to the training models of the other health-care professions (interprofessional education (IPE)) with whom they will work. This collective experience can help shape the future of mental health care by recognizing our past.

Society’s attitude about those with mental illness has been shaped by the economic and cultural conditions of the time. Prior to the industrial revolution, those with mental illness were basically ignored, but the industrial revolution and stricter economic forces resulted in a paternalistic attitude over them. In the 1840s, Dorothea Dix lobbied for better living conditions for those with mental illness and over a 40-year period successfully persuaded the US government to fund the building of 32 state psychiatric hospitals. This is when institutionalized care became popular and remained that way until about the 1950s. With the introduction of psychotropic medications, returning people with mental illness to the community with massive deinstitutionalization ensued pressuring policymakers to rapidly build new community-based programs. Around that time is also when the post-war more liberal and civil rights-oriented views surfaced (e.g., with voting rights and other legislation associated with then President Lyndon Johnson’s Great Society, setting the stage for a similar movement in the disability community – including among people with mental disabilities).

Historically, mental health services (now increasingly designated as “behavioral health” services – recognizing the significant overlap in occurrence of and intervention for mental illness and substance misuse and the spectrum of behaviors related to prevention, intervention, treatment, and recovery) have been considered by society as interventions to correct a moral failing or, reductionistically, to cauterize a breach in neural circuitry (Weir, 2012). The latter probably began with the establishment in 1963 of the federal community mental health center movement under

President John F. Kennedy, deeming mental illness a medical “illness,” one which frequently required the involvement and clinical guidance of a physician. Prior to this far-reaching legislative policy undertaking, the states and various segments of the private sector had developed inpatient mental health facilities, which today most observers would describe as custodial at best (Torrey et al., 2010).

Under the Great Society Era of President Johnson, the Congress enacted the infrastructure in 1965 for a separate nationwide Federally Qualified Community Health Center (FCHC) movement which could, but was not required to, provide mental health care (DeLeon et al., 2019). Not surprisingly, federal regulations and funding for clinical service reimbursement, as well as the critical health professions training initiatives, were categorically separate. The underlying policies for both initiatives seemed to assume that mental health care was to be considered separate from one’s overall physical health care, although many clinicians had long been publicly discussing the significant comorbidity found within the populations of those diagnosed with mental health issues. Two unfortunate results of this philosophical dichotomy are the completely distinct infrastructures built around treating physical illness and addressing mental health and substance misuse supports and, with that, the long history of stigma associated with receiving mental health care. Long-standing efforts to address that stigma and resulting discrimination (e.g., psychiatric survivors’ movement during the civil rights era (Chamberlin, 1978)) have recently become a more favorably viewed public policy issue for welcoming proactive consumer advocates, such as those associated with Give an Hour, established by psychologist Barbara Van Dahlen (Chamberlin, 2012).

Efforts to design a full-fledged community-based mental health system have also waxed and waned. Under the Carter administration, the Mental Health Systems Act established programs and funding for a services continuum, which was later repealed and funding reduced in the form of block grants (Frank & Glied, 2007).

Still, the attitude about mental illness in larger society has changed slowly over the past 50 years. The general popular consensus was that those with mental illness were a risk to either themselves or to others. This bias has lingered for years, and only recently have milder and more moderate forms of mental illness made their way into mainstream acceptance (e.g., depression, ADHD, trauma, and PTSD). Some of the literature cited in popular culture suggested that mental illness may lead directly to a disposition of violent behavior, and as a result, mental health policy became more coercive (Sowislo et al., 2017). More recently, it is well understood that people with serious mental illness are much more likely to be the victims of crime than perpetrators (Ghiasi & Singh, 2019).

Tragically, misunderstanding about people with mental illness are common, and associated stigma, along with other factors (such as housing insecurity, unemployment, and social isolation in the aftermath of deinstitutionalization, as well as with the uptick in “tough on crime” philosophy starting in the 1980s) that there is a high prevalence of mental illness in the corrections system. Women with at least one psychiatric admission were 3.08–11.27 times more likely to be convicted of crime, while men were 2.29–7.5 times more likely. Prisoners tend to have three times the prevalence of mental illness than the general population, and of a survey of 22,790

prisoners in Western countries showed 3.7% of men (4% of women) were psychotic, 10% of men (12% of women) had major depressive disorder, and 65% of men (42% of women) had personality disorders (Konrad, 2002). Jailers and state secretaries of corrections describe this trend as a public health crisis and are engaging in major justice reform initiatives to divert people with mental illness from incarceration (e.g., the Stepping Up Initiative launched by the Council of State Governments Justice Center, the National Association of Counties, the American Psychiatric Association Foundation, and a number of partners and embraced by hundreds of counties across the country). Overrepresentation in the criminal justice system is likely due to a whole host of issues. This includes inadequate access to the right level of treatment and supports, as well as social stigma. The average view is that being mentally stable requires fitting into societal norms and being safe; therefore, those with more obvious signs of mental illness are often considered a safety concern. Self-reports for individuals and families underscore this observation. Persons with mental illness reported overt discrimination, parents were concerned with being seen as unfit if they attempted to get their children help for mental illness, and attitudes that individuals with mental illness were untreatable were common expectations (Report, 1978).

This more enlightened understanding of mental illness has recently made its way into common efforts to build resilience and prevent and address signs of mental illness early. This is most clearly articulated in the current movement to incorporate social-emotional learning curricula into schools, build a positive school climate, and weave in comprehensive mental health interventions from universal prevention/resilience building to more targeted supports for children with identified needs. Good examples can be found in the work of the Center for School Mental Health at the University of Maryland School of Medicine and the Sources of Strength curricula of the Suicide Prevention Center, supported by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration (SAMHSA), for suicide prevention (Wyman et al., 2010).

## **An Evolutionary Policy Perspective**

In 1999, USPHS Surgeon General David Satcher released *the first ever* Surgeon General's report on the topic of mental health and mental illness (HHS, 1999). That year also witnessed the first White House Conference on Mental Health and the first Secretarial initiative on Mental Health prepared under the aegis of the Department of Health and Human Services. The Surgeon General's report emphasized that mental health is fundamental to health, proclaiming that the qualities of mental health are essential to leading a healthy life and further that treatment and mental health services are critical to the nation's health. It formally recognized the inextricably intertwined relationship between mental health and physical health and well-being at all ages. Mental disorders were to be considered real health conditions that have an immense impact on individuals and families throughout the nation and the world. The report further emphasized that the scientific efficacy of mental health

treatments is well documented and that a range of treatments exist for most mental disorders. There was also a visionary call for developing a population-based public health perspective in the Surgeon General's report.

And yet the Surgeon General's report proclaimed:

Even more than other areas of health and medicine, the mental health field is plagued by disparities in the availability of and access to its services.... We have allowed stigma and a now unwarranted sense of hopelessness about the opportunities for recovery from mental illness to erect these barriers. It is time to take them down. Promoting mental health for all Americans will require scientific know-how but, even more importantly, a societal resolve that we will make the needed investment. (HHS, p. v)

President George W. Bush established the New Freedom Commission on Mental Health in 2002, which conducted a comprehensive study of the mental health delivery system across America. The Commission recommended the elimination of mental health disparities and comprehensive screening of both adults and children for mental health illnesses and to provide support service and treatment, further maximizing resources and improving coordination of treatment, services, and community integration. It recognized that discrimination was a barrier to seeking mental health care and established national goals for mental health (President's New Freedom Commission, 2003).

Evolving from the initial mental health parity policy frame of reference, the high priority assigned by President Barack Obama's landmark Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (ACA) (2010) to such underlying issues as integrated care, team-based care, express recognition of the wide range of health care providers (rather than exclusively physician-directive care), prevention, and patient-centered holistic care represent a very significant paradigm shift in treatment and causation philosophies. It also created a new impetus for bringing best practice behavioral health interventions to the fore due to the large proportion of individuals newly covered by Medicaid (under the ACA) with behavioral health concerns. Notably, passage of the ACA coincided with promulgation of regulations for implementing the Paul Wellstone and Pete Domenici Mental Health Parity and Addictions Equity Act (MHPAEA, 2008), which built on the Mental Health Parity Act of 1996 (MHPAEA, 1996), bringing into alignment insurance coverage requirements for behavioral health and medical/surgical conditions.

Aggressively addressing our nation's historical health disparities is seen by many policy experts as one of the crucial hallmarks of these combined efforts. Accordingly, the current emphasis by the National Academy of Medicine (formally the Institute of Medicine), in partnership with the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, on the importance of systematically exploring the social determinants of health and implications for care, and especially on a broad population (i.e., public health) basis, as a critical approach to addressing health disparities, is radically different than what was considered important several decades ago. This is a long overdue imperative, given clear evidence that health outcomes (and mental health) are more closely related to these determinants of health than any biological or genetic factors (HHS, 2000).

Finally, not to be overlooked, within the past decade, each of the mental health disciplines has developed a significant increase in their absolute numbers and, more importantly, has expanded their educational requirements to grant doctoral level credentials upon matriculation (i.e., Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) and Doctor of Clinical Pharmacy (Pharm D)) (Blackman et al., 2018). This evolution is critical, given the serious shortage in access to best practice behavioral health interventions – made more apparent through the opportunities to pay for care under the ACA and MHPAEP.

## **The Intimate Relationship Between Practice, Research, and Education**

We have consistently observed that surprisingly few of our colleagues seem to appreciate the extent to which the very future of their particular professional orientation is intimately intertwined with the growth or failure of their colleagues in practice, research, and education. Morgan Sammons and Gary VandenBos recently opined that psychology is “now seventy-five years old but just out of adolescence as professions go” (Sammons & VandenBos, 2019, p. 1). They were addressing the historical disconnect which exists between how researchers and clinicians approach the usefulness of scientific data and research findings. Essentially, each group comes from their own distinct professional background and orientation, the unfortunate consequence being that there is very little meaningful interaction. Each might agree that evidence-based practice is important to ensure quality of care; however, what that actually entails has dramatically different meanings depending upon your orientation to the field.

We have also been impressed during our careers by the extent to which organized medicine, in seemingly sharp contrast, has developed a significantly more comprehensive and integrated approach. It would be difficult to visualize a medical school which does not possess a faculty practice plan or have a very close relationship with a teaching hospital, as well as a robust research infrastructure. The Veterans Administration (VA) health-care system, for example, has historically been closely tied to our nation’s medical schools, providing teaching in-patient experiences and other innovative clinical placements, not to mention attractive research and future employment opportunities. A similarly close relationship often exists between medicine’s educational systems and the National Institutes of Health (NIH), numerous private research foundations, and state and local health departments. Notably, the National Institute for Mental Health, created in 1949, was intended for just this purpose – to bring about an evidence base in support of prevention and treatment for mental illness in place of overreliance on hospital-based care (Grob, 2005). However, the partnership among mental health researchers and practitioners remains distant. In contrast, it is perhaps surprisingly common for the leadership of the nation’s medical schools to develop collaborative agreements with outside funders,

interested federal agencies (such as the VA), and health departments, which essentially result in their jointly recruiting and hiring relevant staff. Such mutually beneficial relationships are rarely, if ever, even considered by the leadership of the training institutions for psychology and nursing.

The expressed public policy rationale for these intimate relationships has frequently been the importance of ensuring quality care by bringing the most up-to-date scientific knowledge to the clinical bedside or facilitating ongoing research progress, which includes providing exciting opportunities for critical scientific breakthroughs. On one level, such an approach seems to make rational sense and reinforces a general expression of the goodness of intentions of both the treating facility and the local medical school. However, rarely, at least to our knowledge, are questions asked about the underlying appropriateness of what is essentially a no competition contract or the potential adverse impact upon the other behavioral health disciplines when they are excluded from consideration. Thus, this exclusionary orientation significantly limits the range of clinical interventions which the impacted individual or children and their families might receive in the service of meaningfully improving daily life rather than exclusively focusing on symptom reduction and adherence.

A similar rationale has been proffered for the continuing authorization of the Children's Hospital Graduate Medical Education (GME) program, which was established under President William Clinton (HRQA, 1999). This program was modeled after the Medicare GME initiative with its advocates, emphasizing that children's hospitals rarely served the Medicare population and thus are essentially ineligible for its teaching benefits. In the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) Fiscal Year 2019 budget request (HHS, 2019), the Children's Hospital GME initiative accounted for nearly \$300 million of discretionary funding, thus, by definition, limiting the resources available for psychology's rural health training and the various nursing training initiatives.

Although medical and dental schools are eligible to receive these funds, to our knowledge, neither psychology nor nursing has ever attempted to obtain inclusion in the underlying statute. From a health policy frame of reference, it is as if the families of children needing these specialized clinical inpatient services do not require psychological or behavioral health interventions as a consequence of their young loved one's injuries, which, of course, is simply not the case. With the resulting extraordinarily limited ability of the administrators of children's hospitals to determine which types of health professions they actually would prefer, given their current specific case-loads and staffing resources, one could argue that the program perpetuates physician-directed care to the exclusion of alternative models of treatment such as diet and nutrition, expressive therapies, acupuncture, yoga and relaxation, and stress reduction techniques, which, in fact, might be more clinically beneficial. Perhaps, the underlying reason for the psychology and nursing professions not seeking their reasonable share of these training funds is a systematic lack of appreciation by the leadership of these professions for the intimate interconnectivity of their education, practice, and research missions. We would rhetorically ask: Is the underlying mission of the Children's Hospital GME program to serve

the critical clinical needs of children and their families, or is it, instead, to further the medical establishment's dominance over the nation's health-care system under the pretense of serving children?

In a similar vein, within many, if not most, organized health-care systems, including those of the Department of Defense (DOD), VA, Indian Health Service, and major national health plans, physicians per se have historically been appointed to leadership positions where they, in essence, determine clinical privileges and staffing ratios for all health-care providers within their institution or network of providers with which they partner (DeLeon et al., 2013). Unfortunately, history would clearly suggest once again that when those decisions are made, they are often based upon the leadership's personal medical school training experiences and not upon objective clinical evidence. Very few senior health-care administrators or physicians have personally experienced interprofessional training (IPE) models (Sbrocco et al., *in press*). Accordingly, and not surprisingly, the result has been the imposition of numerous artificial barriers to allowing non-physician health-care providers to practice to the fullest extent of their training and licensure status, as well as curtailing alternative models of care, which are often more holistic and noninvasive or non-pharmacological in orientation.

Over the years, the social and economic impact of these restrictions have been highlighted in numerous reports issued by the Institute of Medicine (IOM), which has recently been renamed the National Academy of Medicine (NAM), which consistently stress the need for fundamentally modifying the clinical environment to allow all practitioners to practice without supervision by another profession to the fullest extent of their education and training, including in team-based care (IOM, 2010). Various federal agencies, including the Federal Trade Commission (FTC), the Government Accountability Office (GAO), and the White House, have come to similar conclusions (Trump, 2019). Economist Jeffrey Bauer, for example, estimates that by fully empowering non-physician providers, our nation's health-care costs could be reduced by 32%, which would result in an annual savings of \$155 billion. He further makes the point that he has expressly, and unsuccessfully, sought any evidence that non-physician practitioners have clinical outcomes that are less successful than those of their physician counterparts (Bauer, 2020). As we have emphasized earlier, perhaps most importantly, the actual type of services provided by non-physicians is frequently qualitatively different than those provided by their physician counterparts – and more aligned with holistic care that addresses health behaviors and a broader spectrum of determinants of health, which account for more than half of the variance in health outcomes (HHS, 1991). The training models of alternative providers often emphasize patient-centered, team-based, holistic, complementary, behavioral, and cognitive-oriented treatment, especially with an emphasis upon providing nonpharmaceutical and noninvasive approaches.

## The Importance of Policy in Behavioral Health

As advanced practitioners working in the policy domain, we find that many of our colleagues are unaware of the role that they could play in health-care policy. Policies and the ramifications of policies at the bedside affect patients and providers at different levels, from the time a provider has available to spend with patients, to different interventions that may, or may not, be approved from insurance companies. Over time, we should be convinced of the importance of not just taking an active role in health policy but to do so as a behavioral health advanced provider collaborative team to address policies that facilitate good practice and optimize impact of the care that we want to provide.

Nurses are the largest group of health-care professionals in the United States, yet they are often underrepresented in health-care policy decision-making. We have heard numerous nurses and clinical providers say things like: “I want to stay at the bed side taking care of patients” or “I don’t really want to be in leadership positions, I only want to be a provider.” Times are changing, however, and if they continue taking a passive role with respect to policy, the decisions being made will be done by individuals who are not necessarily health-care professionals and thus who do not really understand the role and advanced training of nursing, as well as their potential clinical contributions. Perhaps well intended, however, this situation could result in negative changes, especially effecting the way the next generation will deliver behavioral health care.

The most effective way in the long run to improve patient care and increase provider satisfaction is for our disciplines to take a more active role in shaping our practice spaces through proactive engagement in health-care policy. To that end, it is critical to influence policy by sitting at the table with those who make decisions and help shape health-care policy. It is important to effectively advocate for our patients and our profession. Policy can be important in working with patient care issues and collaborating with other clinicians. For example, partnering with primary care providers (PCMs) to enhance the way we treat addictions and help PCMs feel more comfortable managing patients with alcohol cravings is vitally important.

Change is always unsettling, regardless of the probable importance of the task. Without professional role models and without having been taught the fundamentals (e.g., the language, culture, history, and nuances) of the policy/political process during their early training years, one cannot reasonably expect the next generation of behavioral health practitioners to feel comfortable in personally engaging as we have suggested. At the Uniformed Services University, we have been pleased to provide this exposure (including visits to Capitol Hill, informal seminars with military surgeon generals and Cabinet-level secretaries) on an interdisciplinary basis (DeLeon et al., 2015). Should this critical exposure be required for all students as nursing has recommended, or should our professional educational systems utilize an individual mentoring approach? There are pros and cons for each approach. We have observed that substantive change requires visionary, passionate, and dedicated commitment over time by caring individuals.

Administrative restrictions and general delivery and payment models blur prioritization of behavioral health care in our system, and policy is often a driving factor. For example, in the hospital setting, there is a great deal of pressure placed upon providers to maintain a full inpatient unit but also at the same time be able to make room so that patients are not sent out too soon. It is challenging, especially for new advanced practice providers, to maintain the perfect balance between the administrative side of the hospital and the clinical best interests of patients. The numbers to include, representing the amount of relative value units (RVUs) generated and bed census, frequently seem viewed as more important measures of an advanced practitioner's value than patient outcomes. There is also the added administrative pressure to put behavioral health patients in non-behavioral health beds in the hospital, an approach which places the patient and health-care provider at increased personal risk. In the long run, it is our view that each of these factors eventually leads to clinical burnout, which is highly costly economically and personally.

Our observation should be viewed in the context of the 2019 the National Academy of Medicine (NAM) report, which opined:

(D)elivering safe, patient-centered, high-quality, and high-value health care requires a clinical workforce that is functioning at the highest level. However, there is growing recognition among health care system experts that clinician well-being, so essential to the therapeutic alliance among clinicians, patients, and families, has long been eroding because of occupational stress. The high rates of burnout reported among U.S. health care clinicians, and clinical students and trainees ('learners'), are a strong indication that the nation's health care system is failing to achieve the aims for system-wide improvement... Research shows that between 35% and 54% of U.S. nurses and physicians have substantial symptoms of burnout... The high rate of clinician and learner burnout is a strong signal to health care leaders that major improvements in the clinical work and learning environment have to become a national and organizational priority. (NASEM, 2019b, p. 1–2)

Another policy issue which must be addressed is the role of metrics in the care of behavioral health patients. The American health-care system has more data than any other system in the world, and today often these data seem to be driving patient care rather than professional judgment and true patient outcomes. For example, providers may hold off on National Committee for Quality Assurance (NCQA)- and Healthcare Effectiveness Data and Information Set (HEDIS)-related clinical information due to their concerns about inadequate follow-up and therefore compromised outcome metrics tied to financial incentives for the facility rather than concerns about what would be most beneficial to the patient. They may even not give a patient an appropriate diagnosis (e.g., major depressive disorder, generalized anxiety disorder, or posttraumatic stress disorder). This perverse incentive can drive treatment toward purely meeting productivity measures, rather than accurately tying it to correct diagnoses and meaningful patient outcomes. To measure outcomes unrelated to the goal of improved patient functioning seems archaic as an advanced practitioner can find him or herself being evaluated and compared to another practitioner solely on that basis of productivity. Health-care professionals are expected by society to use their clinical judgment in addition to evidence in guiding their work, rather than solely or excessively relying upon standardized metrics or protocols.

Health care must be individualized, taking into account the individual's unique environment (physical, cultural, and psychosocial). And yet "clinical judgment" has been found to be a pretty weak predictor of how someone does after an intervention regardless of the provider's discipline. As a result, the entire health system is steadily moving away from this notion and toward seemingly more objective measurements of whether providers are using what is deemed the "best practices" (NASEM, 2019a). This uncertain direction is taking its toll on providers and likely a contributor to the burnout we see. This is especially true among behavioral health providers at all levels.

A concrete and symbolic example of a policy shift that has wide-ranging positive impact, in our view and that of many behavioral health trade organizations, is a change in medically based documentation requirements. The amount of documentation required for each patient is unnecessarily cumbersome and based on dated and medicalized notions of appropriate interventions (e.g., 15-minute billing increments are not correlated with any behavioral health best practice). Notes for the medical records sometimes end up taking more time than advanced practitioners spend with the patient. In the military system, with its emphasis upon "readiness," this is especially true with significant additional paperwork required for commanders and for the system related to fitness for continued service and ability to perform job duties and responsibilities. Again, this burdensome and unproductive bureaucratic/regulatory tail often leads to clinician burnout. The policy quandary, however, is how can one seek to tie clinical privileges (including scope of practice decisions) to objective data, which does necessitate the collection and use of metrics to drive and evaluate clinical work while at the same time call for significantly curtailing the evaluation process due to its potentially burdensome workload requirements.

## **Behavioral Health Advanced Practitioner (BHAP) Collaboration**

Our behavioral health-care system is in crisis. There are many problems with cost, quality, access, and outcomes (NASEM, [in press](#)). The 2020 HRSA national behavioral health workforce report (HRSA, 2020) discussed the magnitude of behavioral health provider workforce shortages, which are exacerbated by high burnout rates, an underlying lack of providers, an aging workforce, and relatively poor compensations compared to other medical specialties. The Congress is listening as demonstrated by the 2020 National Defense Authorization legislation call for DOD to develop a strategy to better recruit and retain mental health providers, including with respect to psychiatrists, psychologists, mental health nurse practitioners, licensed social workers, and other licensed providers of the military health system, in a manner that addresses the need for cultural competence and diversity among such mental health providers.

Our nation's health-care system is the only one in the world so heavily influenced by physicians the way it is, including through legislators, policymakers, and insurance companies. The American Medical Association's (AMA's) predicted opposition to advance nursing's independent practice is still very evident and serves as a reminder of physician influence over other disciplines in health care broadly. When the VA made their landmark announcement in 2016 to allow advanced nurse practitioners full practice authority across the country, notwithstanding state legislative barriers, the AMA formally urged the VA to maintain the physician-led model within the VA health system to ensure greater integration and coordination of care for Veterans and improve health outcomes. Their president further made a statement that they were "disappointed" in the VA's ultimate decision (Gurman, 2016). Given the collegial relationship, which many individual psychiatric nurses and psychiatrists have at the clinical level, the American Psychiatric Association had been encouraged to take a stand contrary to the AMA position by the psychiatric mental health nursing community, although without success. Interestingly, in contrast, a number of the American Psychological Association former presidents did cosign a letter in support of nursing and the VA's unprecedented proposal (personal communication, July 13, 2016).

Advanced practice registered nurses (APRNs) are educated to provide highly qualified, specialty-specific, advanced practice nursing, according to their tightly regulated scope of practice as defined by the individual states. Psychiatric mental health (PMH) APRNs engage in the practice of advanced PMH nursing. One of the critical underlying policy issues that each of the professions has been grappling with is what, if anything, should be the recognized difference in their scopes of practice? What objective commonalities and/or differences exist within their extensive training models? The PMH privileges typically allow for the nursing assessment, diagnosis, and treatment of behavioral, psychiatric, addictive, and emotional disorders, across the life span and across clinical settings. Their practice focuses on comprehensive psychiatric and mental health care to include biopsychosocial assessment, treatment, education, health promotion and disease prevention to patients, families, groups, and working closely with the community. They provide acute, crisis-oriented assessment and treatment, therapeutic counseling/psychotherapy, psychoeducation, and holistic care. Further, they are legislatively authorized to provide pharmacologic and nonpharmacologic therapies. And they frequently collaborate and/or provide consultation to other health-care professionals, as well as the civilian and military legal systems. Again, we would rhetorically ask: Is there any way for our nation's health-care leaders to objectively determine what might be the most appropriate mix of mental health disciplines for any particular health-care system or unique practice environment such as schools, long-term care facilities, or nursing homes?

Education is changing. During the recent past, almost all of the non-physician health-care disciplines have modified their educational standards to provide doctoral-level training. This includes audiology, optometry, physical therapy, clinical pharmacy, psychology, and advanced practice nursing. In 2004, the American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN) in their policy statement recommended

that by 2015, the doctor of nursing practice (DNP) shall become the new standard for entry-level practice (AACN, 2004). In 2013, the American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC), the sole certifying organization for psychiatric mental health nursing practitioners, similarly changed their board certification exam to reflect this growing movement (ANCC, 2018).

Referring to a provider as “midlevel” is inaccurate and misleading. It confuses patients and frequently those involved in health policy deliberations. It essentially is demeaning and, not too subtly, suggests that clinical supervision should be required for patient safety concerns, clearly suggesting that a lower level of care will be provided. It does not recognize other disciplines as full partners in our nation’s health-care arena, fully capable of independent thinking and clinical decision-making. The Doctor of Nursing Practice Essentials (Zaccagnini & White, 2011) delineates that the DNP professional is able to understand and collaborate with the interprofessional health team, understand health systems, and determine outcome evaluation processes and health-care policy. This document further envisions that DNPs should share decision-making, assume leadership, understand team processes, promote psychological safety, and enhance communication within team processes while promoting psychological safety and enhancing communication, thereby envisioning the DNP as bringing an organizational level perspective to clinical practice.

Psychiatric mental health nursing has a long and distinguished history. In 1955, Hildegard Peplau initiated the first psychiatric clinical nurse specialist program with funding from the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH), with the goal of improving patient outcomes and promoting quality nursing care (Peplau, 1962). It is important for psychology and the other behavioral health professions to appreciate that today’s education and training for psychiatric mental health practitioners allows for continuous and comprehensive mental health care to individuals across the life span and across setting. Nationwide, there can be no question that there is a significant and growing shortage of mental health (behavioral health) providers of all disciplines (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2023). In our judgment, the time has come to objectively explore how the different mental health disciplines can effectively collaborate and ensure increased access to quality care for all Americans and to collaboratively address any and all administrative and legislative barriers to this underlying vision.

## **A Legislative Example**

One’s professional background significantly shapes how one understands and ultimately addresses the political/public policy process. Historically, the majority of our nation’s federal elected officials have possessed a legal (i.e., law school) background, and although there are notable exceptions, those seeking higher office (such as in the US House of Representatives or US Senate, as well as Administration Cabinet positions) frequently have earlier served in lower-level positions such as on community councils or in state legislatures. Legislative changes are often the result

of concrete problems brought to the attention of elected officials by impacted constituents – frequently highly emotional – rather than representing the development of a foreseen logical next step in a programmatic process. Again, there are, of course, exceptions. Further, the fundamental, if not critical, importance of legislative committee jurisdiction and reliance upon legal precedence can be paramount.

At one point, we rhetorically reflected upon the question: What are the legal requirements for being appointed to the position of the US Public Health Service (USPHS) surgeon general? Must this position always be a physician? We knew, for example, that although an advanced practice nurse had never been appointed secretary of the now Department of Health and Human Services, they had achieved high-level positions within the Department. Further, under President Johnson, John Gardner (a psychologist and founder of Common Cause) was appointed as Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare (HEW). As we have suggested, obtaining these high-level Administration positions is critical if non-physicians are going to be accorded equal professional status.

Not surprisingly, the initial response from the Congressional Reference Service (CRS) to our question was that, indeed, the position must be filled by a physician. However, their subsequent review of the actual authorization statute confirmed that any member of the USPHS Commission Corps could be selected. At that time, almost every health discipline other than psychology had been included in the Corps' membership. Accordingly, US Senator Daniel K. Inouye (Dem., Hawaii) requested that the Chairman of the Senate Committee with jurisdiction – now the Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee (HELP) – (Senator Orrin Hatch, Rep., Utah) appropriately modify the underlying statute, which the Chairman subsequently successfully did. Interestingly, our most recent reading of the statute found that the term “behavioral and mental health professionals” has replaced “psychologist” (HCSNA, 2002).

Further, around that same time, we reviewed the statutory definition of the qualification requirement for the three military surgeon generals, which we found did exclusively reference a physician. Once again, Senator Inouye requested that the Chairman of the Senate Committee with relevant jurisdiction, this time Senator John Warner (Rep., Virginia) of the Armed Services Committee, modify the military qualifications to reflect those of the USPHS. The Chairman concurred, and accordingly today, the qualifications for each of the nation's four surgeon generals are discipline neutral. Subsequently, a senior nurse – General Gale Pollock – was appointed acting surgeon general of the US Army, and General Patty Horoho (another nurse) was confirmed by the US Senate as the 43rd US Army Surgeon General. General Horoho became the first female to hold that position in the history of the military, which, in itself, soon became a precedent with the confirmation of Nadja West as the 44th US Army Surgeon General and Dorothy Hogg (a nurse) as the 23rd US Air Force Surgeon General.

We would suggest that as psychology and nursing become more actively involved in the political process, and thereby hopefully increasing the number of their colleagues who actually hold elected office or are appointed to high-level Administration offices, their national organizations would develop a more sophisticated

understanding of the potential for significant and far-reaching changes. Stated slightly differently, rather than exclusively reacting to what are essentially short-term immediate crises generated by aggrieved members, the next generation of psychologists and advanced practice nurses would work to develop strategic approaches to addressing society's pressing needs. History clearly demonstrates that those who undertake to serve national needs will, in turn, be well served by the Congress (DeLeon & Kazdin, 2010).

It is important to also appreciate, however, that unfortunately, one cannot solely rely upon national professional organizations to chart out the course for one's profession's future. In reviewing numerous association action alerts to their members, we find that these frequently are notifications of collaborative endorsements with other associations on a common agenda, such as increasing funding for programs targeted toward the homeless. However, what is missing are targeted efforts that would directly benefit their members, such as inclusion in the Children's Hospital GME program. Professional organizations are essentially membership-run organizations and, as such, must be careful not to get too far ahead of their own membership's agenda – which is almost always short term and crisis-driven. In the particular case of the legislative qualifications for the surgeon generals, neither psychology nor nursing's national organizations were involved at all, not in the conceptualization nor implementation stage. In fact, even a decade later, they have not even brought the significance of these legislative changes to the attention of their membership.

## **An Exciting Potential State Association Focus**

Those intimately involved in the health policy process soon come to also appreciate that the states frequently serve as “living laboratories” for substantive change. While much focus is admittedly on federal policy, state policymaking is ripe for attention and holds significant opportunities to influence policies that underpin a truly integrated, team-based approach to behavioral health care. Our professions pay even less attention to the state policy domain than the federal landscape, but, arguably, more influence and innovation may be available here – especially as it pertains to scope of practice issues and the evolution toward holistic care.

A confluence of events and evidence supports this notion: Medicaid expansion to individuals (many of whom have unaddressed behavioral health needs); state-level data showing the value of targeting those with behavioral health needs as the sweet spot for achieving the three-part aim of improved outcomes, high-quality care, and reduced costs for individuals and the system; and the high-profile nature of the opioid crisis. Governors and state leaders feel an urgency to improve the behavioral health system. This is true across the life span and involves a public health lens, as well as a delivery reform and payment lens. There is a growing recognition among these state leaders that access to care (outside of institutional settings such as state psychiatric hospitals, emergency departments, and acute care hospitals, as well as

jails and prisons) is severely limited and needs to map onto a modern mental health system. A few major priorities among state leaders that are open to influence now include:

- Preventing and mitigating adverse childhood experiences
- Building trauma-informed schools in response to modern education approaches as well as school safety around the rash of school shootings
- Juvenile justice and criminal justice reform, which lean toward reentry into communities (which are ill-equipped to address behavioral health needs)
- Focus on suicide prevention and crisis services
- Medicaid waivers that allow for more residential treatment of people with substance use disorder and serious mental illness (IMD waivers) and also require building a continuum of care
- Broad efforts to integrate behavioral health into primary care (ala the Collaborative Care model) and to “carve in” behavioral health services into overall administration of the Medicaid program
- Implementation of the ACA’s provisions for team-based and coordinated care – such as Section 2703 Health Homes
- Adding Certified Community Behavioral Health Centers (CCBHCs) – authorized by the Mental Health Excellence Act and built upon the FQHC model – recognizing that people with behavioral health needs often enter the system through community mental health centers (rather than health clinics)
- Housing and homelessness (best practices rely on those essential wrap-around services and supports – which hinge on behavioral health and social services supports)
- Opioids crisis – which is now recognized as a broader addictions crisis

Champions of these issues are acutely aware of the professional shortages to address these issues and scope of practice issues (including multistate efforts such as interstate compacts). A subset of those champions are focused on scope of practice issues, but others are working to fill the gaps with community health workers and peer supports and need education around how all professionals and peers may optimally work together. The overarching focus is on both addressing acute issues (opioids) as well as defragmenting and better resourcing the behavioral health infrastructure for sustainability. Practically, this approach is making its way into requirements with health plans to increase access and adequately pay for services, into state general fund appropriations and overall state health plans, and in data dashboards that drive state policymaking. One example is the Massachusetts Governor’s 2020 Health Care Reform bill (HB 4134) that would require licensed clinics to offer behavioral health services; hospitals to arrange for behavioral health clinicians to evaluate, stabilize, and refer when admitted to emergency rooms; licensed mental health professionals to receive pay equal to that of primary care providers; and aligning scope of practice reforms.

## Personal Lessons Learned

Having worked within the public policy/political process for a prolonged period of time, there are several critical lessons which we have learned. Perhaps most important is the realization that there is a natural ebb and flow in leadership, with those who are in the majority today being in the minority tomorrow. Consequently, one should always reach across the aisle to work collaboratively with those who may at first glance have a different perspective or political orientation. Substantive change always takes considerable time, often far longer than one might initially anticipate.

As the former Speaker of the US House of Representatives, Tip O’Neill is famous for having proclaimed “all politics is local” (DeLeon, 2017). And we would add highly personal. Successfully enacting legislative change is very different than seeking credit for one’s successes or insisting that your view is the only correct one. For example, one can strenuously argue about what should be the appropriate role for government (local, state, and federal) in health care. Yet it is relatively easy to develop bipartisan consensus around the need for an appropriate supply and mix of health-care providers, the importance of utilizing the most up-to-date advances in relevant technology, and addressing the unique and pressing needs of rural America. Each of these issues are vitally important to *every* elected official when local needs can be clearly identified.

Whereas the media, and therefore the public, might focus upon immediate high visibility issues such as the opioid crisis, working toward steady incremental change often brings far more lasting results. Possessing a long-term vision for the bigger picture is extraordinarily important. To get there, one must strategize on the necessary short-term steps that must be successfully negotiated, as well as identify those colleagues who will ultimately implement the proposed changes. And of course, one must respond to the ever-present unexpected consequences of change.

Similarly, it is important to make it relatively easy for one’s colleagues (from all political perspectives) to be helpful; one must establish the necessary foundations and carefully explore what they can and cannot reasonably do. Never assume that one’s political stance today (perhaps, posturing for their political base) precludes meaningful collaboration tomorrow. One should go out of one’s way to be helpful to others when possible, never forgetting that genuine expressions of appreciation are meaningful and are often remembered. Further, it is important to study and understand the importance of the position (elected official, staff, lobbyist, or constituent) of those with whom you are working. Each individual has important, and quite distinct, roles to play in the political process at any given time. Personal coffee break visits are more effective than informal mass mailings. Finally, under no circumstances should one ever publicly question the motives and integrity of others, if for no other reason than one never knows what role that individual might play in the future.

It is also important to appreciate that one should not naively assume that merely working to have members of one’s own discipline elected to Congress and state legislatures or appointed to high-level Administration positions at the federal or

state level will necessarily result in creating positive change. Members of both professions have obtained these positions; however, they are fundamentally political positions, and as such, successful incumbents are often quite hesitant to act in a manner in which those who are opposed to their views (i.e., to their very presence) would be provided with the opportunity to use their actions against them politically. Another concrete example: one of Senator Inouye's military nurse Congressional Fellows crafted a letter to the Federal Trade Commission (FTC), asking for a review of potential anti-trust activities by organized medicine. Several senators agreed to co-sign the letter (personal communication, April 15, 2011). However, even though the nurse Fellow brought the letter to the personal attention of each of the then-serving nurse Congresswomen, none of them would add their name to the document. Again, however, we are constantly impressed by how such a concern does not seem to deter physicians from using their positions to act on behalf of their own profession, often, as we have suggested, to the detriment of non-physicians.

## Reflections

We are currently in the midst of an unprecedented evolution in society's appreciation for the importance of providing quality behavioral health care and the critical need to effectively address the complex social determinants involved. One's physical and mental health well-being are intimately intertwined. These are exciting times, with each of the mental health professions significantly increasing their absolute numbers and educational credentials. The mental health of the nation and our ability as non-physicians to care for it ride on our ability to advocate and get involved in the public policy process, especially when there are individuals who, without adequate guidance and evidence, can stall or weaken promising initiatives. As is common in the political arena, there are positive and negative things that can be said about policy direction in any administration. Under the current administration and Congressional leadership of the 116th Congress, the budget for mental health services has affirmatively supported behavioral health advanced practitioners practicing at the full scope of their education and training and has prioritized additional support for addressing the opioid crisis, but it is at odds over the nature and extent of coverage under the Medicare and Medicaid programs – potentially threatening already challenged access to behavioral health care. Accordingly, our next generation of practitioners must become personally involved in the public policy process and provide visionary leadership. Now is a moment of interest among policymakers to address behavioral health issues: a moment that has been shaped through repeated attempts to build a coherent and sustained behavioral health system. Now is the time to get involved in the policy process to get some hard-fought battles over the finish line – for people who need the care and those who want to deliver it.

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# Chapter 19

## Social Justice in Psychotherapy and Beyond



Richard E. Redding and Sally Satel

One of the earliest stains on the legacy of the mental health professions (in this case, psychiatry) dates to the American 1840 census, when the US government first began systematically collecting information on “idiocy” and “insanity.” According to the results, the purported rates of mental illness among free blacks in northern cities were deemed to exceed those among enslaved blacks in the south by an 11:1 ratio (Grob, 1976). South Carolina Senator John C. Calhoun, a notorious defender of slavery, seized upon the results as “proof” that “the African is incapable of self-care and sinks into lunacy under the burden of freedom. It is a mercy to him to give this guardianship and protection from mental death” (Satel, 2021).

Five years later, the American Statistical Association published a new analysis of the census data, in which it illuminated what distinguished American psychiatrist Edward Jarvis found to be many errors as well as the deliberate misuse of data (Grob, 1976). Yet many citizens in pro-slavery states continued to believe that enslaved blacks were less inclined toward insanity only because they were spared the social pressures associated with owning property, engaging in commerce, and participating in civic affairs (Geller, 2020). So comfortable was the state of bondage, this perverse thinking went, that slaves who fled must have been impelled by madness.

In 1851, Samuel Cartwright, a Louisiana physician (though not a psychiatrist) gave that invented form of madness a name: *Drapetomania* (in Greek, *drapétis* means “fugitive”) (Guillory, 1968). Some called it “runaway-slave syndrome” and

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suggested it could be prevented through whippings and the amputation of toes. Cartwright also claimed to “discover” something called *Dysaesthesia aethiopica* (an “abnormal sensation” characterized by reduced intellectual ability, laziness, and partial insensitivity of the skin). According to Geller (2020), “Cartwright’s theories were embraced in the slave states and mocked in the free states, including in medical journals. APA was silent.”

Cartwright’s taxonomy expired with the abolition of slavery. But the relationship between the psychiatric profession and black Americans remained a deeply troubled one. During the Civil Rights movement, for example, many psychiatrists considered the anger of black clients to be a form of “neurotic hostility” (Crowell et al., 2017). A 1970 issue of the *American Journal of Psychiatry* devoted a special section to racism, in which an article detailed the custom of regarding black clients as “not motivated for treatment, having primitive character structure, not psychologically minded, and impulse-ridden” (Sabshin et al., 1970, 788). It was also common that behaviors deemed criminal in blacks were regarded merely as the product of sickness when they manifested in white clients. Even today, there remains a tendency to misdiagnose black clients with the more severe diagnosis of schizophrenia while categorizing whites with similar presentations as having mood disorders (Gara et al., 2012; Neighbors et al., 2003; Shao et al., 2016).

This shameful legacy moved the American Psychiatric Association to issue an apology in 2021, announcing that “The Association is beginning the process of making amends for both the direct and indirect acts of racism in psychiatry” (Warner, 2021, p. 14). The American Psychological Association (2021, p. 1) also apologized for its “role in promoting, perpetuating, and failing to challenge racism, racial discrimination, and human hierarchy.” What prompted the two associations to issue these apologies in 2021? No doubt it was the murder of George Floyd a year earlier, leading to nationwide unrest and calls for racial justice. Many other organizations and corporations issued apologies for past racial transgressions and undertook social justice initiatives to fight racism and foster diversity, equity, and inclusion.

At the same time, a “woke” therapeutic trend called social justice counseling (SJC) accelerated in the mental health professions. By “woke” we refer to the ideology that the world is beset and pervaded by a struggle between the powerful and the oppressed (Sullivan, 2020). The counseling program at the University of Vermont, for example, announced it would: (1) “structurally align” itself with the Black Lives Matter movement and begin “the work of undoing systemic white supremacy,” (2) “take up the work of Dr. Ibram X. Kendi [and] adopt his definition of both racist and anti-racist,” and (3) “integrate these definitions into our program philosophy” (Satel, 2021). Aaron Kindsvatter, a professor at the university, spoke out against these changes in an interview with YouTuber Benjamin Boyce (Boyce, 2021). “Eventually counselors are going to feel that it is their job to help clients who are experiencing mental distress understand themselves in these terms of racist or antiracist.”

According to British therapist Val Thomas, writing in the online “Critical Therapy Antidote,” SJC, which she called critical social justice therapy, is a practice that views people not as individual actors but rather as representatives of particular

groups embedded within systems of power (Thomas, 2020). SJC trains therapist-activists to diagnose clients through a collective lens. “Critical Social Justice views individualism as arising out of the European Enlightenment tradition and consequently as problematic: group membership is what counts. As a member of a particular identity group, a person’s lived experience is shaped by social and cultural narratives ... A person’s group identity is characterised as either marginalised/ oppressed or privileged/oppressor. Its proponents must continuously work to make these power positions visible and disrupt and dismantle the dominant systems in society” (Thomas, 2020). She believes that the critical social justice approach politicizes psychotherapy, often at the expense of clients. In response, she founded the online community *Critical Therapy Antidote* as a hub for academics, practitioners, and clients. It is dedicated to “protecting the integrity of talking therapies.”

To picture SJC in its pure form, imagine an African-American client whose therapist conceives of many of the client’s problems in love, work, and family life as directly or indirectly largely or solely the by-products of systemic racism, with the therapist helping the client achieve a “critical consciousness” that her problems are due to the oppressive and discriminatory systems impacting her life. Or imagine the therapist who sees consciousness raising about white privilege as a necessary component of therapy with his white clients. In addition, these therapists see social activism as an important ingredient of psychotherapy.

Odd as this may sound to anyone familiar with traditional psychotherapy, this overtly ideological approach is becoming increasingly prominent among a cadre of mental health professionals, particularly among counseling psychologists. The optimal way for mental health professionals to redress past and current racial transgressions is to provide excellent treatment. Further, the professions should school the public in what skilled psychotherapy looks like, so that they can recognize when therapeutic methods may be compromised by ideological agendas.

In this chapter, we trace the origins of SJC to the multicultural movement in psychology over the last 30 years (see Frisby, 2018a). While recognizing the real benefits of its ecological perspective on client problems, we examine the ways in which SJC politicizes psychotherapy through an expressly “woke” or politically progressive lens and how that can be harmful – to clients as well as counseling trainees. We conclude with recommendations for ethical and efficacious psychotherapy and therapist training.

## **The “Fourth Force” in Psychotherapy: Multicultural Counseling**

Before the dawn of the civil rights era, psychotherapy was overwhelmingly the province of white practitioners and the white clients who could afford their care. After World War II, the number of public mental-hygiene clinics expanded markedly (Heine, 1950). Some of the new clients were black workers who sought

assistance in adjusting to newly integrated workplaces, among other problems. In 1950, the issue was addressed in a *Journal of Clinical Psychology* article entitled “The Negro patient in psychotherapy” (Heine, 1950). Heine considered whether “the notion of communicating real feelings or interpersonal problems [to a white therapist] would be difficult for [a black patient] to accept” (p. 374). In turn, he wondered whether therapists could respond to a black client as an individual rather than a member of a minority group. He also offered this cautionary remark, which seems apt in light of the modern identitarian thrust in counselor education: “No attempt will be made here to generalize on the character structure of Negroes as a group. [This] writer, at least, has never found characterological studies of entire groups of specific help in working with one member of that group.” Heine affirms that “the therapist must clearly communicate to his patient that he is interested in him only as an individual ... and not as symbols or as representatives of the racial minority” (Heine, 1950, p. 376).

But as the century ended, Heine’s vision was giving way to “multiculturalism” in the mental health professions (Frisby, 2018a; Satel & Redding, 2005), along with a new paradigm called “multicultural counseling,” which is the idea that therapy with minority populations requires a distinct set of competencies (Sue et al., 1982). Sue and Sue’s landmark textbook, *Counseling the Culturally Different* (1981), directed counselors to ask themselves, “as a member of the white group, what responsibility do you hold for the racist depressive and discriminating manner by which you personally and professionally deal with minorities?” As for the “worldview of the culturally different client,” the authors write: it “boils down to one important question: ‘What makes you any different from all the others out there who have oppressed and discriminated against me’” (p. 47). Now in its ninth edition (Sue et al., 2022), this textbook is used in many if not most counseling, clinical, and school psychology programs today.

By 1991, multicultural counseling had become so dominant that it was called “the fourth force” among counseling paradigms, taking its place as a key therapeutic approach alongside the the first three forces – the psychodynamic, cognitive-behavioral, and existential-humanistic schools of psychotherapy. (Pedersen, 1991). Indeed, cultural competence is now an ethical imperative for therapists, and multicultural counseling is considered a touchstone for effective psychotherapy with minority or marginalized populations (Redding, 2020). Both the American Psychological Association (APA) and American Counseling Association (ACA) require the graduate programs they accredit to include multicultural training in their curricula (APA, 2009; Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs, 2016), and organizations such as the APA have promulgated multicultural practice guidelines (e.g., APA, 2017).

Multicultural counseling has two key components: sensitizing marginalized clients to instances of oppression (“consciousness raising”) and cultural competence. To be “culturally competent,” therapists should tailor interventions to clients’ language, attributes, and identity, employ cultural concepts and metaphors rooted in the clients’ worldviews, and consider clients’ cultural values and the cultural context in which they live and work (Smith et al., 2011). Recent meta-analyses of

many studies conducted show that evidence-based therapies having such cultural adaptations are significantly more effective (with robust average effect sizes ranging from 0.35 to 0.67) than non-adapted treatments (Hall et al., 2016; Smith et al., 2011; Soto et al., 2018). In fact, data show that culturally adapted treatments are 4.7 times more likely to produce remission from symptoms (Hall et al., 2016). But research has failed to assess the effectiveness or outcomes of the consciousness-raising or social justice component of multicultural counseling (Cobb et al., 2020).

Probably the most salient criticism is that multicultural counseling tends to treat individual clients according to simplistic generalizations and stereotypes about the demographic groups to which they belong (Frisby, 2018c; Satel & Redding, 2004). For example, *Counseling the Culturally Diverse* (Sue et al., 2022) includes separate chapters devoted to counseling each key demographic or marginalized group. Subdividing the population into racial and ethnic groups is easy to do when writing textbooks, but to assume that differences in experiential variables neatly subdivide this way is both presumptuous and inaccurate. Not only are life experiences affected by a host of other variables (Frisby, 2018c), but individual differences within a group are often as great as individual differences between groups (Satel & Redding, 2005). Of course, skilled therapists must respect cultural values and traditions and educate themselves as best as possible in local anthropology. But preparation and sensitivity of this sort are far different from bringing a largely pre-ordained, victim-oriented cultural script to a session and imposing it on a client.

## **The “Fifth Force” in Psychotherapy: Social Justice Counseling (SJC)**

Social justice counseling (SJC) grew out of multicultural counseling (Arredondo & Perez, 2003). SJC is the “the extension of multiculturalism into action – the active expression of advocacy, allyhood, and other efforts” (Dollarhide et al., 2020, p. 41). Here, the most widely accepted definition of “social justice” is “the equitable inclusion of all individuals in a society, particularly those who have been historically marginalized” (Lee et al., 2020, p. 1). SJC aims “to change societal values, structures, policies, and practices, such that disadvantaged or marginalized groups gain increased access to those tools of self-determination” (Goodman et al., 2015 p. 795).

As multicultural counseling had become “the fourth force” in psychotherapy, SJC is now considered to be “the fifth force” (Ratts, 2009). The American Counseling Association (ACA) Code of Ethics now lists “promoting social justice” alongside cultural competence as core values of the profession (ACA, 2014, p. 3). In addition, the ACA has a division called “Counselors for Social Justice,” which “works to promote social justice in our society through confronting oppressive systems of power and privilege” (Counselors for Social Justice Website, 2023). As of 2017, however, it appeared that SJC had not taken hold as tenaciously among practitioners as multicultural counseling. Between 2012 and 2017, the number of sessions at the

yearly conference of the American Counseling Association devoted to multicultural and/or social justice issues ranged from 15% to 29%. Most of these sessions focused on multicultural issues; only about 1.5% to 5% focused on social justice (Dollarhide et al., 2020).

There has been an increased emphasis on social justice in the counseling literature, however, with 28 articles on social justice published between 2000 and 2009 as compared to 95 articles appearing between 2010 and 2019 (Na & Fietzer, 2020). There are at least five textbooks today (one in its third edition) and treatises on SJC (see Audet & Pare, 2018; Chung & Bemak, 2012; Goodman & Gorski, 2015; Lee, 2018a, b; Toporek et al., 2005).

Unfortunately, however, this literature includes little solid research on the effectiveness of SJC, which requires controlled studies that include validated measures of the kinds of variables and change that SJC targets. Clark et al. (2022) analyzed the extant 35 evaluation studies of social justice interventions, which focused on identity, advocacy, or systems change. Few studies used rigorous quantitative methods, and only a few assessed long-term systems change. Moreover, because social justice research “tends to focus on subjectively defined needs of marginalized populations” and issues of power and privilege (Holcomb-McCoy, 2018, p. 223) and systems change, it may be less amenable to effectiveness research because such variables are difficult to operationalize and measure.

### *Characteristics of SJJ*

Perhaps the best description of SJC is found in the *Multicultural and Social Justice Competencies* (MSJC). Endorsed by the ACA (Ratts et al., 2016), it states that “[e]thically, counselors must consider both multiculturalism and social justice in their work with clients” (p. 36), and explains the link between *multiculturalism* and *social justice*: “Multiculturalism helps counselors gain insight into the inequities experienced by clients from marginalized groups as well as the privileges bestowed to clients from privileged groups ... insights into these inequities can help counselors identify and engage in social justice initiatives that require individual- and systems-level work” (Ratts et al., 2016, p. 36).

The MSJC list four overarching goals for counselors: “understanding the complexities of *diversity and multiculturalism* on the counseling relationship, recognizing the negative *influence of oppression* on mental health and well-being, understanding individuals in the context of their *social environment*, and integrating *social justice advocacy* into the various modalities of counseling” (Ratts et al., 2016, p. 30–31, emphasis added). At the heart of SJC is an ecological orientation for understanding client problems along with a focus on power, privilege, and oppression as key ecological factors contributing to client problems, and the use of social justice advocacy to change the environmental factors contributing to client distress (Ratts, 2016).

Counselors are urged to help marginalized as well as privileged clients “understand that the relationships they have with others may be influenced by their privileged and marginalized status,” and should encourage clients to “discuss issues of power, privilege, and oppression with family, friends, peers, and colleagues” (Ratts et al., 2016, p. 12). The MSJC suggest that counselors conceptualize their counselor-client relationships as falling into one of four dyads: privileged counselor-marginalized client, privileged counselor-privileged client, marginalized counselor-privileged client, or marginalized counselor-marginalized client. Therapists should be aware of how their privilege or lack thereof affects the therapeutic relationship and their understanding of privileged and marginalized clients, lest they inflict distress by “engaging in a form of microaggression that results in the invalidation of clients’ lived experiences of discrimination and oppression” (Clark et al., 2022, p. 2).

An important therapeutic goal is raising client consciousness that oppressive and discriminatory systems may be the source of their problems rather than “counseling oppressed clients to be more like members of the dominant culture” (Dollarhide et al., 2020, p. 42). Otherwise, counselors are “blaming the victim” (see Ryan, 1971) and unwittingly “join[ing] the forces that perpetuate social injustice” (Ratts, 2016, p. 162, quoting Vera & Speight, 2007, p. 373). “[C]lients need help to makes sense of the forces of injustice affecting their lives, leading to the problems they are experiencing. . . . Every oppression and injustice tries to convince people . . . to take their place in an unjust world without complaining (and often enlists counseling for this purpose)” (Winslade, 2018, p. 21).

SJC “necessitates refocusing the lens of counseling psychology from the individual to the environment” (Speight & Vera, p. 110). Counselors may need to address client problems at the “intrapersonal, interpersonal, institutional, community, public policy, and international/global levels” (Ratts et al., 2016, p. 11). Traditional approaches, such as psychodynamic or cognitive-behavioral therapies, focus on the client’s behaviors and intrapsychic world, while the social justice approach addresses the pathologies and sociopolitical forces in the client’s environment. In addition to providing individual psychotherapy, the counselor must be a “social change agent, activist, consultant, and social advocate” (Ratts, 2009, p. 164). Social-justice therapists often go beyond treatment, entering into the client’s everyday life to break down oppressive and discriminatory systems or barriers to accessing services, with therapists often advocating for politically progressive systems change (Kiselica & Robinson, 2001).

## The Progressive Politics of SJC

SJC is undeniably political. Many in the profession argue that this is an essential aspect of the work: if counselors are to help clients, politics is an inevitable component (e.g., Arthur & Collins, 2014). SJC textbooks and articles inform counselors that political neutrality is incompatible with their work (see Goodman et al., 2015;

Reynolds & Hammoud-Beckett, 2018). As Collins and Arthur (2018) explain, a “value-free practice leads to inadvertent cultural blindness and supports an oppressive status quo ... It is impossible to orient towards advocacy and hold a value-neutral or apolitical positioning” (p. 33). According to Miles and Fassinger (2021, p. 1240), who argue against therapist neutrality, treating “only the person while not attending to the oppressive contexts in which they exist creates a ‘null environment’ ... one that neither encourages nor discourages individuals but, in maintaining a stance of apparent neutrality, actually reinforces the ... status quo ... Unless contextual factors, including systems of privilege and oppression are proactively challenged, interventions will be inadequate at best and victim-blaming at worst.”

The social justice mission of SJC is grounded in a progressive, socialist/communitarian orientation (see Aldarondo, 2007; Watts, 2004). And, the very term “social justice” ... is powerful rhetoric, implying the ‘goodness’ of the motives and actions of the ... psychologist” (Lillis et al., 2005, p. 284). As Goldberg (2016, quoted in Frisby, 2018, p. 175) explains: “Social justice simply *is* goodness, and if you can’t see that ... you’re either unintentionally ‘part of the problem’ or ... you’re for ‘badness’ ... The social justice syllogism goes something like this: (1) we are liberals, (2) Liberals believe it is imperative that social justice be advanced wherever we find it, and (3) Therefore, whatever we believe to be imperative is social justice.” Social justice counselors take for granted that their progressive-woke sociopolitical worldview, which sees the world as pervaded by a struggle between the powerful and oppressed minority groups, is the correct one and accurately portrays client problems. But what if that is not the case?

The worldview of SJC corresponds to the political views of psychologists, most of whom are politically liberal or progressive. And, not coincidentally, as psychologists have become even more liberal or progressive over the last several decades (Redding, 2023b, this volume), so too have the aims of counseling psychology. To be sure, there has long been a social justice movement in all the clinically related disciplines (clinical, counseling, school, community) of psychology and in psychology generally. School psychology programs, for example, include curricula designed to develop students into agents of social justice (Moy et al., 2014), and there are social justice groups within the National Association of School Psychologists and the school psychology division of APA (Frisby, 2018a, b, c, d). But social justice concerns have gained the strongest foothold in community psychology and counseling psychology, as these disciplines have always had social justice concerns at their core (Kiselica & Robinson, 2001; Lillis et al., 2005).

This progressive flavor of SJC manifests itself in the terminology used, scholars referenced, and issues discussed in the SJC literature, as well as in course descriptions, and syllabi. Topics addressed in counseling courses include, for example, “peace education, political ideology, liberatory consciousness, social activism, economic systems of oppression, [and] poverty” (Pieterse et al., 2009, p. 109). Freire’s *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Freire, 1970), the Bible for critical consciousness education and liberation movements, and Martin-Baro’s *Writings for a Liberation Psychology* (Martin-Baro, 1994) are frequently referenced in the SJC literature, as are Foucault and Prilleltensky (e.g., Prilleltensky, 2003; Prilleltensky & Prilleltensky,

2003). In the SJC literature, we find discussions of “integrating liberation ideas into clinical practice,” “building critical consciousness,” “psychotherapy as liberation” (Ivey & Collins, 2003, p. 292–293; Lee et al., 2020), using critical race theory and liberation psychology to understand the mental health needs of people of color (Singh et al., 2020), the importance of helping “minoritized populations to achieve liberation,” helping “clients in enhancing their own critical consciousness” (Lee & Haskins, 2020, p. 6), and “responding to white supremacy and colonization” (Reynolds & Hammoud-Beckett, 2018, p. 6). Journal articles now bear overtly political titles, such as “Black Lives Matter: A Call to Action for Counseling Psychology Leaders” (Crowell et al., 2017), or the recent ACA Presidential Address of Dr. Singh (2020, p. 1125), which calls for counselors to “know that another world of liberation is possible and then build this world within counseling psychology.”

## **The Problem’s Definition Determines the Solution: Preferred Social Interventions in SJC**

Psychology and certain subdisciplines (e.g., social, community, counseling psychology) in particular have adopted a progressive view of human nature that favors social and economic engineering as the way to solve social problems (Frisby, 2018d). Not surprising, one’s understanding of a problem goes a long way in determining the solutions that one envisions. In adopting this progressive vision of social justice, SJC often excludes alternative approaches that may be beneficial for solving client problems, not all of which are even remotely related to political issues or oppression. But how does a social justice therapist decide *which* client problems need social justice activism or consciousness raising? And if societal racism or oppression is truly a key cause of the client’s problems, then there is very little that the therapist or client can do to change that.

But the oppression of disadvantaged or minority groups is the primary concern of multicultural counseling and SJC. This leads to a “politics of victimization” (Lillis et al., 2005, p. 289), wherein some groups are labelled oppressors and others oppressed. The following heuristic is intended to achieve social justice:

1. Identify a particular group as marginalized or disadvantaged
2. Define their problems as due to victimization and oppression
3. Define helping the group as consciousness raising about their oppression and a redistribution of resources towards the group
4. Advocate for government social programs to help the group (Lillis et al., 2005, p. 287)

Social justice is, therefore, attained when both victim and oppressor groups are sensitized to ongoing oppression and when systems are reconfigured to ensure equal access and outcomes across groups. These efforts, however, may yield unintended consequences, such as incentivizing “victimhood,” fostering a sense of

helplessness and/or lack of responsibility over one's problems, encouraging government dependency, and exacerbating prejudices and resentments between individuals and groups (Lillis et al., 2005).

Though the term "social justice" is not typically a part of their lexicon, centrists and those right of center would likely define social justice differently and would not endorse an equity approach (see Frisby, 2018d; Sowell, 1998). Rather, they might endorse interventions aimed at expanding liberty, individual choice, and free market opportunities, as well as those scaffolding practices that facilitate success (Lillis et al., 2005).

When working with a juvenile client who is struggling at his inner-city school, the progressive social-justice therapist is likely to advocate for more government services for the child's family or more lenient school grading or disciplinary practices. The politically conservative therapist (what few there are!), however, would be more likely to explore possibilities for the parents to enroll their child in a higher-quality school or behavior therapy programs to shape and reinforce academic skills. In an instance where a minority client is upset with her boss, the social-justice counselor may assume that the boss is racist and counsel the client accordingly, rather than teaching her effective communication skills or walking the client through the possible reasons of why the boss might be treating her differently along with the possibility that the client may be misperceiving the situation. Of course, if little else seems to explain his behavior, then the therapist can confirm her interpretation, and they can decide what kinds of options for redress exist.

Who is to say, *a priori*, which approach – liberal, progressive, liberation, conservative, libertarian, or some other – will be more beneficial for a particular client or group? Therapists should not approach client problems with a pre-programmed worldview that constraints the approaches that they are willing to consider, or worse yet, when their ideology overrides the client's values, preferences, or even best interests. Arguably, it is not in the client's best interests to use largely untested therapeutic approaches driven mainly by the therapist's own political ideology.

## **How Aspects of SJC Help and Hurt Clients**

SJC's ecological approach to client problems has substantial value insofar as clients' problems may well arise from objective instances of unfairness or barriers to flourishing. Change their ecology, and you alleviate their problems. Consider, for example, the family who consults a therapist about their child's delinquent behavior. Delinquency is often a response to dysfunctional environments and unmet needs (see Heilbrun et al., 2005), particularly among minority youth (Redding & Arrigo, 2005). Thus, the most effective treatments for delinquency are multisystemic and community based (Henggeler et al., 2009). The therapist serves as a kind of social worker collaborating with the child's family, school, and neighborhood to address those risk factors (e.g., unaddressed learning disabilities, poor after-school supervision, ineffective parental discipline practices, exposure to antisocial or drug-abusing

peers, lack of prosocial activities) for delinquency impacting the child (Henggeler et al., 2009). Or, consider the person addicted to drugs. Not uncommonly, they break the cycle of use by relocating to a place where they know few drug users and dealers and encounter fewer conditioned cues that elicit craving. These disruptions to a malignant cycle can be suggested by professionals and occur spontaneously or by observing others who have improved their lives. A new job, a new relationship, a new circle of friends, a new baby or other newly injected sources of meaning in their lives can be a pathway out of addiction (Biernacki, 1986).

Changes in the client's ecology may be more effective in alleviating client distress than psychotherapy alone. The social justice therapist can significantly enhance overall treatment effectiveness by taking on the role of ad hoc social worker for the client, helping him or her to access services and working with others to address troubling aspects of the client's life.

Yet, if it is a mistake to assume that a client's problems are mostly intrapsychic in nature, it is equally mistaken to assume that they are mostly due to environmental pathologies or systemic "oppression" (an ill-defined term often casually tossed about by social justice counselors). Telling clients that their problems are due to oppression and discrimination may have the unintended effects of decreasing their internal locus of control and sense of agency, perhaps instilling learned helplessness, depression, and anxiety. Moreover, it often is not possible to affect the client's ecology – some situations will simply require the client to adopt more resilient coping skills. Bandura (1977) argued that a sense of control and agency over one's life is beneficial for mental health and human flourishing. His theory of "self-efficacy" launched a large body of scholarship, yielding hundreds of studies on the relationship of measured self-efficacy to effective problem-solving. Bandura critiqued the predominantly pathology-focused approach of psychologists and endorsed the importance of optimism in the face of adversity.

Along these lines, research has consistently revealed a positive association between external locus of control and depression (Rubenstein et al., 2016), which fits with the dynamics of learned helplessness – a state in which the person feels that he or she cannot change circumstances no matter what they try (Maier & Seligman, 2016).

Against this backdrop, consider how Dr. Sarah Sevedge practices "liberation psychology" with her clients. That "means redirecting pathology away from individuals and onto systems that create environments where it is not possible for someone to be healthy." She "tries to create a brave space within the oppressive environment by not being neutral about the oppression and validating her clients' experiences" (Phillips, 2021, p. 6).

To be sure, this is not to say that psychotherapists shouldn't be sensitive to matters of race and racism more generally – much as they should be familiar with the other important dynamics that shape mental life. A therapist is free to believe that Black Lives Matter and Ibram X. Kendi (2019) should guide the creation of a new kind of social contract, but the SJC practitioner violates core tenets of sound and ethical psychotherapy when their therapy work is driven by a commitment to furthering their own political causes or grinding a political axe. Instead of addressing

the individual person in need, he or she applies a somewhat pre-programmed ideological agenda that classifies individuals as oppressor or oppressed based on their identity group. The totalizing narrative of power, privilege, and oppression, like all totalizing narratives, dangerously skews and oversimplifies things.

For example, consider the white client who sees a social justice therapist. He sees the therapist to get help with *his* problems, not so the therapist can spend precious session time raising his consciousness about White privilege. Yet this is now what some social justice counselors do. There is an important question of informed consent here – does the client really know what they are getting, what the evidence is for its efficacy, and what the alternatives are? (Moreover, there are no outcome studies on whether the majority-culture client fares better or worse upon having their consciousness raised in this way – again, the focus should be on helping the individual client with their presenting problems). But a 2021 article in *Counseling Today*, the trade journal of the American Counseling Association, describes how counselors are “intentionally decentering whiteness in their practices [with] their white clients” (Phillips, 2021, p. 7).

Counselors ask their white clients to examine their own privilege and reckon with their role in enabling systemic racism and inequities (Phillips, 2021). As for Ratts (2009) asks, “[w]hat if clients have one goal (to solve their personal problem) and the counselor has another goal (social justice)?” (p. 169). Referencing Friere’s *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, his solution to this dilemma is “liberating [clients] from oppression” (p. 169), by helping them develop a critical consciousness as to the oppressive forces affecting their psychological well-being and that of others, with white supremacy as a key concern (Grzanka et al., 2019; Mosley et al., 2021). Some counseling psychologists challenge the prevailing ethical norms, which they note have been developed by White majority organizations, arguing that it might be appropriate for therapists not to “prioritize[ ] the client’s goals when confronting White supremacy with a client who may not view race as the presenting concern or their own racism as a problem” (Grzanka & Cole, 2021, p. 1338).

### ***Impact of SJT on the Therapeutic Alliance***

Abundant research has shown that the quality and strength of the “therapeutic alliance” can help predict whether the therapy will be successful. In fact, the “therapeutic alliance” is likely the most important ingredient in successful psychotherapy (Baier et al., 2020; Horvath et al., 2011). But the alliance between therapist and client, as Hallam (2018) elaborates in his book, *The Therapy Relationship: A Special Kind of Friendship*, depends upon: (1) their rapport and ability to communicate effectively with one another, (2) the therapist’s empathy for the client, and (3) an overall agreement between both parties regarding the methods employed and the goals pursued. It is worth considering how the social-justice therapist may endanger the therapeutic alliance.

The task of the therapist is “to get the patient to talk as freely as possible whilst he himself stays in the background” (Storr, 1990, p. 16). But talking freely is possible only if a therapist assumes a posture of caring neutrality, openness, and curiosity. Learning to maintain compassionate detachment lies at the heart of practitioner training. Mature therapists keep their private passions from distorting the work. They are attuned to the development of countertransference, wherein their own emotional reaction to a client clouds their clinical judgment. Even seasoned therapists engage trusted supervisors to help them understand and manage such complexities as they emerge in therapeutic relationships.

In his classic book, *Persuasion and Healing: A Comparative Study of Psychotherapy*, psychiatrist Jerome Frank described the alliance as “the therapist’s acceptance of the sufferer, if not for what he or she is, then for what he or she can become” (Frank, 1961). When a therapist comes to the first session armed with an ideological program that dictates what the client should become, such an alliance is threatened. Even if a client agrees to this program before treatment begins, what they will be receiving isn’t psychotherapy so much as an anti-racism pedagogy delivered under the pretext of treatment. Where clients should be inculcated in the habit of self-observation, they will instead be taught to search outside themselves for sources of duress; instead of traveling a path to greater autonomy, they will be rewarded for adopting the victim role.

And how could a therapist wedded to their view of anti-racism relate empathically to, say, a white, straight young man who voted for Donald Trump? How could a client regard a therapist as benign and caring if she tells him, or even strongly implies, that she thinks he is a bigot – and, furthermore, that many of his personal problems are rooted in his alleged bigotry?

Velma Olden (a pseudonym) wrote of being alienated by group therapy with a counselor who pronounced himself an avowed Black Lives Matter supporter (which is fine, of course, so long as the instructor does not use his professional role to proselytize) (Olden, 2021). He encouraged the group to discuss race issues in the service of what Olden described as “extreme left activism.” In one instance, there was a discussion about how to talk to one’s family “about social justice.” Olden’s goal was to find clarity, relief from suffering, and freedom from the habits that had imprisoned her for years. Instead, she was told that we are “victims of vague societal forces outside of our control.”

### ***Impact of Therapist Politics on Therapeutic Processes and Outcomes***

Two recent surveys of clinicians and clients illuminate how their political views and the match or mismatch between those views, can affect therapeutic processes and outcomes. These surveys found that both therapists and clients often discussed their political views in therapy, as issues of concern to clients often touch on

sociopolitical issues (Redding, 2020; Solomonov & Barber, 2018). Therapeutic relationships were reported as stronger when clients felt comfortable disclosing their political views to the therapist, when the therapist was non-judgmental and accepting of those views, and when there was an actual or perceived similarity in their political views (Redding, 2020). Twenty-three percent of clinicians identified a client's political views as being among the characteristics that have the greatest potential to bias them in their work (Redding, 2020).

The question is this: if a client is seeking help for depression or is in conflict with their spouse or child, of what relevance are the therapist's and client's politics? The answer lies in research findings amassed over the last several decades in social/personality psychology, clinical psychology, neuroscience, and behavior genetics. Drawing on these lines of research, Redding and Cobb (2023) show how sociopolitical values are a deep aspect of culture that affects people's daily lives, drives decision-making, and guides their interactions with others. These values-based identities often have greater salience to them than their demographic identities. Sociopolitical values, data show, (1) have a strong genetic and neurological basis (and are influenced by early family experiences), which is why people's sociopolitical values tend to be deeply felt and relatively resistant to change; (2) reflect underlying personality and temperament patterns, with people tending to have ideologies consistent with their personalities; (3) are often integral to one's sense of security and self-esteem, providing a religious-like function for many; and (4) are important in interpersonal attraction and repulsion, with studies showing that sociopolitical values trump race and ethnicity as factors driving prejudicial and discriminatory behavior.

Consequently, a rough congruence in values between client and therapist often benefits the therapeutic relationship, whereas a significant mismatch may be harmful. No surprise, then, that many clients say it is important to them that their therapist share roughly similar political outlooks with them (Drexler, 2018, surveying 8000 clients). In fact, the strong progressive tilt of most therapists may be one reason why conservatives often are reluctant to seek mental health treatment (Brody, 1994). The political values of the social justice therapist may clash with those of a conservative, libertarian, centrist, or apolitical client. A mismatch between client and therapist sociopolitical values may negatively affect the therapist's empathy for the client, the mutual understanding and rapport between them, the client's willingness to confide in the therapist, and the client's confidence in the therapist's ability to understand their problems and phenomenological world as well and their desired therapeutic goals (Redding, 2020).

This negative dynamic is amplified when the therapist is wedded to social-justice therapy. The risk of social-justice therapists imposing their values or preferred therapeutic goals on the client is rooted in evidence showing that clients' values often shift toward those of the therapist (Bergin et al., 1996) In Redding's (2020) study, 40% of clinicians reported that they might impose their values on the client. In addition, social-justice therapists may unintentionally commit sociopolitical microaggressions against the politically "Other" client (Redding, 2020).

Sometimes those microaggressions are intentional, however, and not so “micro.” We have heard reports of clients being scolded by therapists for voting the “wrong” way. Apparently so great is the need for therapists who can resonate with politically or religiously conservative (and ideologically noncompliant liberal) clients, that one former academic has an informal side gig referring clients to “non-woke,” neutral therapists. But these examples may be outliers. It is difficult to gauge how deeply the SJC ethos has penetrated the real world of practicing counseling psychologists or other psychotherapists. Even in a university setting, where the pursuit of ideological fads is always more pronounced, many professionals may simply be mouthing social-justice platitudes for public consumption by their own colleagues and bosses – but then, behind closed doors get on with the real work of helping people in an ethical, clear-eyed way. Even so, politicizing the counseling curricula siphons precious time away from preparing trainees to treat their future clients, as we discuss in the next section.

## **SJC in Counselor Education**

Training in social justice or SJC, alongside multicultural counseling, has become a key mission of many counselor education programs. For example, Rollins College’s description of its counseling program states: “We consider ourselves a social justice program ... each faculty member has a personal commitment to social justice ... our program sequences and reinforces social justice content starting in each student cohort’s first semester. Social justice topics, including Multicultural and Social Justice Competencies ... are heavily emphasized and systematically reinforced within all first-year courses” (Sanabria & DeLorenzi, 2019 p. 36, 38).

To see the extent to which counseling education programs emphasize social justice in their programs, we reviewed the mission statements and program descriptions posted on the websites of all 74 doctoral-level counseling psychology programs accredited by the American Psychological Association. As of 2022, 44% had mission statements that explicitly mention their commitments to “social justice” and/or “anti-racism.” For example, Columbia University’s counseling program includes an “[i]n-depth infusion of racial-cultural and social justice emphases throughout program components” (Columbia University Counseling Program Website, 2022). Texas Tech’s program states: “It is important that we, united as a program, stand firmly against racism, discrimination, and inequality. We are in solidarity with #BlackLivesMatter, and with all others who advocate for equality and justice. As a pillar of counseling psychology, we support and advocate for social justice and social change” (Texas Tech. Counseling Program Website, 2022). The counseling program at UC-Santa Barbara states that it “stands unequivocally united with the Black Lives Matter movement. The mission of our department is to train the next

generation of diverse scholars in applied psychology. This work begins at home, interrupting the ways anti-Black racism shows up in our teaching, research, and the clinical services we provide to our local community” (UC Santa Barbara, 2022).

In fact, the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) requires that counseling programs include training on “the effects of power and privilege for counselors and clients” as well as “strategies for identifying and eliminating barriers, prejudices, and processes of intentional and unintentional oppression and discrimination” (CACREP, 2016, Standards 2. F.2.e & h). Counselor education programs are urged to *infuse* social justice training *throughout* their curricula (Constantine et al., 2007; Dollarhide et al., 2020; Gazzola et al., 2018). This social justice curriculum entails teaching students how to recognize and remedy “various ‘isms’ (e.g., racism, heterosexism, male sexism, ageism, ableism, etc.) that oppress people, social inequities, prejudice, and discrimination ... [students are taught] to first recognize these problems within themselves, avoid behaviors that would manifest these ills within the therapeutic relationship, engage in activities that would assist vulnerable clients to either cope with or overcome the effects of these ills, and explicitly advocate for them outside of the therapeutic relationship” (Frisby, 2018d, p. 174).

Chung and Bemak (2012) describe how social justice is infused throughout the counseling programs at George Mason University. First, the program’s mission statement lists “*social justice, multiculturalism, internationalism, advocacy, and leadership*” (emphasis added) as the five educational goals for counseling students. Second, applicants in the admissions process are screened for their commitment to social justice and “alignment” with the program’s mission, as well as their potential to be social justice advocates. Third, in addition to multicultural courses, students are required to take a counseling and social justice course, which may include activities like the development of a “Tunnel of Oppression” exhibit for the University. They also complete practicums and internships entailing social justice work.

Fourth, students are expected to conform their behavior and attitudes to reflect certain “professional dispositions,” including commitments to multiculturalism and social justice in counseling. Thus, students who do outstanding academic work may nonetheless receive a poor overall grade in a course if their attitudes and behaviors do not reflect these commitments. Although this raises significant concerns about free speech (O’Donohue & Fisher, 2022) and intellectual diversity, Chung and Bemak point out that incoming students are aware of the program’s commitment to social justice and know they will be evaluated accordingly. Noting that the dispositions “are in no way a method of silencing students who have other viewpoints” (p. 245), they give the example of a student who said that she felt silenced. (One can assume that other students have also felt that way but were afraid to voice their concerns.) Fifth, students are involved in social justice projects throughout their time in the program.

The University of Tennessee’s counseling psychology program has developed a scientist-practitioner-advocate model for its doctoral program (Mallinckrodt et al., 2014). The advocacy prong focuses on social justice advocacy, and the program’s

main goal is “to develop within students a social justice orientation” focusing on systemic oppression and equity (Miles & Fassinger, 2021, p. 1241). The overtly progressive political nature of the program, and its goal of orienting students within particular ideological perspectives, is evident in their description of many of their courses, whereby “*students develop a theoretical orientation to social justice advocacy by reading foundational interdisciplinary literatures ... and liberation psychology that aims to free people and groups from oppression, including that perpetrated by traditional psychological research and practice ... as well as the common threads connecting these literatures (e.g., a systems focus; attention to privilege, power, and oppression) ... Students learn to embody feminist, multicultural, and social justice values*” (Miles & Fassinger, 2021, p. 1242, emphasis added).

Social justice training often extends beyond the university to field settings like internships and continuing education programming, and clinical supervisors are urged to adopt a “social justice praxis” when working with counseling students in practicums and internships (Mackie & Boucher, 2018). According to Mackie and Boucher (2018), supervisors should teach their trainees to consider how their power and privilege, or lack thereof, and that of their client impact the client’s problems and therapeutic relationship. Trainees should talk to their clients about the ways in which social injustice is contributing to their problems. One web-based continuing education program for counselors by Dr. Lisa Xochitl Vallejos, *Social Justice as a Counseling Concern*, instructs practitioners on how to apply “critical consciousness when viewing systems of oppression” and how to “create a social justice counseling plan.”

In addition, leaders in the counseling profession urge graduate programs to rigorously assess applicants’ ability to be social justice advocates (Lee, 2012; Motulsky et al., 2014; Ratts, 2009), with one study identifying the personality and demographic characteristics predictive of social justice behaviors by counselors (Na & Fietzer, 2020). Lee (2012) suggests that the admissions process include an interview to assess the applicant’s multicultural experiences and understanding of equity and social justice concepts; a group interview where candidates work on a case study to develop a counseling plan for a client from a marginalized group; a writing exercise where applicants react to a reading about equity and social justice; and a brief oral presentation where applicants react to a social injustice presented to them and explain how knowing such information might guide their work as a counselor.

Noting that the ACA Code of Ethics (, 2014) articulates social justice as a key value of counselors, Lee further argues that all faculty in counselor education programs should be involved in social justice work and research and that program mission statements articulate social justice as central to that mission. Thus, given their stated commitments to social justice, counseling programs no doubt implicitly or explicitly screen faculty to make sure that they are on board with their social justice agenda and progressive political values, which severely narrows the perspectives represented on the faculty, thus impoverishing the breadth of pedagogy and research (Redding, 2023a, b this volume).

## How SJC May Harm Counseling Students and Trainees

Programs' pursuit of SJC may do an injustice to their students and, over time, to the counseling profession and to the many clients their graduates will serve. The practice of SJC will severely limit the diversity of those entering the profession and thus limit the profession's ability to serve diverse communities, by limiting the breadth by which they can conceptualize and address their clients' problems.

Basing admissions decisions on candidates' commitment to a progressive social justice mission means that many conservative, libertarian, or apolitical students will be excluded from such programs, amounting to a de facto policy of sociopolitical discrimination. Indeed, studies have shown that academic psychologists affirmatively discriminate against conservatives in admission decisions and a variety of other professional contexts (Gartner, 1986; Inbar & Lammers, 2012; Redding, 2020). Or, ideologically diverse students will be deterred from pursuing a career in counseling psychology in the first place, when they come to understand the political landscape of the profession and that of the programs to which they might apply (Redding, 2023b, this volume).

When virtually all the graduates from counselor education programs are politically progressive, very few are even centrist, and virtually none are right of center politically (see Redding, 2023a,b, this volume), what is the impact on their quality of their educational programs in terms of intellectual diversity and their profession's ability to serve sociopolitically diverse communities and clients? Are these counselors equipped, by virtue of their own ideological biases and the ideologically skewed education they received, to truly understand, empathize with, and competently address the needs and goals of clients who do not share their sociopolitical values? Will they employ a one-size-fits-all politically progressive approach to solving client and social problems, ignoring alternative approaches? Will some counseling students experience an educational climate that is hostile to their perspectives, thus limiting their ability to flourish and excel as students and later as counselors? An educational climate that is hostile to diverse views and prejudicial against those who hold them has serious implications for free speech, academic freedom, and open inquiry for students and faculty alike (O'Donohue & Fisher, 2022).

Consider the required "Whiteness" course taught in the counseling program at a university in the Northeastern United States. The course focuses on: "systemic racial inequities; White culture, power, and privilege, and guilt; personal racism; White ethnicity; and skill building in antiracist advocacy (Rothman et al., 2012, p. 40)." The course foci were derived from the literature on race-based counselor competencies, which suggests that counselors be educated on systemic racial inequities, White privilege, and racial identity. It is hoped that students will become aware of racial identities, overcome the colorblind mindset, and internalize a commitment to fight racism.

Reacting to the consciousness-raising content in many of her courses, one counseling student observed that, "[a] lesson on white privilege ... talked about how white people are more privileged than other populations ... It seemed like a lesson

in hypocrisy, that no matter how culturally sensitive I am, how multiculturally competent I become ... I will always be a white oppressor ... Stop shaming white people. I am more than my skin color” (Arthur & Collins, 2014, p. 32).

A counseling student asked what this pedagogy would mean for White clients: “When you seek counseling, how [would] you feel knowing that the person supposedly providing you with empathy and care sees you as an oppressor ... How is this healthy and productive for anyone?” (Student J, 2020). A White woman who recently obtained her doctoral degree in counseling psychology was struck by the overt bias among instructors. They routinely derided conservatives as “ignorant and uneducated,” she said, noting that antagonism was directed at trainees who questioned the relevance of social justice dogma to their clinical cases. “If we were not combating oppression, we were contributing to it,” she said (Satel, 2021).

Moreover, some SJC courses lack substantive content on psychopathology or psychotherapeutic techniques. Professor Gazzola et al. (2018) explain that in their courses, “the process of sharing, reflecting, and relating ... become the main instructional tools ... as all participants in the classroom community are socially situated, their lived experiences provide vivid illustrations of the social structures that generate privileges and oppressions” (p. 50). One wonders about the percentage of class time devoted to such consciousness-raising sessions or feel-good projects like the construction of a “Tunnel of Oppression” or teaching students how to organize protests, as some counseling programs now do (Ratts, 2009; DeBlaere et al., 2019).

Alexander Adams, a pseudonymous recent graduate of a master’s program in counseling, recently wrote an essay for *Critical Therapy Antidote* entitled “My Master’s Degree in Counseling Psychology Taught Me a Lot About ‘Social Justice’ But Very Little About Counseling or Psychology” (Adams, 2021). He describes two and a half years of “incompetence and mediocrity” – at a cost of \$70,000 in (borrowed) money – during which teachers felt free to lecture students about their political beliefs and trainees were instructed on “the dynamics and dilemmas of microaggressions” and “developing a nonracist and antiracist white identity.”

## **Social Justice Activism by Therapists: Ethics, Training, and Effective Psychotherapy**

Social justice is (in theory, at least) a worthy societal goal. But political bias or activism has no place in the relationship between a psychotherapist and her client. Nor does it have a place in the classroom or in the relationship between a professor and his or her students. The American Counseling Association Code of Ethics (2014, p. 5) states that:

Counselors are [to be] aware of—and avoid imposing—their own values, attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors. Counselors respect the diversity of clients, trainees, and research participants and seek training in areas in which they are at risk of imposing their values onto clients, especially when the counselor’s values are inconsistent with the client’s goals or are discriminatory in nature.

SJT risks the imposition of a particular set of values and beliefs. It threatens to collapse a time-honored sanctuary for introspection under the weight of stereotyping, conditional compassion, rehearsed oppression narratives, and, perhaps most pernicious of all, the gratification of the therapist's own quest, sincere as it may be, for high moral ground. Certainly, it speaks volumes about the current ideological environment that officials at the University of Vermont's Counseling Program would feel at liberty to endorse the adoption of Kendi-esque imperatives without any apparent fear of censure from the ACA or the University.

Redding and Silander (2023) have developed a set of "Sociopolitical Competency Guidelines" on ethical and efficacious practices when it comes to dealing with sociopolitical issues in psychology. The following principles are especially relevant for ensuring that SJC education and practice respects ideologically diverse perspectives, clients, and students. Psychologists should:

1. Appreciate how their own sociopolitical values may influence or bias their views of others
2. Recognize that some therapeutic approaches may conflict with client values
3. Recognize that sociopolitical discrimination is a form of discrimination
4. Determine when their sociopolitical values influence case conceptualization, assessment, diagnosis, and treatment goals and modify treatment plans to remain consistent with clients' goals and sociopolitical values
5. Not discriminate on the basis of sociopolitical values, pathologize client sociopolitical values, or inappropriately influence client values.

Thus, social-justice therapists – all therapists, for that matter – should be conscious of how their ideological orientation may bias their views of clients, particularly those whose politics differ from such an orientation. Likewise, therapists should be conscious of the ways in which their politics may influence their case conceptualization and treatment plan, especially when the client's problems touch on sociopolitical values, and ensure that the treatment plan does not conflict with the client's values or treatment goals. Importantly, therapists should try to ensure that any conflict or mismatch between their politics and those of the client do not undermine the therapeutic alliance or the therapist's empathy for the client, and that the therapist does not impose values or a politically-charged treatment approach on the client.

Moreover, graduate and post-graduate education should incorporate training on clinical issues surrounding clients' sociopolitical diversity. Even social-justice-oriented counseling programs should not screen out applicants whose politics fail to conform to those prevailing among program faculty. On the contrary, programs should explicitly seek out sociopolitically diverse applicants. Diversifying the profession in this way ensures that we have a cadre of professionals capable of serving sociopolitically heterogeneous communities and clientele and students are exposed to a breadth of perspectives and therapeutic approaches rather than having their horizons narrowed and funneled toward one sociopolitical perspective.

## Conclusion

We have shown that mental health professionals are replacing evidence-driven therapeutics with political ideology and an activist agenda in graduate programs and clinical practica and internships. Until relatively recently, people seeking mental healthcare could expect their therapists to keep politics out of the office. But as counselor education programs and perhaps even psychology as a whole and its professional organizations embrace a social justice perspective and agenda, that bedrock principle of neutrality is crumbling.

The stakes are high. When therapists use clients as receptacles for their worldview, they are not led to introspection, nor are they emboldened to experiment with new attitudes, perspectives, and actions. Clients labeled by their therapists as oppressors can feel alienated and confused; those branded as oppressed learn to see themselves as feeble victims. It is difficult to imagine how a healthy therapeutic alliance between counselor and client – a core bond nurtured through a clinician’s posture of caring neutrality and compassionate detachment – could thrive under these conditions.

Psychologists ought to be worried about this corruption – a fair word – of the therapeutic enterprise. We should be concerned for colleagues who feel pressure to conform and for the clients who depend on them. Yet we remain hopeful that a majority of clinicians see the need to resist the ideological encroachment into the field to rebuff politicized narratives, to re-assert the primacy of individual clients in all their complexity.

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# Chapter 20

## Dissecting Darwin’s Drama: Understanding the Politicization of Evolutionary Psychology Within the Academy



Alexander Mackiel, Jennifer K. Link, and Glenn Geher

No single book has been quite so influential in the scientific community as Charles Darwin’s *On the Origin of Species*, published in 1859. Darwin changed the way many see the world and opened the eyes of much of the public to the evidence for evolution by means of natural selection. Darwin could have no way of knowing just how influential his work would become, nor how misconstrued it would be in the following centuries. Though of course the field of biology was forever changed, that was not the only place he made waves. Even Darwin himself proclaimed that psychology should someday take into account the effects of evolution and natural selection on the human mind: “In the distant future I see open fields for far more important researches. Psychology will be based on a new foundation, that of the necessary acquirement of each mental power and capacity by gradation” (Darwin, 1859, p. 576).

Perhaps the first person to take Darwin’s work and apply it directly to psychology, after Darwin himself, was Chauncey Wright (see Green, 2009). Wright was an American philosopher in the mid-nineteenth century, who read and accepted *On The Origin of Species* nearly from the moment it came out in 1859. He viewed natural selection as an explanation for human consciousness, arguing that human intellect was derived from the competition among our immediate thoughts and there was therefore a sort of “survival of the fittest” in each human mind at all times (Green,

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2009). In other words, this model posits a selective mechanism of differential ideas being preferred over others (similar to a process of cultural evolution). Wright died of a stroke in 1875, but not before imparting some of his ideas to his good friend and influential psychologist William James.

James developed Wright's ideas about an evolutionary basis of behavior and helped found the functionalist movement (Green, 2009). He expanded on Wright's work and went on to not only accept consciousness as a product of natural selection but also to ponder on what made it useful to humans and how consciousness might be helpful in an animal so as to facilitate it being selected for James' textbook, *Principles of Psychology (1890)* would closely examine the ways consciousness may have been imperative in human evolution and ultimately make a case for the evolution of free will (Green, 2009).

Though evolutionary theory tended to struggle to contend with the ideas of anti-evolution psychological scientists at the time, such as the renowned German scholar, Wilhelm Wundt, the field continued to gather evidence in its favor, and functionalist views (which partly were a proxy for evolutionary approaches to behavior) remained important to many psychologists of the time (Green, 2009).

In particular, psychiatrist Adolf Meyer learned of this functionalist view and was able to apply evolutionary theory and ideas about social adaptation to his work in clinical settings (Green, 2009). In his view of psychiatry, mental ailments were not a matter of brain defects, so much as a problem of insufficient adaptation to the social environment (Green, 2009). This approach mirrors the view of many evolutionary psychologists today, who see much of mental illness prevailing in society as an evolutionary mismatch between the environment of evolutionary adaptedness (EEA) and the current setting in which many humans find themselves.

The early twentieth century was not a good time for evolutionary ideas in psychology. Many made the jump from "certain behaviors and ways of being have an important genetic basis" to "I bet if we control who has children, we can make the species better," thus starting groups fond of eugenics. This state of events would leave a permanent stain on the record of evolutionary psychology, one that many still bring up when attempting to discredit the field. Between the rise of eugenics in the early twentieth century and the world wars that would follow, there was a lull in prominent research in the field. It was not until much later that people would be willing to examine the human mind under an adaptationist lens again.

Things changed when the publication of Desmond Morris' (1967) *The Naked Ape: A Zoologist's study of the Human Mind* made significant waves in American culture. Morris postulated a number of different possible origins of specific aspects of humanity. For instance, he hypothesized that hairlessness evolved to promote bonding. That is, hairlessness necessitates closer physical touch between individuals in order to maintain warmth. He also posited that pair bonding had evolved as a way to ensure females were not mating with other males while their bonded male was away hunting. While today many of these ideas have not stood the test of time (Tanner & Zihlman, 1976; Wrangham, 2009), the book remains an important touchstone in the conversation about how the human body and mind evolved.

Around this same time, Paul Ekman was just starting to publish his now-classic research on the universal human emotions (see Ekman & Friesen, 1971). These scholars found evidence for six basic, “universal” human emotions: disgust, sadness, anger, fear, surprise, and happiness. Ekman’s work led him all over the world, replicated consistently, and curated a convincing case for an evolved set of facial expressions for these six emotions that are shared across cultures (Ekman & Friesen, 1971).

These new arguments for an evolutionary basis of psychology restarted a conversation that had been halted in previous years. And this time, scholars could look at human behavior with the benefit of a more modern understanding of animal ethology (Shimkus & Geher, 2015)—that is, the study of animal behavior from an evolutionary perspective—which was a powerful intellectual movement in Europe in the mid-twentieth century (and which had started to gain more traction in the years prior to *The Naked Ape*’s release). Although Morris may not have been correct, the fact that he and Ekman said these things about behavior’s biological basis at all started to get people to think about an evolutionary basis for psychology. Further, the models that these scholars advanced were not so focused on advancing bigoted ideology, such as eugenics, but, rather, were focused on gaining a better understanding of the human experience as a whole.

Only a few years later from Ekman’s groundbreaking work, E. O. Wilson debuted his approach to the evolution of social behavior in a portion of his book, *Sociobiology: The New Synthesis* (Wilson, 1975). This book is what sparked much of the debate about the idea of human biological determinism and landed itself squarely in the “Nature” side of the Nature vs. Nurture debate. The controversial thesis shared in this book was that of the idea of an evolutionary basis for human social behavior such as altruism and aggression. The idea that these behaviors could be at least in part *genetically determined* started what some, rather dramatically, referred to as the “sociobiology wars” (Seegerstrale, 2000), wherein people believed Wilson was advocating for genetic determinism or the idea that certain aspects of human behavior, like aggression, were inherited via organic evolutionary processes and therefore unchangeable. Other powerful theories of human social behavior emerged during this era, such as ideas on reciprocal altruism (Trivers, 1971), which shed light on the helping of non-kin. Since Trivers’ publication of reciprocal altruism, hundreds of publications have emerged that support the basic premises of this theory (see Cosmides & Tooby, 1992).

Alongside *Sociobiology: The New Synthesis* and reciprocal altruism came *The Selfish Gene* by Richard Dawkins in 1976. Dawkins was intrigued by the works of earlier evolutionary biologists like George C. Williams (1966), *Adaptation and Natural Selection*, who proposed the idea of anthropomorphic genes that are uninterested in the group so much as the self, and all altruistic behaviors are simply a means to continue the line of specific genes. In other words, individuals are altruistic with their direct family members, who carry similar genetic constellations. Dawkins drew from some of Williams’ ideas and went on to explain how altruism is simply a product of “selfish” genes, rather than a desire for the “greater good.” He explains that what is best for the genes is not always best for the society, the

immediate family, or even the individual in which those genes are housed, in fact. Having said this, Dawkins by no means believed that we were slaves to our genes: “Let us try to teach generosity and altruism, because we are born selfish. Let us understand what our own selfish genes are up to, because we may then at least have the chance to upset their designs, something that no other species has ever aspired to do” (Dawkins, 1976, p. 3).

David Buss, a pioneer in the current field of evolutionary psychology, largely rebranded this scholarly approach when he was working at Harvard concurrently with such luminaries as E. O. Wilson, Leda Cosmides, John Tooby, Steven Pinker, Margo Wilson, Martin Daly, and Robert Trivers. As chance would have it, they all found themselves at the same place at the same time, all thinking about the evolution and behavior interface along the same lines. Buss took this torch and famously ran with it, leading to the first-ever textbook in the field, simply titled *Evolutionary Psychology* (published in 1999).

With the publication of *The Adapted Mind* (1992), Barkow, Cosmides, and Tooby introduced what is largely considered the field of evolutionary psychology today. They argued against the idea that evolutionary psychology was entirely focused on the “Nature” side of the Nature vs. Nurture debate and instead proposed an alternative model that there is an interaction between environment and biology. They explained that adaptations necessarily depend on environmental factors: “both the genes and the developmentally relevant environment are the product of evolution” (Barkow et al., 1992, p.84). For example, while one may argue that humans are genetically predisposed to develop language, the particular language that they acquire is one that is determined from the environment in which they are raised. Instead of a *debate* between Nature and Nurture, *The Adapted Mind* proposed the idea of “closed” and “open” developmental programs, where “closed” refers to traits not impacted by environment (visual processing, etc.) and “open” refers to those traits that are impacted by environment (language, etc.). Steven Pinker’s *The Blank Slate*, published in 2002, further addressed the Nature vs. Nurture controversy. Pinker (2002) argues that the Nature vs. Nurture dichotomy is often a false one and challenges the different ways that people have viewed the human mind up to that point, showing how many areas of human life are better informed through an evolutionary psychological lens.

Since the publication of *On the Origin of Species*, there has undoubtedly been controversy surrounding not only evolutionary psychology but around the field of evolution itself. All this continues today, with people still battling in courts about teaching creationism alongside evolution in classrooms. Seeing all these disagreements and anger prompted David Sloan Wilson to write *Evolution for Everyone* (2007) and attempted to make evolutionary theories accessible to people from every background. Premised on the ideas presented in this book, Wilson and his colleagues developed a campus-wide, interdisciplinary evolutionary studies (EvoS) program at Binghamton University to help advance the understanding of evolution and its implications for undergraduate students from any major. SUNY New Paltz, the University of Alabama, and Albright College all soon followed suit. This emergent trend in universities has the capacity to

help provide an increasingly sympathetic context for the teaching of evolutionary psychology.

## The Successes and Spoils of Evolutionary Psychology

The ultimate test of any scientific approach is its theoretical and empirical contributions to science. And the application of evolutionary principles to human psychology has made and continues to make significant contributions to our understanding of mind and behavior. Evolutionary theories that have revolutionized our understanding of human psychology include *kin selection* (Hamilton, 1964), *parental investment theory* (Trivers, 1972), and *reciprocal altruism* (Trivers, 1971). Kin selection refers to the evolutionary strategy that favors the reproductive success of one's relatives. It has helped make sense of seemingly costly behaviors that individuals engage in because such behaviors end up benefiting one's relatives. Parental investment theory refers to the idea that the sex that invests more resources in offspring will be more selective in choosing a mate than the sex that invests less resources in offspring. And reciprocal altruism refers to situations in which an organism acts in a way that seemingly reduces its fitness while increasing another organism's fitness with the expectation that the other organism will return the favor.

Researchers have made new insights into the functional role that social emotions like pride, shame, guilt, and embarrassment play in helping us navigate the social world by applying an evolutionary lens to social psychology (Durkee et al., 2019). In particular, Durkee et al. (2019) argued that pride and shame are components of a status management system, finding cross-cultural evidence that pride tracks status gains, while shame tracks status losses. This finding gives evidence for a potential adaptive function of social emotions like pride and shame, which is that they have evolved for the purpose of managing one's social value in the minds of others. Additionally, Sznycer and Lukaszewski (2019) found evidence that the social emotions are designed to solve adaptive problems relating to social valuation, such as attending to and associating with individuals based on his or her probability of contributing to the fitness of the valuer. Five different social emotions were found to be governed by a system that responds to valuations of characteristics that give social value to oneself and to others, giving preliminary evidence for this functional hypothesis of social emotions solving adaptive problems of social valuation.

Evolutionists have pioneered the use of game theory—a mathematical tool to help model complex decision-making and strategic interactions between two or more agents—in biological contexts such as animal contests related to aggressive display or mating outcomes conceptualized in terms of costs and benefits, as in a game (Maynard Smith & Price, 1973; Geher et al., 2004). It has since been used to help researchers understand how complex social behavior like altruism and reciprocity, key components of cooperation, could have evolved (Hoffman et al., 2015, 2016; Rand et al., 2014). Many social situations people find themselves in are ones of limited knowledge between the parties involved and closely approximate game

theoretic contexts that can be explained using this framework. Additionally, game theoretic insights have helped understand some of the puzzles of morality such as why we value principled over strategic individuals and the omission-commission distinction (Hoffman et al., 2016). The omission-commission distinction is the idea that people judge harmful actions (commissions) more negatively than equally harmful inactions (omissions). Hoffman et al. (2016) argue that this is likely the case since our moral intuitions evolved in contexts where harm is more easily observable and understandable to witnesses when brought about by a specific action rather than an inaction.

Further, an understanding of human evolutionary history has provided crucial insights into how humans think, understand, communicate, and receive communicated information and represent the knowledge of others (Mercier & Sperber, 2011; Pinker & Bloom, 1990; Sperber et al., 2010; Soldá et al., 2019). The term “tribalism” has become a buzzword in the English lexicon in light of the recent political events and growing political polarization in the USA (Alesian et al., 2020). The tribal behaviors that are seen writ large in modern-day politics and perhaps exaggerated by social media, in some degree, originate from an evolutionary history of humans as beings that evolved in small tribes where individuals likely had a strong sense of their relevant in-groups versus their out-groups (Dunbar, 1992; Clark et al., 2019). The human mind is designed in part for group loyalty and for individuals to support their own group or coalition over other groups, which results in motivated reasoning, irrationalities, and cognitive biases (Clark et al., 2019). In this way, an understanding of human evolution provides a conceptual foundation for the popular findings that humans are susceptible to cognitive biases like the confirmation bias and the availability heuristic (Tversky & Kahneman, 1974). Moreover, evolutionary insights in human psychology provide an understanding of not just when and how our thinking is biased but why it is biased and suggest ways in which biased thinking can be overcome (Mercier, 2016; Mercier & Sperber, 2011).

## Politics and Evolutionary Psychology

It might strike one as obvious that political opinions on welfare are correlated with opinions on gun control or that opinions on abortion are correlated with opinions on climate change. However, there is no reason for why this set of empirical tendencies necessarily must be true. Indeed welfare, gun control, abortion, and climate change are independent, unique, and distinct issues from each other. The reason that these seemingly disparate topics aggregate together in predictable patterns (see Pinker, 2002) is because there are different theories of human nature that people have, which underlie how these topics cohere (Pinker, 2002). For example, many Christians are socially conservative; they tend to be against abortion and tend to be skeptical of climate change, gun restrictions, and welfare programs compared to socially liberal individuals (Pew Research Center, 2015). This tendency may be because underlying their political stance is a theory of human nature that humans

are divinely created beings, sinful by nature but capable of redemption only through good acts and proper worship of God. This particular religious theory of human nature may drive Christians to be more open to notions that human beings have flaws that need to be corrected by institutions, that people need incentives to motivate them toward the good and away from the bad, that life is sacred, and that people need to fix themselves rather than seek help from elsewhere. In sum, homogeneity of attitudes across a broad range of issues seems to characterize the human political mind, and this may be playing a role in the resistance to evolutionary psychology.

Apart from religion, another important element of the resistance to evolutionary psychology stems from the lack of a diversity of political and ideological viewpoints in psychology, especially social psychology. One reason for the resistance to evolutionary psychology within the academy may be that the basic idea of evolutionary psychology is on the “wrong” side of the implicit political divide even among secular academics.

## Politics Within the Academy

To best understand the politics surrounding evolutionary psychology in the academy, we need to first step back to understand the general nature of politics among modern academics. Duarte et al. (2015) describes the problem of a lack of diversity of ideological and political views in social psychology and how that has served not only to encourage malpractice within the field, such as failing to rigorously examine favorable findings that evidently end up failing to replicate upon closer scrutiny, but also screen out processes of scrutiny that will lead to the convergence upon truth. This lack of ideological diversity among academic psychologists may help explain the political resistance to evolutionary perspectives in the field.

Duarte et al. (2015) report that among psychologists, 84% identify as liberal, whereas only 8% identify as conservative. The ratio of liberals to conservatives among academic psychologists has climbed precipitously from a near equal ratio in the 1920s to nearly 14:1 in 2015. And this trend is similar for other social scientists and academics within the humanities. Recent surveys report that 58–66% of social science professors in the USA identify as liberals, while only 5–8% identify as conservatives (Duarte et al., 2015). In the humanities, 52–77% of professors identify as liberal, while only 4–8% identify as conservative. Whatever the reasons are for the deep asymmetry in political representation in psychology, the lack of political diversity in academia might create problems for the discipline. Duarte et al. (2015) point to three main risks associated with the paucity of viewpoint diversity: (1) Liberal values and assumptions can become embedded in the very process by which science is conducted; (2) topics and findings may be validated and held under less scrutiny on the basis of falling in accordance with the liberal narrative, while others are invalidated for being in discord with the narrative; and (3) negative attitudes toward conservatives can produce a false narrative regarding their traits and attributes.

In a commentary to Duarte et al. (2015), Steven Pinker (2015) argues that a leftward bias in academic psychology is also related to the lack of deep explanatory theories in psychology. These deeper theories are not simply focused on the *what* or the *how* of psychological phenomena but the *why*. For instance, a list of cognitive biases is no more an answer to the question of human irrationality as a stack of bricks is a home. Lacking from this list of cognitive biases is a deeper understanding of why these biases exist and how they can be turned on or off. What are the domains in which humans are more and less rational? Might certain cognitive biases be rational strategies in special circumstances? Answers to deeper questions such as these require the help of deeper theories, which are often found by traversing the boundaries of psychology and dipping into disciplines such as economics, evolutionary biology, anthropology, sociology, and genetics. However, these sources of explanations are often neglected and even outright rejected when they are being sourced from fields of the biological sciences because they are perceived as coming with pre-packaged political norms. This neglect is especially the case for explanations coming from the evolutionary sciences, and yet the evolutionary and biological sciences arguably have most to contribute to a deeper understanding of human nature given that humans descended with modification through evolutionary time.

## The Politics of a Darwinian Approach to Behavior

Now what does this all have to do with evolutionary psychology? The main pioneers of evolutionary psychology, Barkow et al. (1992) described the main paradigm of the human mind in psychology as inherently antithetical to evolutionary approaches. They called it the “standard social science model” (SSSM) of the mind. This view of the mind is allied with many conceptual ideas that lend themselves to left-leaning ideologies, such as the relative unimportance of biology in understanding human behavior and the idea that culture and socialization are the only major influences on the human mind, which should be thought of as a blank slate at birth, among others (Barkow et al., 1992). However, many of the theoretical and empirical findings of evolutionary psychology have run counter to these philosophical and conceptual underpinnings of social science and have suggested an alternative view of human nature. This conflict of perspectives has contributed to the perception that evolutionary psychology is opposed to left-leaning attitudes, opinions, and topics and, worse, is supporting a right-wing political agenda (Barkow et al., 1992; Tyber et al., 2007).

Even though evolutionary psychologists are often thought of resisting the leftist political orthodoxies, ironically, they themselves are very often included within the statistic that psychologists are generally on the political left (see Tybur et al., 2007). In their work on this issue, Tybur et al. (2007) found that among psychologists, those who refer to themselves as “adaptationist” are no more politically conservative than psychologists who do not ascribe to that label. In fact, only 2 of the 31 evolutionary psychologists (6.5%) compared to 21 of the 137 (18.1%) non-evolutionary psychologists assessed identified as Republican or Libertarian. On a

political orientation scale from  $-3$  (strongly conservative) to  $+3$  (strongly liberal), all the evolutionary psychologists placed themselves left of the midpoint.

So, we have a conundrum. On the one hand, evolutionary psychologists, like most academics, tend to self-identify as politically liberal (see Tybur et al., 2007). On the other hand, academics, in a more general sense, seem to think that the evolutionary approach to behavior is somehow misaligned with the prevailing political narratives that dominate modern-day academia.

## The Prevailing Narratives in Academia

Academia is a famously politicized endeavor (see Wilson et al., 2019). Former US president Woodrow Wilson famously quipped that he left the ivory tower (as an academic administrator at Princeton) to get out of politics (see Brands & Schlesinger, 2003).

Within the humanities and social and behavioral sciences, which consumes a good bit of the academic world, certain narratives have a way of taking hold. Based on various standard social psychological processes, it only makes sense that core, agreed-upon narratives and paradigms will come to dominate such an ideologically based institution as the university.

When people come together in groups, ideas tend to converge on certain consensual realities. This fact follows from such processes as *groupthink* (Janis, 1972), when people in a small, insulated group come to reach consensus about reality, often in spite of mountains of contradictory evidence; the *false consensus effect* (see Bauman & Geher, 2003), which is characterized by a strong tendency for people to believe that others (more than is warranted) share their same beliefs; and *belief perseverance* (see Ross & Nisbett, 1991), which is the deeply entrenched tendency for people to hold onto their beliefs and ideas in spite of just about anything (including contradictory evidence). In combination, these standard social psychological processes have the capacity to create narratives within communities, narratives that stand as “truths” or even as “orthodoxies” to community members (see Haidt, 2016). And, of course, orthodoxies are not to be questioned.

In the past several decades, academia has become largely dominated by faculty and administrators who lean as highly liberal on the political spectrum (see Haidt, 2016). It only makes sense, as a consequence, that content and ideas within academic disciplines—narratives, as it were—would be consistent with principles of a highly liberal political approach.

Of course, political ideology is multifaceted and includes beliefs pertaining to such a broad range of concepts as freedom of speech, immigration policies, free healthcare, rights to bear arms, and so forth. For this reason, one might think that various sub-versions of political ideology would exist. Interestingly, given the social psychological pressures that surround political attitudes, it is, instead, quite often the case that political ideologies often follow a partisan nature, with attitudes about such varied issues following along partisan lines (Frimer et al., 2017).

One of the core features of the modern political left ideology surrounds the issue of equality. The notion of equal opportunities for people, regardless of ethnicity, gender, or socioeconomic status, stands as a pillar of modern left-leaning thinking (see Haidt et al., 2009). We can think of this philosophy as a variant of socialism, which seeks to provide structures that afford equal opportunities and sometimes equal outcomes to all.

Importantly, we are not arguing against a socialistic approach to society at all in this chapter. (In fact, at least one author on our team identifies strongly and publicly as socialistic!) Rather, we raise the salience of socialism, as it characterizes the current state of the political left to provide a sense of the predominant narratives that surround modern academia.

To the extent that a high proportion of academics are generally leftists (see Tyber et al., 2007) when it comes to the idea of social equality, it makes sense that certain elements of the narratives that characterize the modern academy will follow suit. Principles such as gender and ethnic equality, among others, thus, stand as axiomatic within most pockets of the Academy.

One concept that might be interpreted as conflicting with such an equality-based approach to society pertains to the idea of genes corresponding to differentiated psychological attributes. This concept, which we might think of as “genetic determinism” in psychology, has potential to be truly controversial in politics. And it can certainly be extended to the idea of different subgroups who share different genotypes as being more or less likely to have certain behavioral or psychological attributes. And this idea can then be extended, in a dangerous and likely poorly conceptualized way, to ideas related to Social Darwinism (see Wilson, 2019) and even eugenics.

In many ways, concerns about genetic determinism map onto concerns surrounding evolutionary psychology within the academy. Some academics may well read the term “evolutionary psychology” and hear “genetic determinism” (see Geher & Rolon, 2019). And, thus, they may see the basic idea of evolutionary psychology as inconsistent with basic narratives that surround modern academia.

## **Evolutionary Psychology and the Current Academic World**

Interestingly, in fact, evolutionary psychologists rarely focus on the kinds of concerns that so many other academics seem to think that we focus on. The idea of genetic and phenotypic differences across different ethnic groups, for instance, is rarely found in any textbooks in the field of evolutionary psychology. Further, a high proportion of evolutionary psychologists, as elaborated on elsewhere in this manuscript, actually identify politically as strongly left-leaning (see Tybur et al., 2007).

This said, evolutionary psychologists do, in fact, see behavior as ultimately resulting from the interaction between genes and environment and modern-day scholars who fully reject any genetic accounts of causation often reject the entire field outright as a result.

Further, as has been addressed in some of the past work of our lab (see Geher & Gambacorta, 2010), the particular idea of evolved behavioral sex differences, which certainly has been a dominant topic of study in the field, is seen by many modern scholars as being against the specific prevailing narrative of feminism as well as that of biological sex being a spectrum. Many scholars who identify as “feminist” may see the idea of evolved behavioral sex differences as threatening to the entire feminist approach to the human experience. This feminist approach may see sex as socially constructed, and therefore the idea of an evolved set of traits for different sexes challenges that belief. For these reasons, evolutionary psychology, as a field, continues to run into strong pockets of resistance within the academy.

Interestingly, recent research on the way that evolutionary psychology is presented in textbooks that are written by those who are outside the field (e.g., sociologists who write about gender issues) has found that these presentations are often inaccurate (Winegard et al., 2014). In a systematic content analysis of these textbooks, these researchers found that many errors, such as the “naive species selection” fallacy (i.e., the idea that evolved adaptations purportedly were selected to help improve the species as a whole), are rampant in the writing of such textbooks.

So, in the landscape of modern academia, when it comes to evolutionary psychology, we have a problem. On one hand, many who are outside the field see the field as threatening to many of the basic narratives that so many modern scholars hold close to their hearts and to their scholarship. On the other hand, many of these same scholars truly seem to misunderstand what evolutionary psychology even is. In effect, many of these scholars from outside the field are attacking a straw man of evolutionary psychology rather than the actual field itself. Either way, we must conclude that being an evolutionary psychologist in the modern academic world is a dicey business.

## Evolutionary Psychology Inside the Ivory Tower

While the basic premises of evolutionary psychology may cut against the grain of many prevailing narratives within the academy, in many ways, the field is growing and advancing as well. Research has demonstrated the growing impact of evolutionary psychology on personality and social psychology research (Webster, 2007). Webster (2007) conducted a content analysis of the *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* from 1985 to 2004 and found that evolutionary psychology has been showing greater representation compared to other areas of psychology. Additionally, Webster (2007) found that evolutionary psychology is growing at a rate that is similar to other areas within social and personality psychology such as neuroscience, psychophysiology, and emotion and motivation, among others. Moreover, Glass et al. (2012) show that over a third of the publications in a prestigious psychology journal *Behavioral and Brain Sciences* are informed by evolutionary perspectives. However, authors of research within this journal report the lack of formal training in evolution in their graduate degree programs. Generally,

these authors report having experienced much resistance to the field of evolutionary psychology both during their own graduate training and at their current universities.

From its inception, the field of evolutionary psychology has been met with a considerable amount of skepticism and, in many cases, outright hostility. Richard Dawkins argues that this is troubling given that the central claim of evolutionary psychology proceeds from a basic acceptance and understanding of biology: that minds, like every other functional organ, should be thought of as, at least in part, products of Darwinian selection (Dawkins, 2005). Researchers advancing evolutionary explanations for the phenomena of the human mind, instead of facing standard criticisms of their research on scientific grounds, have had to deal with a large amount of ideological and political resistance (Buss & Hippel, 2018). More concerning, the main resistance to the field has been coming not from lay people but scholars and academics. Why is it that so many well-educated people who are highly capable of advancing scientific knowledge about the human condition seemingly unable to think sensibly about evolutionary perspectives on human behavior?

Much of the resistance to evolutionary psychology in academia may be coming from the general rejection of evolutionary perspectives on human psychology from broad swaths of the psychological community. For instance, a recent survey of social psychologists' attitudes toward evolution found reasons for why they find evolutionary psychology objectionable (Buss & Hippel, 2018). In that study, social psychologists showed near-unanimous agreement with the notion that Darwinian evolution is an actual process by which all of life has been shaped and unanimously rejected the idea that humans are an exception to evolution. Despite this understanding of Darwinian evolution, their agreement was much more variable to the statement that those same evolutionary processes apply to the human mind (Buss & Hippel, 2018).

In other words, for social psychologists, evolution becomes controversial precisely when it is applied above the neck. But why? Perhaps the notion of evolved minds clashes with their religious views or interferes with their feelings that humans are exceptional. Or maybe it has more to do with specific areas of research within evolutionary psychology that have demonstrated to be controversial, such as topics like the psychology of violence, attractiveness, and sex differences (see below). And, indeed, Buss and Hippel (2018) found that some of these "hot button" issues were significant and unique predictors of belief in evolutionary psychology, and it had nothing to do with religious views or feelings of human exceptionalism.

## Specific Controversies Surrounding Evolutionary Psychology

It is important to recognize that the application of biology to understanding human psychology has been deeply problematic in the past. Principles of biology and of the evolutionary sciences were invoked to justify and rationalize the unequal treatment of women and racial minorities (see Grossi et al., 2014). Variants of Darwinism

were, in fact, distorted by racist and bigoted intellectuals in the past to create social Darwinism and to uphold eugenicist practices and ideas (see Wilson, 2019). Thus, it is likely that the deeply problematic history of applying biology to human affairs plays some role in scholars' resistance to evolutionary psychology today. And we should not forget this fact.

However, it is important not to take previous academic sins as the death knell to a discipline that has been making great strides in furthering our understanding of human psychology. Indeed, there have been several controversies surrounding evolutionary psychology, many of which are based on logical fallacies and common misperceptions of what it means to apply biological concepts to human psychology. Geher and Rolon (2019) describe several of these controversies:

1. The evolved-behavioral-sex-differences controversy
2. The religion controversy
3. The genetic-determinism controversy
4. The bad-science controversy
5. The eugenics controversy

Several of these controversies, described in detail below, speak to hot-button social issues, such as the role of women in society and the potential influence of genes on human intellect. In a broad sense, the fact that the field of evolutionary psychology touches on such hot-button issues partly accounts for its controversial nature.

The evolved behavioral sex differences controversy involves the issue of whether men and women differ in important psychological variables. Evolutionary psychologists take the approach that since there are important physiological differences between men and women based on biological sex, behavioral strategies between the sexes should differ as well (Buss, 2017). These include personality dimensions, interests such as occupational interests and preferring objects over people, and, perhaps most controversial, abilities. It is important to note that the question of whether the sexes differ is an empirical one and a question to which answers really do matter. A number of studies do show that there are important and significant differences between men and women in personality (Kaiser et al., 2019; Weisberg et al., 2011) and occupational interests (Archer, 2019), however, not very much when it comes to psychological abilities like intelligence (Colom et al., 2000). Recently, a comprehensive review of the human psychological sex differences research showed that there are a substantial number of sex differences ranging from small to very large, in many areas of psychology such as aggression, violence, risk-taking, fearfulness, social relations, occupational choice, mate choice, and negative emotions (Archer, 2019). These sex differences are real and, in some cases, very substantial, such as in the cases of homicide and sexual violence (Archer, 2019).

However, many have dismissed the research on sex differences as not only unimportant but as inherently problematic to begin with. Geher and Gambacorta (2010) demonstrated that political orientation and academic status were predictive of attitudes to the origins of sex differences in humans. Those who identified as liberal and

those who were academics were more likely to ascribe sex differences to “Nurture” over “Nature.” However, there was no significant correlation between political orientation or academic status and sex differences in nonhuman animals or on topics related to human universals. In other words, the topic of sex differences, in particular, was uniquely associated with politicization.

The problem with politicization is that facts have no loyalties to the political left or the right. Opponents of evolutionary psychology often fail to separate empirical facts from moral commitments. They presume that our moral commitment to equal treatment of the sexes is dependent on there being no differences between the sexes. To this point, cognitive psychologist Steven Pinker put it best: “Equality is not the empirical claim that all groups of humans are interchangeable; it is the moral principle that individuals should not be judged or constrained by the average properties of their group” (Pinker, 2002, p. 340). In other words, the question of whether the sexes differ in important psychological variables has no bearing on the question of whether we ought to treat individuals differently based on the findings about their group.

The *religion controversy* concerns the issue of whether endorsing evolution necessarily contradicts religious belief. The religion controversy is perhaps the oldest controversy regarding evolution that originated in the days of Charles Darwin. The view of life that Darwin found tremendous evidence for seemed for many people to clash with their deep-seated religious values and beliefs. His theory of natural selection posited that there is a natural mechanism by which organisms adapt to their environments without recourse to divine intervention or human specialness. Indeed, the theory does not even require foresight or any kind of planning but is, as Richard Dawkins writes, *a blind mechanistic force* (Dawkins, 1986).

Many critics of evolutionary psychology voice the concern that by studying the biological bases of the human mind and behavior, researchers are affirming that psychology (and important differences between individual’s psychology) is genetically determined. This angle opens the door to some disagreeable conclusions such as the conclusion that people have no control over their behavior and that humanities’ sins are unchangeable and deterministic. In other words, we are bound to be homicidal, genocidal, and xenophobic, because our genes made us that way. In fact, this logic is fatally flawed for several reasons. Like any scientific area of inquiry, the goal of evolutionary psychology is to explain natural phenomena. Like the laws of thermodynamics, the principles of evolution are inexorable and uncaring. Natural selection increases the frequency of those genes that lead to higher reproductive fitness in individuals that have them. Additionally, genes do not prescribe behaviors, since behaviors are the product of complex interplays between genetic, ontogenetic, environmental, and cultural factors.

Pioneers of evolutionary psychology, John Tooby and Leda Cosmides, give the example of a callus-forming adaptation that all humans have coded in their genome (Tooby & Cosmides, 2016). Possessing the gene or genes for callus formation is a necessary but not a sufficient criterion for someone to have calluses. This is because callus formation depends on both the genetic code and the environmental determinant, namely, friction. If one were to wear gloves to prevent friction on their hands,

they then will not form calluses. Similarly, many agreeable as well as disagreeable traits in humans, such as our aggressive and violent tendencies, have an adaptive and therefore genetic basis, but that does not entail determinability, inevitability, or inflexibility. Like callus formation, changing one's environment and shifting the social norms and incentives toward peaceable goals can prevent the expression of the darker side of human nature.

The *bad science controversy* in evolutionary psychology concerns the often-stated argument that evolutionary psychology is a field of research, riddled with unfalsifiable claims, just-so stories, pot hoc justifications, and ad hoc explanations, among others. The just-so story criticism is perhaps the most damning criticism of the field, partially because it is somewhat true. The evolutionary sciences are fundamentally retrospective, making guesses about life in the past using only evidence that we have today; however, this is not a damning criticism but a feature of how evolutionary science works. Where the just-so story criticism goes wrong is in saying that evolutionary psychology puts forth unfalsifiable claims, a claim which itself is falsifiable and indeed patently false (Dawkins, 2005).

Much of the hostility toward evolutionary accounts of human behavior can be described by a rather short list of common misperceptions and logical fallacies such as the fallacy of automatically deriving statements of moral value from statements of fact (is/ought fallacy), the fallacy of concluding that something is good or morally desirable because it is natural (the naturalistic fallacy), and the inability to distinguish between the how and the why of human behavior (proximate vs. ultimate distinction). On this point, cognitive psychologist, Steven Pinker, describes three central doctrines within the social sciences that contribute to the hostility many have against the application of evolutionary principles to human life: the *blank slate*, the *noble savage*, and the *ghost in the machine*.

The blank slate is the presumption that the mind is a clean slate at birth, awaiting the influence of experience, culture, and socialization. In this view, people differ from one another not from any biological reasons but from their different histories. The doctrine of the noble savage is that people are naturally peaceable, selfless, and good and that all the bad things we see among humanity, from greed to selfishness to violence, are products of the corrupting influence of civilization. Last, the ghost in the machine is the doctrine that who we are most centrally; our mind, our soul, is non-physical and distinct from our brain. In this sense, it shares significant similarities to Cartesian dualism.

While many do not explicitly believe or endorse these doctrines or even take them to their logical extremes, there is ample evidence that these three doctrines form the backdrop of modern intellectual life. Adherence to these doctrines lies behind most objections to applying biology to the social sciences. For example, the study of population differences has been one of the most controversial areas of science (see Wilson, 2019, for an extensive discussion of this point). It involves the attempt to apply biology to understanding how people who belong to different gender, race, and socioeconomic status groups differ from each other. In fact, when examining mainstream evolutionary psychology textbooks, one finds little evidence of a focus on such large-scale group differences rooted in genetic differences (see

Burch, 2020). In fact, the few scholars in the field who have tried to advance work on the topic of genetic effects related to race and intelligence have had their work largely discredited from within the field itself (see Dutton, 2013). Thus, many of the purported hot-button topics in the field, such as the idea of inherent racial differences in intelligence, are, in fact, not truly part of the edifice of evolutionary psychology.

On the other hand, the study of human universals—universal expressions of emotions, cues to attractiveness, and patterns of violence—has also been problematized and framed as a hot-button issue in its own right. The study of human universals runs counter to blank slatism, according to which universals would be unlikely if people begin at zero and experience varying life histories (Pinker, 2002). Additionally, many of these universals are rather disagreeable, which runs counter to the noble savage doctrine. Evolutionary psychologists are then uniquely positioned in opposition to these three central doctrines because of their attempts to understand human psychological similarities, reasons for why humans differ from each other (e.g., sex differences research), mental adaptations, contrary to blank slatism, and that the functions of the mind are solely products of the brain (Pinker, 2002).

## Evolutionary Psychology and the Heterodoxy Movement

Partly as a pushback against the ideological homogeneity within the academy that is described herein, a recent trend within the academy has been to underscore the importance of *heterodoxy*, or an approach to ideas that is inclusive of multiple perspectives and ideologies (Haidt, 2016). Toward this end, the Heterodox Academy has been formed to help advance intellectual dialog and scholarship that underscores the importance of viewpoint diversity within the academy. Such viewpoint diversity often pertains to political diversity, but it may also bear on intellectual-perspective-based diversity as well. For instance, a truly heterodox department of sociology might make sure to include both *social constructionist* scholars, who focus on human behavior as the result of social forces and constructs, and *essentialist* scholars, who focus on such essential causes of human outcomes as genes, hormones, and other biological factors.

In 2018, under the leadership of Richard Redding, a group of behavioral scientists held a conference titled the Heterodox Psychology Workshop. This conference focused on advancing the general idea of heterodoxy in the behavioral sciences in particular. This event, which was well attended and which generated a great deal of enthusiasm, had a large focus on evolutionary psychology in particular. To this point, it is noteworthy that such leading evolutionary scholars as Leda Cosmides, John Tooby, and Catherine Salmon all gave invited presentations.

The fact that evolutionary psychology was highlighted at the first-ever meeting of the Heterodox Psychology group was not coincidental. As demarcated throughout this chapter, for years, evolutionary approaches to behavior have been largely

marginalized within the behavioral sciences, largely on political grounds and on grounds that the evolutionist approach to behavior is not fully consistent with the prevailing narratives that surround the modern academy writ large. In sum, evolutionary psychology, as a field, stands as a clear exemplar of scholarly work that cuts against the grain and across traditional psychology branches and that may be, thus, characterized as “heterodox” in nature.

## The Future of Evolutionary Psychology

Throughout the tumultuous history of evolutionary theory and, more specifically, evolutionary theory as it is applied to the psychological sciences, Darwin and his ideas have been venerated and torn apart alike. From Chauncey Wright's first ideas about the evolutionary basis of consciousness in 1860 to *The Adapted Mind* in 1992 evolutionary psychology has been through a lot in its time as a field in academia. Although it no doubt had innumerable arguments espoused against it, it remains a prominent feature in the psychological landscape, refusing to budge.

With *The Blank Slate*, Steven Pinker (2002) managed to challenge the classic views of humanity in eyes of social psychologists and in doing so changed and inspired the way that many modern researchers view the processes that make up the human mind and how they may be impacted not only by our environment but by the very same mechanism that created our ability to walk on two legs and breathe out carbon dioxide. Despite the push back that evolutionary psychology has received, it continues to provide new and exciting research in the field of psychology and provide insights into the human condition (see Geher, 2014).

Evolutionary theory may still be controversial to some. And we acknowledge that many of the objections outlined above to evolutionary psychology in the past and in the present are valid. But with visionaries like David Sloan Wilson (2019) being able to imagine a world where evolution is available to everyone, there could be a bright future yet for the way that evolutionary psychology is viewed by academics and lay people alike. We think that the current heterodox movement, which seeks to advance intellectual viewpoint diversity in a large-scale manner, can help facilitate a better understanding of evolutionary psychology to help us realize Darwin's vision of using evolutionary concepts to improve the broader human experience. But, of course, only time will tell.

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# Chapter 21

## Parental Punishment: Don't Throw Out the Baby with the Bathwater



Robert E. Larzelere, David Reitman, Camilo Ortiz, and Ronald B. Cox Jr.

“One of the most incredible psychological dogmas of the twentieth century [is] that punishment is ineffective in eliminating undesirable responses. This dogma is contrary to so much evidence, naturalistic as well as experimental, that it is about as difficult to believe as that the earth is flat” (Marx & Hillix, 1979, p. 50).

In 2018, the APA Task Force on Physical Punishment of Children recommended an APA resolution opposing all physical punishment, concluding that the “Research on physical punishment has met the requirements for causal conclusions” (Gershoff et al., 2018, p. 635). Although the Task Force cited five meta-analyses, they relied almost entirely on Gershoff and Grogan-Kaylor’s (2016) evidence against physical punishment, which came exclusively from unadjusted correlations, mostly (55%) cross-sectional (Gershoff & Grogan-Kaylor, 2016, p. 455, 463–464). The Task Force ignored two stronger meta-analyses that went beyond correlations either by controlling statistically for preexisting differences (Ferguson, 2013) or by comparing effect sizes of physical punishment with those of alternative disciplinary tactics (Larzelere & Kuhn, 2005). These other meta-analyses concluded that harmful effects of physical punishment were “trivial” (Ferguson, 2013) or limited to severe and predominant use of physical punishment (Larzelere & Kuhn, 2005). The Task

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Force did cite several statistically controlled longitudinal studies as their strongest replicated evidence against physical punishment (Gershoff et al., 2018, p. 629–631) but neglected to say that Ferguson's (2013) meta-analysis had shown the mean effect size of such studies to explain only one-half of 1% of the variance in the outcomes, an amount he referred to as trivial (Ferguson, 2013). A more recent "narrative" review emphasized the consistency of this adverse-looking effect (Heilmann et al., 2021), which looks impressive until realizing that such a trivial-sized effect is easily explained by a systematic bias (Larzelere et al., 2015), which epidemiologists recognize as residual confounding (Rothman et al., 2008). Indeed, this effect it is so small (mean  $\beta = 0.07$ ) that behavior problems actually decrease significantly more after being spanked than after not being spanked according to difference-score analyses (Larzelere et al., 2018a). It is no wonder that these types of correlational and statistically controlled longitudinal studies have been explicitly excluded from evaluating the effectiveness of psychotherapies by the APA, ever since Chambless and Hollon (1998, pp. 7–8) concluded, "Some argue that statistical controls alone can suffice to draw causal inferences [but] these approaches are so susceptible to model misspecification and inferential error that any conclusion drawn on their basis must be tentative indeed."

The standards for meeting sufficient "requirements for causal conclusions" in the American Psychological Association (APA) thus appear to depend more on the desirability of the conclusion than on the rigor of the evidence. The pattern of evidence for customary use of disciplinary spanking and psychotherapy on subsequent trends in externalizing problems is similar to each other (Table 21.1) and to other corrective actions (Larzelere et al., 2018c). However, APA's psychologists have promoted different "causal" conclusions by selecting distinct parts of this pattern of evidence depending on the conclusion's desirability. Unadjusted correlations and ANCOVA-type controls have been considered sufficient causal evidence to oppose all spanking by parents (Gershoff et al., 2018), even though such evidence is explicitly excluded from empirical evaluations of any psychotherapy. Psychotherapies are held to the higher standard of replicated randomized controlled trials. It would be unrealistic to require randomized studies before opposing spanking (something similar occurs with smoking research). It is not unrealistic, however, to expect evidence that would make spanking look more harmful than the disciplinary responses recommended to replace it, and certainly, it should show spanking to be more harmful than professional treatments for similar problems in children. Yet Table 21.1 indicates that the pattern of evidence is similar across equivalent types of evidence for all these corrective actions that are intended to correct disruptive behavior problems in young children.

The biggest problem is not that psychologists are using biased evidence to oppose all spanking but that these biased standards discourage research from finding effective replacements for spanking, especially for oppositional defiance and related behavior problems. Because of their reliance on correlational evidence, all known attempts of anti-spanking researchers to identify effective responses to non-compliance have failed, despite 88 statistical tests of 16 alternative tactics in 2 studies (Gershoff et al., 2010; Van Leeuwen et al., 2012). Accordingly, most anti-spanking

**Table 21.1** Associations of three corrective actions with subsequent levels or changes in externalizing behavior problems in standardized regression coefficients by type of evidence<sup>a</sup>

Type of evidence	Spanking	Nonphysical punishments	Psychotherapy
Cross-sectional correlations	.20*** <sup>b</sup>	.23*** <sup>c</sup>	.14*** <sup>c</sup>
Longitudinal correlations	.16*** <sup>b</sup>	.18*** <sup>c</sup>	.13*** <sup>c</sup>
ANCOVA-type controls for initial differences	.07*** <sup>b</sup>	.03 <sup>c</sup>	.04 <sup>c</sup>
Subsequent within-person changes	-.04* <sup>b</sup>	-.05 <sup>c</sup>	.00 <sup>c</sup>
Randomized vs. control	-.35* <sup>d</sup>	-.63* <sup>c</sup>	-.24*** <sup>f</sup>
Randomized vs. effective treatment	.10 <sup>d</sup>	-.50* <sup>c</sup>	-.05 <sup>g</sup>

\* $p < 0.05$ . \*\*\* $p < 0.001$

<sup>a</sup>Positive standardized regression coefficients ( $\beta$ 's) indicate harmful-looking associations, whereas negative  $\beta$ 's indicate beneficial-looking associations. Note that  $\beta = r$  in first two rows

<sup>b</sup>Larzelere et al. (2018a, p. 2044), similar to Gershoff and Grogan-Kaylor (2016) for correlations and to Ferguson (2013) for ANCOVA-type controls

<sup>c</sup>Mean effect sizes from the only published statistically controlled longitudinal analyses of spanking and alternatives (nonphysical punishments and psychotherapy), which used nationally representative studies in Canada (Larzelere et al., 2010b, pp. 182–185) and in the USA (Larzelere et al., 2010a, pp. 7–8)

<sup>d</sup>Based on two and three randomized studies of the spank backup for timeout in the last two rows, respectively: Larzelere and Kuhn (2005, p. 20)

<sup>e</sup>Based on two studies and one study for the last two rows, respectively, for the effect of timeout on externalizing problems (Larzelere et al., 2020, pp. 299–300)

<sup>f</sup>Weisz et al. (2019, p. 227)

<sup>g</sup>A therapy can be empirically supported by results equivalent to another empirically supported therapy, given an adequate sample size, according to APA criteria for empirical support for therapies (Kaminski & Claussen, 2017, p. 482)

researchers oppose all punishment, including timeout (Gershoff et al., 2010; Holden et al., 2017). They prefer exclusively (or “strong”) positive parenting, which opposes the use of all punishment. Despite its limited scientific support (Larzelere et al., 2017), exclusive use of positive parenting dominates many popular parenting books (e.g., Markham, 2012; Nelsen, 2006; Siegel & Bryson, 2014a) as well as the viewpoints of anti-spanking researchers. For example, exclusively positive parenting (e.g., Durrant, 2011) was the only alternative to spanking offered at the Global Summit on Ending Corporal Punishment and Promoting Positive Discipline (Holden, 2011). The opposition to timeout is especially problematic, given that most of the empirically supported treatments for defiant disorders in young children feature timeout along with positive reinforcement (Kaminski & Claussen, 2017). Anti-punishment advocates seem to be getting their message out to the general public much better than the dwindling number of punishment researchers (Lydon et al., 2015).

Given the current movement against all punishment, this chapter summarizes the scientific evidence about punishment. Much of that research comes from previous decades, given the decline of punishment research in recent years. Of course,

ubiquitous negative side effects might also warrant opposition to punishment, so we will summarize evidence on unintended effects.

## **Punishment Controversy**

In 1995, the parents of two young adults with severe developmental disabilities initiated a legal challenge against new legislation in Ontario that prohibited them from continuing to consent to electric-shock treatment for their two children (Gerhardt, 1996). That treatment had proven far more effective than anything else to prevent their children from harming themselves with extreme self-injurious behavior. Three other parents testified that the treatment had cured similar behaviors in their children, who had previously struck themselves from 30 to 124 times per minute, making them bloody and causing blindness in one of their eyes. One of the two suing parents testified that her son had banged his head up to 300 or 400 times per day before this treatment, unless fully restrained or medically sedated. All five parents testified that they had tried multiple treatments for many years before reluctantly trying aversive treatment, and all five testified that the treatment had benefited their children greatly.

This case illustrates the current conflict between advocates and critics of punishment. Although parents and professionals rightly prefer the least aversive treatments that will improve children's well-being, anti-punishment advocates have undermined consideration of effective discipline and treatments for too many children (Johnston et al., 2006). This chapter argues that child well-being is best served when parents and professionals choose treatments that maximize effectiveness and minimize aversiveness, based on the best available science rather than having their options unnecessarily constrained. Although more research is needed, the extant literature demonstrates that properly implemented procedures that include punishment can be the best option for many children in some situations.

## **Definitions**

Controversy about punishment starts with its definition. Most behavioral psychologists define punishment in terms of its effect, similar to defining reinforcement in terms of its effect. This results-oriented definition refers to punishment as any stimulus that, when appearing after a targeted behavior, reduces the subsequent likelihood of that behavior (Cipani, 2004; Van Houten, 1983). This definition "guarantees" the effectiveness of punishment but limits consideration of the characteristics of a stimulus that make a given punishment procedure likely to be effective.

Alternative definitions refer to a procedure of imposing aversive consequences following a targeted misbehavior that is *intended* to reduce the recurrence of that misbehavior (Cipani, 2004; Parke, 1977). This chapter defines punishment as an aversive condition imposed to try to reduce a target misbehavior but further defines “aversiveness” as a situation that is less desirable than the situation the child would be experiencing otherwise. From this perspective, timeout is aversive only to the extent that the child would find it more desirable to be out of timeout. Note also that this type of aversiveness always exists as long as some situations are more desirable than others.

This definition of punishment encompasses both positive and negative punishment (Lydon et al., 2015; Miltenberger, 2001), parallel to positive and negative reinforcement. Positive punishment is the imposition of an aversive condition following a misbehavior that is intended to reduce the rate of recurrence of that misbehavior. Negative punishment is the removal of a positive reinforcing condition after a misbehavior to try to reduce the recurrence of that misbehavior. Positive punishers include restraint, physical punishment, extra chores, restitution, and overcorrection, whereas negative punishers include timeout (i.e., the removal of freedom) and privilege removal. These punishments meet the results-oriented definition of punishment only if they are effective in reducing the target misbehavior in that particular situation, regardless of intent. Thus, “results-oriented” and “aversiveness” definitions of punishment are ultimately related by the effectiveness of aversive conditions in reducing the target misbehavior.

### ***Too Aversive?***

At what level of aversiveness should punishment be prohibited? Consider mild electric shock. Many find any shock dosage to be abhorrent regardless of its effectiveness. Yet a recent article summarized 173 young people treated at a center that provides mild electric shock treatment for severe aggression and self-injurious behaviors that had otherwise been resistant to change (Blenkush & O’Neill, 2020). All cases had been rejected by, unsuccessfully treated in, or expelled from other settings that used a combination of behavioral interventions and psychotropic medications. Attempts were made in the center to reduce their severely aggressive or health-threatening behaviors without aversive treatment for as long as 6 months, which led to successful treatment for 83% of their clients. After other treatments proved inadequate, aversive shock treatment reduced the rate of those severe behaviors in clients not responding to more positive approaches by an average of 97% in the first full month of treatment. The need to use aversive punishment then decreased dramatically as the problematic behaviors subsequently occurred much less often.

This example highlights the issue of whether some punishment procedures are too aversive to be tolerated even when shown to be effective in reducing problem behavior. The moral convictions of anti-punishment advocates may compel them to oppose all use of electric shock by professional therapists, regardless of its effectiveness. Other anti-punishment advocates have sought to ban all physical punishment by parents, “however light” (Sege, Siegel, Council on Child Abuse and Neglect, & Committee on Psychosocial Aspects of Child and Family Health, 2018, p. 2). Four leading anti-spanking researchers go further, opposing punishments as mild as timeout (Holden et al., 2017). A few behavioral clinicians have also opposed the use of timeout (e.g., Lutzker, 1994).

Opposition to timeout has also grown in popular parenting books (Markham, 2012; Siegel & Bryson, 2014a, b.) as well as among some parenting researchers (Durrant, 2016; Holden et al., 2016). This led to several journal articles defending timeout (Dadds & Tully, 2019; Morawska & Sanders, 2011; Quetsch et al., 2015). A recent meta-analysis documented its effectiveness for oppositional defiance in young children (Larzelere et al., 2020), with large effect sizes (mean *ds* of 1.78 and 1.48 for reducing noncompliance and externalizing behavior problems, respectively). If two interventions are equally effective, the less aversive one should be preferred, but absolute opposition to any of these levels of aversiveness will prevent some children from achieving their full potential in life.

## *Ethical Issues*

Punishment has always been controversial. Most punishment researchers have acknowledged the conflict between preferred values and objective science. Azrin and Holz’s (1966) 68-page chapter on punishment noted that few people approach punishment neutrally: “our reaction to the use of punishment often seems to be determined by prescientific opinions” (p. 380). They noted that public opinion had turned against punishment in the 1960s, despite its wide use in classrooms and homes for centuries.

We do not question the good intentions of those who advance exclusively “positive parenting” as an alternative to procedures that include punishment (Holden et al., 2016; Sidman, 1989). But we concur with researchers who advocate for the best scientific understanding of punishment (Azrin & Holz, 1966). If nothing else, punishment needs to be studied because it is so pervasive in life (G. C. Walters & Grusec, 1977). Hineline and Rosales-Ruiz (2013) concluded that scientists need to recognize “aversive events as inevitably involved in people’s lives, making those processes important to understand, that they might be minimized when alternative techniques are not feasible and used effectively when that use is deemed important and appropriate” (p. 506). We agree that overly severe and ineffective punishment should be discouraged, but scientists also need a more scientifically informed understanding of optimal use of punishment. When professional interventions or parental discipline can be sufficiently effective with positive methods, we support those

methods. But it is hard to imagine eliminating all aversiveness from life. The goal of this chapter is therefore to summarize research that helps discriminate among effective, neutral (benign), and harmful punishment.

## Two Research Literatures

Child developmental and clinical child research on parental punishment complement each other in several ways. Developmental researchers study normative, non-referred samples, whereas clinical child psychologists investigate clinically referred samples, focusing on individual cases as well as average group outcomes. Developmentalists study pro-social and antisocial trends as they unfold over time; clinicians use randomized trials and experimental cases to identify what parents can do to reduce children's most problematic behaviors. Those distinctions result in generally different conclusions about punishments.

Child development researchers find that the parents of well-behaved children use less punishment and often oppose all punishment on that basis (Holden et al., 2016). But these anti-punishment conclusions are based mostly on correlational data (Gershoff & Grogan-Kaylor, 2016; Larzelere et al., 2020). For example, the strongest meta-analytic evidence cited most often by anti-spanking advocates consists of simple correlations (55% cross-sectional, 21% retrospective, 21% longitudinal: Gershoff & Grogan-Kaylor, 2016, p. 463). The authors of that meta-analysis acknowledged, "As most of the included studies were correlational or retrospective (72%), causal links between spanking and child outcomes cannot be established by these meta-analyses," (p. 464) and that longitudinal correlations (their strongest evidence against spanking) "do not rule out the potential for a child elicitation effect" (p. 455). Nonetheless, the American Psychological Association (APA, Gershoff et al., 2018) and the American Academy of Pediatrics relied on this meta-analysis as their primary basis for opposing all spanking "however light" (Sege et al., 2018, p. 2), while ignoring meta-analyses that found only "trivial" effects after controlling for confounding variables (Ferguson, 2013) or effects that varied by the type of physical punishment (Larzelere & Kuhn, 2005).

Contrast this reliance on correlational evidence with the causal evidence required for any conclusion about the effectiveness of clinical child treatments by the APA. To be considered as "well established" or "probably efficacious," clinical treatments must be supported by randomized studies (e.g., Kaminski & Claussen, 2017, p. 482; Table 21.1 herein). The wisdom of this is shown by recent evidence on a wide range of corrective actions used by professionals, including psychotherapy, *Ritalin*, job training programs, treatments for depression, hospitalizations, foster care, and child-care subsidies. Controlled longitudinal studies make them all appear to be as harmful looking as corrective disciplinary actions by parents (e.g., spanking, grounding, privilege removal: Larzelere et al., 2018c).

A second distinction between these two literatures is that the child developmental research used to oppose all spanking (or punishment in general) rarely attempts

to distinguish between more and less effective implementations across situations relevant for their use (called the *lumping fallacy*: Larzelere et al., 2017). In contrast, most clinical child research specifies precisely how to implement the treatment and the specific diagnostic conditions for which the treatment is recommended. Together, the correlation fallacy and the lumping fallacy undermine the ability of child developmental researchers to identify any punishment-based interventions that are effective in reducing oppositional behavior. That may be why leading anti-spanking researchers oppose *all* punishments, including timeout and privilege removal (Holden et al., 2017). But their correlational and lumping methods have inadvertently prevented them from identifying *any* response to behavior problems that is effective in reducing those problems (Gershoff et al., 2010; Van Leeuwen et al., 2012).

Whereas behavioral clinical research and developmental research both study positive alternatives to punishment, non-aversive methods developed by behavioral researchers have generally utilized stronger, more causally valid designs. Non-aversive methods are always preferred to reduce the frequency of problem behavior, and ethical guidelines developed by behavior analysts clearly call for non-aversive interventions to be attempted before using punishment procedures (see Van Houten et al., 1988). No behaviorists limit their interventions to aversive procedures. Some notable empirically supported alternatives to punishment include differential reinforcement of alternative behavior (DRA) and differential reinforcement of incompatible behavior (DRI). Such procedures are used to promote behaviors that limit the individual's opportunity to engage in problematic behavior by promoting actions inconsistent with the sort of behavior that might otherwise be addressed with aversive consequences (i.e., to promote reductions in the targeted behavior). In addition, the applied behavior analysis literature also promotes the use of antecedent interventions, which are intended to reduce the motivation for problem behavior, or more technically, eliminate stimuli that evoke problematic behavior, or influence setting events (e.g., satiation or deprivation) that are functionally related to problem behavior (see Kern & Clemens, 2007; O'Neill et al., 2015).

Unfortunately, while research on alternatives to punishment has flourished in the past 25 years, research on punishment has dwindled, even among clinical child researchers (Critchfield & Farmer-Dougan, 2015; Lydon et al., 2015). The diminished interest in punishment has perhaps been a side effect of arguments that functional analysis could improve the effectiveness of reinforcement-based treatments, thereby rendering punishment unnecessary (Carr et al., 2002). But many behavior problems cannot be reduced sufficiently with positive reinforcement alone (Foxx, 2016). For example, Hagopian et al. (1998) summarized 27 behavior problems in 21 2- to 16-year-olds with intellectual disabilities in which functional communication training was used to reinforce an appropriate behavior with or without extinction or punishment of the problem behavior (self-injurious behavior, aggression, and/or disruptive behavior). Extinction refers to ignoring the problem behavior to minimize any inadvertent reinforcement of it. On average, functional communication training alone led to a 17% *increase* in the rate of the problem behavior, whereas combining it with extinction led to a 69% *reduced* rate of the behavior. The goal was

to reduce the rate of these severe problem behaviors by 90%, which was achieved in 11 of 25 applications of functional communication training plus extinction but was never achieved with functional communication training alone. Punishment was added to functional communication training for 17 behavior problems in 14 clients, which led to a reduced rate of 97% on average, achieving the 90% reduction goal for all 17 applications. The most common punishers were basket holds, facial screens, and timeout. The need to supplement an all-positive treatment at least with extinction is noteworthy, given a popular parenting book's opposition to extinction as well as timeout (Siegel & Bryson, 2014a).

Despite the focus of this chapter, punishment should only be a minor part of parental discipline overall. We need the best of both developmental and clinical child research to improve our understanding of how parents can best prevent behavior problems without resorting to punishment. But we also need the best of both types of research to know when punishment is needed and how to use it as effectively as possible in those situations, with the least amount of aversiveness.

## Effectiveness

Whether punishment is effective at reducing targeted misbehavior may constitute the greatest discrepancy between reviews of punishment research and conclusions that are disseminated to the public. The recent increase in anti-punishment statements on social media contrast sharply with the conclusions of published literature reviews of punishment, whether by behavioral psychologists (Aronfreed, 1968; Axelrod & Apsche, 1983; Azrin & Holz, 1966; Cipani, 2004; Matson & Taras, 1989), a developmental psychologist (Parke, 1974), or psychologists who publish in both areas (Patterson, 1982; G. C. Walters & Grusec, 1977). For example, in their book-length literature review, Walters and Grusec (1977) concluded, "A large body of research, all of it carried out with children, suggests that punishment for incorrect behavior leads to faster learning than does reinforcement for correct behavior" (p. 115). The most thorough summary of research on punishment of children may still be Axelrod and Apsche's (1983) book. Its introductory chapter concluded, "There is no doubt about the main effects of punishment procedures. Such tactics reduce the rate of behavior more reliably and more quickly than other decelerative techniques, such as reinforcement of incompatible behavior and extinction" (Axelrod, 1983, p. 9).

Patterson (1982) began his career by trying to help parents manage antisocial behavior by ignoring such behavior and reinforcing alternative behaviors. In his major book, he concluded, "If I were allowed to select only one concept to use in training parents of antisocial children, I would teach them how to punish more effectively" (p. 111), referring to consistent use of timeout. A recent literature review, which summarized 368 studies on punishment involving people with development disabilities (96% single-case studies), concluded that the rate of the targeted behavior was reduced by an average of 74% when punishment was used alone and

by 80% when it was used in combination with other procedures (Lydon et al., 2015). Punishments were most effective when they were used together with either reinforcement or skills training (mean reduction of 85%). However, a few of the 368 studies in the review reported a 0% reduction in targeted behavior. This suggests that the effectiveness of punishment depends on various characteristics of the particular case. As is true of any therapeutic or medical treatment, the average effectiveness may not apply to individual cases. Careful science is thus needed to predict what is most likely to be effective for particular children in specific situations, and the effectiveness of any punishment should be checked empirically.

### *Short- vs. Long-Term Effects*

The very effectiveness of punishment produces its most common negative side effect: Parents may rely on punishment too much because it is effective at securing short-term compliance from children. Threatening corporal punishment or otherwise behaving aggressively toward a child by yelling often leads children to comply with parental requests immediately (Rachlin, 1991). However, overreliance on punishment violates many of the principles of effective discipline, especially if it is inconsistent, chaotic, and emotionally charged.

Two processes help explain why parents may resort too often to aversive responses to child noncompliance, even when they are ineffective long term. The first is coercion theory, developed by Patterson (1982), which elegantly describes the escalation of both child and parent aversiveness during discipline confrontations by means of negative reinforcement. On the one hand, children's behavior becomes more aversive if their outbursts are sometimes successful in getting parents to withdraw their demands. On the other hand, a parent's angry escalation may occur more often if that sometimes leads to child compliance. The effect of repeated instances of escalating outbursts by children and parents is that they both become unknowingly "trapped" in a coercive cycle of escalating aversiveness because it works often enough for both of them. Over time, parents may keep increasing the aversiveness of their punishment attempts even while their inconsistency makes such efforts less and less effective, thereby training the child to be aversive while harming the parent-child bond.

The other process that may explain why parents overestimate the effectiveness of punishment is the statistical principle of regression to the mean (Galton, 1886). This is the phenomenon by which an observation (in this case, child misbehavior) will "regress" or move toward the mean on subsequent observations. This applies to the parenting context when a child is behaving uncharacteristically badly as a function of many variables, including some random fluctuations (e.g., due to loss of sleep). They are then likely to behave more typically (and thus better) just with the passage of time. Parents, being understandably fed up with this uncharacteristic misbehavior, may resort to punishment to correct the behavior. This creates an illusion that the punishment caused the improvement in the child's behavior, when in fact it was likely the

natural movement toward their typical behavior (the mean). Over many instances, parents can become convinced that punishment (especially overreactive punishment) is more effective than it actually is. This mistaken causal inference is known as the narrative fallacy. This emphasizes the need for research to clarify how punishment can be used for long-term effectiveness, not just illusory short-term effectiveness.

### ***Factors Influencing Effectiveness***

Literature reviews of punishment have identified various factors that enhance its effectiveness, usually citing factors listed in Azrin and Holz's (1966) classic summary of punishment research on animals. Cipani (2004) added two factors based on his hands-on clinical experience: specificity of the target misbehavior to be punished and the specificity of the punishment itself. Applications should start with one clearly specified target misbehavior rather than addressing ambiguous problems or too many problems at once. The negative consequence should also be specified clearly, such as requiring a set timeout duration.

Cipani (2004) emphasized the importance of verifying that punishment works, by recording the rate of the target misbehavior before and after the punishment is introduced. Although the target misbehavior and aversive protests may increase at first (known as an *extinction burst*), both should subsequently decrease after a parent applies the punishment consistently for enough time to overcome children's expectation that they can get the parent to relent by using aversive outbursts that had previously accomplished that goal. This initial extinction burst is expected according to Patterson's (1982) coercive process theory. Nonetheless, parents should try another strategy if the target misbehavior fails to decrease when expected, rather than assuming that any strategy is going to work for every child all of the time.

Other factors involve the contrast between punishment and alternative conditions. Recall that aversiveness is defined as a less desirable situation than the alternative situation. Therefore, it is important to maximize the contrast between the desirability of the situation brought about by the target misbehavior and the alternative situation. Often that contrast is achieved by reinforcing appropriate behavior and ignoring the target misbehavior. Sometimes, however, that contrast is insufficient for one of several reasons. The target misbehavior may be inherently reinforcing, or it may be critical to suppress the target misbehavior as quickly and completely as possible. The point is to ensure that the child has an alternative way to get what they want and that reinforcement is minimized or eliminated when engaging in the target misbehavior. All-positive strategies should be attempted first whenever possible, ideally with functional assessment or analysis employed to try to identify the reinforcers that are associated with the target misbehavior. Another implication is that escape from punishment should not be permitted. Further, if punishment consistently leads to a reinforcing situation (e.g., re-establishing a positive parent-child relationship), punishment may become more desirable for a child if that is the best way to get positive interaction (i.e., social attention) from the parent.

**Problematic Factors** Several of Azrin and Holz's factors for maximizing punishment's effectiveness can be problematic ethically or difficult pragmatically, depending on the situation. Punishment is most effective when it begins as intensely as possible, occurs immediately after the target misbehavior, and occurs after each occurrence of the target misbehavior. These factors create ethical or practical problems if taken to the extreme. Indeed, these realities compelled Azrin and others to develop an elaborate system of ethics to govern the use of behavioral interventions (see Van Houten et al., 1988).

In most applications, the intensity of punishment is started at a level thought to be sufficient to suppress the behavior, but if the punishment needs to be increased in intensity, it is less effective than if that greater intensity was used at first. Strategies should be used to make a mild punishment sufficiently effective (Lerman & Vorndran, 2002). Obviously, maximizing reinforcement of appropriate behavior can minimize the intensity of the punishment needed. One study showed that the effectiveness of punishment in delaying the next recurrence of misbehavior in 2- and 3-year-olds could be maximized at a lower intensity of child distress by combining reasoning with punishment (Larzelere & Merenda, 1994). This is consistent with Hoffman's (2000) theory of moral internalization, which considers parental reasoning crucial for children to learn *why* to behave appropriately but that an optimal level of power assertion is necessary for children to attend to and process the cognitive lesson. Another issue is that intensity may not enhance the effectiveness of all types of punishment (e.g., timeout, Brantner & Doherty, 1983; verbal reprimands, G. C. Walters & Grusec, 1977). Alternating types of punishment or a hiatus from punishment is preferred to increasing its intensity when it fails to be effective (Lerman & Vorndran, 2002). Others have shown that delayed punishment can be as effective as immediate punishment when the contingency is expressed verbally (Cipani, 2004; Lerman & Vorndran, 2002; Parke, 1969).

Punishing consistently for every occurrence of the target misbehavior maximizes suppression but can be difficult to do all the time. Moreover, the target misbehavior often recovers after the punishment is discontinued, unless the suppression is complete. In contrast, an intermittent use of punishment suppresses behavior more slowly, but the suppression is maintained better after punishment is discontinued (Hineline & Rosales-Ruiz, 2013). One option for timeout might be to start with it consistently but then gradually decrease the rate at which the target misbehavior leads to timeout (Brantner & Doherty, 1983).

### *Unintended Effects*

Many are concerned about the unintended or side effects of punishment. Some behavioral researchers highlight this concern (e.g., Critchfield, 2014; Miltenberger, 2001; Sidman, 1989), but most literature reviews have found more positive than negative side effects (e.g., Cipani, 2004; Fontes & Shahan, 2021; Lerman &

Vorndran, 2002; Lundervold & Bourland, 1988; Newsom et al., 1983; Van Houten, 1983; G. C. Walters & Grusec, 1977). Matson and Taras (1989) reviewed 382 studies and found that 93% of the unanticipated side effects were considered positive, such as improvements in social behavior and responsiveness to the environment. In a review of research on overcorrection, Foxx and Bechtel (1983) found that 79% of the studies with relevant information found positive side effects, whereas 60% found negative side effects. (39% reported both negative and positive side effects.)

One of the most thorough reviews categorized side effects as physical, secondary, and social (Newsom et al., 1983). Physical side effects involve pain, such as from physical punishment. Pain is necessary for some punishers to be effective, but it should be minimized and used only when milder approaches are ineffective. Pain-producing punishment may be called for, however, when the need to suppress the target misbehavior outweighs the magnitude and duration of the pain.

Secondary effects refer to unanticipated effects, whether positive or negative. Newsom et al. considered social effects important enough to constitute its own category, which is summarized next.

The most important negative side effect of using punishment with children involves deterioration of the social relationship with the person administering the punishment. However, positive relationship effects resulting from punishment have been reported more often than negative social effects (Lerman & Vorndran, 2002). Positive relationship effects are more likely when positive reinforcement and positive interactions occur much more often than punishment. Improvements in the relationship may also occur due to reductions in problematic behavior produced by effective use of punishment, which frees more time for positive play (Newsom et al., 1983). Punishment often leads children to attend more closely to the environment and to make more eye contact with caregivers and enhances the effectiveness of reinforcement from them (Wahler, 1969).

Most other negative secondary effects are temporary, can be minimized, and can easily be corrected (Newsom et al., 1983). Such side effects include negative emotions, aggression, escape/avoidance, habituation to punishment, and lying (Critchfield, 2014; Talwar et al., 2015). Some of these negative effects can be minimized by making reinforcement available for appropriate behaviors, by prevention, or by consequences for them when they occur (e.g., for aggression). The emotional distress that is a hallmark of the "extinction burst" has long been associated with the implementation of effective punishments with typically developing children, especially when first administered (Cipani, 2004). The extinction burst can persist longer for oppositional children, until they are convinced that the parent is going to be consistent in consequating target misbehavior with punishment (Patterson, 1982). Parents who employ punishments effectively "out-persist" their children during discipline episodes rather than out-escalating them, a distinction associated with less aggression in adolescent boys (Snyder et al., 1994).

Punishment rarely leads to aggression if the child can perform socially acceptable behavior to avoid punishment. Bandura's Bobo doll studies generated concerns about the modeling of aggression (Bandura et al., 1963). Indeed, disciplinary methods often do become part of children's repertoire, as illustrated by how preschoolers

discipline their dolls. But as Bandura showed, children's imitation of aggressive actions is not due to observation alone but also depends on whether they see or experience aggression being reinforced or punished (Bandura, 1965). In modern cultures, the child will see many ways to be aggressive, but whether they use those aggressive actions will depend on the consequences they expect if they use them along with inhibitions related to their moral internalizations.

Other important side effects involve inappropriate generalizations of the punished behavior and behavioral contrast effects (Newsom et al., 1983). When one behavior is suppressed, related behaviors may inadvertently be suppressed, and other behaviors may increase. Although the goal is for target misbehaviors to decrease and desired behaviors to increase, sometimes the suppressive and enhancing effects may differ from those intended. Usually, these problems can be minimized by clarifying discriminations between unwanted and desired behavior by verbal clarification and corresponding punishment and reinforcement.

It is important to be aware of potential negative side effects, but the suppression of target misbehavior often outweighs the emergence of the most likely negative side effects, which are usually temporary or can be managed subsequently. In their review, Newsom et al. (1983) concluded:

Punishment procedures are avoided and underutilized more often from uninformed fears of hypothetical, all-powerful negative side effects than from knowledgeable appraisals of their generally limited and manageable negative side effects. The result is often the continuation of serious behavior problems for months and years when they might be eliminated, to the client's immense long-term benefit, in a matter of days or weeks. (pp. 285–286)

The danger of overusing and escalating the aversiveness of punishment when frustrated can be minimized by using punishment to enforce the effectiveness of milder disciplinary actions with conditioned punishment processes. The effectiveness of punishment can lead parents to rely on it too often, putting them at risk for increasing its aversiveness when it is less effective than usual (Critchfield, 2014; Knutson, 1982; Miltenberger, 2001; Newsom et al., 1983). This tendency for punishment to escalate is "apparent to all who have had practical experience in using and supervising the use of punishment, [but] it appears never to have been subjected to experimental analysis" (Newsom et al., 1983, p. 309). The effectiveness of punishment should instead be used to enhance the effectiveness of milder methods for dealing with parent-child conflict, which can be accomplished with conditioned punishment processes.

## Conditioned Punishment

Conditioned punishers can be used to maximize effectiveness with minimal aversiveness. A conditioned punisher is a neutral stimulus that becomes an effective punisher after being paired with a more effective, unconditioned punishment.

Conditioned punishment is evident in the sequence of responses to noncompliance in behavioral parent training. The protocol begins with a sequence of two verbal responses (command, timeout warning) to noncompliance and then proceeds to timeout and, if needed, a backup for timeout. The more intense later steps are used to improve cooperation with the earlier steps, making those milder steps more effective (i.e., children increase their rate of compliance to the verbal steps). More compliant children cooperate more readily with the initial steps, but children displaying oppositional behavior often require optimal implementation of all steps at first. Older research identified optimal implementation of each step (e.g., Roberts, 1982; Roberts & Hatzenbuehler, 1981; Roberts & Powers, 1990), but such research has declined in recent decades, so that recent changes in behavioral parent training may have been made to minimize aversiveness more than to improve effectiveness.

Consider, for example, the most recent randomized comparison of backups for timeout (33 years ago!), which found that the traditional spank backup and a brief room isolation were the two most effective backups for timeout (Roberts & Powers, 1990). At that time both backups were applied in the same way that medical practice would use two maximally effective medications: when either backup failed to work quickly enough, the other backup was tried, which always produced cooperation with timeout (Roberts & Powers, 1990). Further, parents were given their choice of which backup to use at home. Despite the lack of such research since then, both backups are now opposed by some professional societies according to Everett et al. (2010). That may help explain why clinical treatments for conduct problems in children are half as effective today as they were 50 years ago (Weisz et al., 2019).

Research should try to identify the least aversive tactics that can be used at each step of this sequence, but such research also needs to determine whether these well-intentioned changes will actually improve the outcomes for children with oppositional defiance. According to Horner's (2002) commentary, the main takeaway from Lerman and Vorndran's (2002) review of punishment research was the need for systematic research to maximize the effectiveness of milder punishments by use of conditioned punishment processes and by combining reinforcement with punishment in optimal ways. The next section therefore focuses on how to use punishment to maximize the effectiveness of non-aversive disciplinary tactics.

### *Enhancing Positive Parenting*

Given increasing claims that positive parenting can eliminate the need to use punishment of any kind (Holden et al., 2016; Siegel & Bryson, 2014a), it is important not only to defend appropriate punishment but to consider how punishment can be used to enhance positive parenting characteristics and their effectiveness. Several lines of research indicate that punishment is associated with better child outcomes when it is combined with nurturance (R. H. Walters & Parke, 1967), concern for a child's welfare (Larzelere et al., 1989), positive reinforcement (Lydon et al., 2015), and age-appropriate reasoning (Parke, 1969).

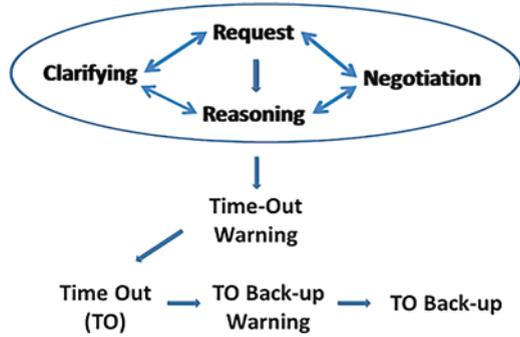
Consider reasoning, for example. Several studies have shown that a combination of reasoning and punishment is more effective than either one alone (Larzelere et al., 1996; Parke, 1969). The effectiveness of punishment can be maximized at milder levels of intensity when combined with reasoning (Larzelere & Merenda, 1994; G. C. Walters & Grusec, 1977) and can then retain its effectiveness even when administered some time after the target misbehavior (Parke, 1969; G. C. Walters & Grusec, 1977). Reasoning may also help clarify appropriate generalization of punishment's suppressive effect.

Reasoning is more effective when backed up with punishment (Larzelere et al., 1998). That may be why a combination of frequent use of both reasoning and time-out was optimal in reducing externalizing behavior problems in the most antisocial 4- and 5-year-olds (Larzelere et al., 2006) and toddlers (Larzelere et al., 2018b). In the toddler study, reasoning was the least effective response to oppositional non-compliance immediately, yet frequent use predicted significant reductions in externalizing behavior problems 2 months later in the most oppositional toddlers. Timeout was also effective with oppositional toddlers if not used too often, probably because effective mothers tried verbal corrections first. Therefore, brief age-appropriate reasoning may pave the way for oppositional toddlers to learn to attend to it when it is backed up consistently with effective punishment.

The biggest surprise in the toddler study was that offering an alternative was the most effective way to de-escalate discipline episodes with toddlers, regardless of how oppositional their noncompliance was. At that age, offering an alternative often took the form of redirecting in addition to suggesting a compromise verbally. Mutually acceptable compromises may allow toddlers' growing autonomy to influence conflict resolutions, a value emphasized in developmental psychology (Grolnick, 2003; Kopp, 1982). The only downside was that too many compromises increased externalizing problems in oppositional toddlers 2 months later (Larzelere et al., 2018b). Oppositional toddlers need to learn that they cannot always get a compromise to their liking, but these findings otherwise challenge the view of behavioral clinicians that parents must always win their disciplinary battles. That thinking is based on the danger that giving in inadvertently teaches children that emotional and physical outbursts pay off. In contrast, mutually acceptable compromises teach children that they can influence disciplinary resolutions, but only in ways that are acceptable to parents. The value of reinforcing de-escalations in parent-child conflicts prior to full compliance was also evident in a study of parent-adolescent interaction patterns that contrasted aggressive vs. nonaggressive adolescent boys (Snyder et al., 1994).

These represent some ways that positive parenting and effective punishment likely work together to produce the optimal long-term outcomes of authoritative parenting, compared to the dysfunctional extremes of overly punitive authoritarian parenting and overly lax permissive parenting (Baumrind et al., 2010; Steinberg, 2001). Authoritative parents combine nurturance, age-appropriate autonomy support, and verbal give-and-take with firm control when needed. Figure 21.1 is a plausible model of how they use mild punishment to enforce the kind of verbal resolutions they prefer to use to teach their children why to behave in specified ways and how

**Fig. 21.1** A conditional sequence model of authoritative parenting. (From Larzelere et al. (2013, p. 101) © American Psychological Association. Reprinted with permission)



to coordinate their developing independence with the need to cooperate with those around them. This model accounts for the correlational evidence supporting positive parenting and the causal evidence that consistent use of mild punishment is effective when young children respond defiantly to verbal disciplinary responses. Cooperative children rarely require punishment, whereas oppositional children will push their parents to use the full range of tactics that are in their disciplinary repertoire. This model can extend the timeout-based sequence to enforce other verbal responses beyond mere cooperation with commands and warnings (e.g., Roberts & Powers, 1990). It thus has implications for how parenting research can expand the range of verbal disciplinary responses that can gain effectiveness via conditioned punishment by being consistently enforced by timeout. Behavioral interventions have minimized parental use of reasoning and negotiating because they detract from the consistent use of timeout for noncompliance. Research is needed to distinguish effective from counterproductive use of these common positive disciplinary responses, in response to noncompliance as well as at other times.

Punishment research has done little to go beyond the goal of suppressing problematic behavior problems. The authoritative parenting combination of nurturance, give-and-take communication, age-appropriate autonomy, and firm discipline produced large beneficial 10-year outcomes in a wide range of academic and interpersonal competencies in Baumrind's classic longitudinal study (Baumrind et al., 2010). The more effectively parents can use positive disciplinary tactics such as reasoning and negotiating as well as positive reinforcement, the less their need to resort to the consistent, lock-step sequence used to respond to noncompliance in behavioral parent training. Anti-spanking advocates claim that parenting can be effective without ever resorting to any punishment, but the supporting research is mostly correlational and rarely tries to distinguish between effective and counterproductive ways to implement their preferred positive tactics (Holden et al., 2016, 2017; Larzelere et al., 2020). Two all-positive treatments for children displaying oppositional behavior have met the initial qualifications for being empirically supported (Kaminski & Claussen, 2017): emotion coaching (Havighurst et al., 2013) and collaborative problem-solving (Ollendick et al., 2016). Both of those strategies could be combined with behavioral parent training, which might be more effective than either one alone, but an initial attempt to test that combination was

unsuccessful in a small randomized study (Salmon et al., 2014). In the meantime, choices among them should be based on how well each treatment fits the child's age and presenting problems (Larzelere et al., 2020).

## Conclusions

Punishment is pervasive in life, defined herein as imposing a situation on a child that is less desirable than what the situation would be otherwise. Any pervasive human behavior needs to be investigated to improve our understanding of it and its most appropriate applications. It is commendable to minimize aversiveness, but not at the expense of minimizing effectiveness. It is commendable to prefer more positive parenting, but some children need consistent aversive consequences for some misbehavior, especially for persistent oppositional defiance. Children need the full range of effective parenting, including nurturance, proactive teaching, preventive measures, reinforcement for appropriate behavior, and other types of positive parenting. But some children also need consistent negative consequences for oppositional defiance.

Despite the enormous body of research supporting the benefits of punishment for some children, research to increase our understanding of its effective use has waned in recent years. Sadly, opposition against the use of punishment, especially spanking, is based on the types of correlational and longitudinal studies that would be immediately dismissed if used to oppose an established therapy or medical treatment. Even with the use of statistical controls, the systematic bias in these studies render them incapable of identifying replacements for spanking. The same biases prevent research from showing that less aversive disciplinary punishments are effective in disciplinary situations where spanking has been considered to be appropriate traditionally (e.g., when milder disciplinary tactics are insufficient).

Timeout is the punishment featured in most empirically supported parent-implemented treatments for children with oppositional defiance and related disorders. But timeout requires enforcement before the most defiant children will cooperate with it. A brief room isolation is the only enforcement shown to be as effective as the traditional spank enforcement (Roberts & Powers, 1990). Because of their effectiveness, either enforcement gets phased out quickly as the most defiant children learn to cooperate with timeout and then with verbal correction. Rather than considering all children to be temperamentally equal, we need more research like Roberts' randomized trials of treatment components in the 1980s to find the right combination of minimal aversiveness and maximal effectiveness for every child and disciplinary situation parents might face.

Of course, we need better research on effective use of non-punishment tactics that can reduce the need to use any disciplinary punishment. We also need research that maximizes the effectiveness of punishment while minimizing its aversiveness, as well as research to improve the effectiveness of preventative and proactive discipline and of positive disciplinary methods in response to both appropriate and inappropriate behavior.

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## Chapter 22

# The Conundrum of Measuring Authoritarianism: A Case Study in Political Bias



Thomas H. Costello

Psychological measurement is ripe with the potential for bias. Measurement entails a myriad of degrees of freedom for the researcher (i.e., disclosed and undisclosed flexibility in decision making), both in its methodological “nuts and bolts” (e.g., control groups, item wording, response options, analysis) and broader conceptual decisions (e.g., tests of construct validity, naming of factors and constructs). Consequently, beginning in the early 1900s, with the advent of intelligence testing (Binet & Simon, 1916/1973; Stern, 1914), researchers, clinicians, and members of the lay public have extensively explored and debated the prospect of systematic cultural biases in psychological assessments (Reynolds & Suzuki, 2013). These investigations typically emphasize bias attributable to identity commitments, such as race, gender, class, and sexuality. Such identity commitments influence and distort research practices and conclusions (e.g., Gurven, 2018). Far less attention has been devoted to ideological commitments, such as political, moral, and religious beliefs, which may too be a salient sources of test bias (Honeycutt & Jussim, 2020).

In the wake of psychology’s replication crisis, political bias, particularly, has been highlighted as a potentially important source of non-replicable research findings, perhaps because the ratio of liberals to conservatives within social and personality psychology has been estimated from 8:1 to nearly 100:1 (Haidt, 2011; Inbar & Lammers, 2012; Langbert et al., 2016; von Hippel & Buss, 2017). Such a political tilt by itself may not be worrisome if scholars can maintain a reasonably objective stance toward politically tinged scientific claims that activate their congeniality bias, a variant of confirmation bias in which individuals are especially likely to accept assertions that accord with their broader worldviews (Hart et al., 2009). Still, in a survey of 506 members of the Society for Personality and Social Psychology, Inbar and Lammers (2012) found that a substantial proportion of left-leaning

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respondents were willing to discriminate against right-leaning applicants in hiring, symposia invitations, journal reviews, and grant reviews. This finding is consistent with past research suggesting that grant proposals and Institutional Review Board submissions are sometimes rejected due to their political implications (see Ceci & Williams, 2018, for a review). Duarte et al. (2015) argued that “the peer-review process likely offers much less protection against error when the community of peers is politically homogeneous...In this way, certain assumptions, theories, and findings can become the entrenched wisdom in a field...because they have consistently undergone less critical scrutiny” (cf. Reinero et al., 2019). Public health scholars similarly speak of “white hat bias,” the propensity to favor scientific assertions that strike researchers as morally virtuous (Cope & Allison, 2009).

In the context of measurement, bias refers to a systematic difference in the correspondence between test scores and true scores as a function of a grouping variable (e.g., age, sex, education, political ideology), such that a test demonstrates differential validity across groups (Reynolds & Suzuki, 2013). Given that many commonly used psychological instruments are designed to measure political constructs (e.g., authoritarianism, system justification motives, prejudice), widespread political bias in measurement, if present in said popular measures, has far-reaching implications for political psychology (Charney, 2015; Harper, 2020; Honeycutt & Jussim, 2020; Lindgren, 2012; Reyna, 2017; Stanovich & Toplak, 2019; Wright, 2019). In the present chapter, we identify several potential sources of bias in political measures and, as an illustrative case example, explore the interactions among these different sources of bias in literature concerning the construct of authoritarianism. In focusing on a single construct, we hope to illustrate how test bias can, over decades, come to shape and define entire research literatures (Reyna, 2017).

## Test Bias in Political Psychology

Van de Vijver and Tanzer (2004) have proposed a useful tripartite taxonomy of test bias (i.e., construct bias, method bias, and item bias). *Construct bias* stems from heterogeneity in a construct across groups, either at the level of conceptualization or in the construct’s behavioral manifestations (e.g., item responses on a personality measure may reflect conscientiousness in one culture, yet reflect social desirability in another culture). For instance, there are both conceptual and behavioral differences in authoritarianism across the political left and right (Costello et al., 2020).

Developing complementary measures of political constructs tailored to specific political contexts (e.g., administering measures of left-wing authoritarianism to leftists and measures of right-wing authoritarianism to conservatives) is one promising strategy for addressing construct bias in political psychology (see Costello et al., 2020). Still, developing such parallel measures is quite complicated, as merely varying political content across otherwise identical items is unlikely to mitigate construct bias.

Construct bias can also occur for measures of political ideology. In the last 100 years alone, political movements have spanned such ideologies as anarchism (i.e., rejecting all involuntary, coercive forms of hierarchy), totalitarianism, communism, sortition (i.e., selection of political officials as a random sample from a larger pool of candidates), and radical centrism (i.e., call for fundamental reforms of institutions alongside a belief that genuine solutions require pragmatism), to name but a handful of political belief systems. These heterogeneous ideologies can combine in unintuitive ways that fall outside of the left-right spectrum (e.g., anarcho-communism vs. anarcho-capitalism, religious communism). Nevertheless, a large proportion of political psychology research has emphasized cognitive and personality differences between political liberals and conservatives in the United States, perhaps artificially reifying the left-right spectrum (Malka, 2020). Ideology measures that fail to account for the vicissitudes of political views are vulnerable to construct bias.

*Method bias* describes methodological artefacts that arise from sampling, features of a measurement instrument, and/or test administration procedures. Psychological science has increasingly grappled with the degree to which overreliance on Western, Educated, Industrialized, Rich, and Democratic (WEIRD; Henrich et al., 2010) samples has distorted our understanding of fundamental psychological processes (e.g., Gurven, 2018). There is ample reason to suspect that such inattention to meaningful cultural variability has distorted the measurement of political constructs. Coherent and stable ideological orientations may only exist among the 20–30% most knowledgeable, politically engaged individuals (Kalmoe, 2020), who are generally committed to their political identities and have a sense of which political positions they “should” endorse. Failing to account for such variability may artificially attenuate or accentuate political ideology’s relations with external criteria, depending on the sample type. For example, Houck and Conway (2019), in a meta-analysis of relations between political ideology and integrative complexity (i.e., a propensity for adopting multiple perspectives when evaluating an issue and recognizing connections across divergent perspectives; Suedfeld et al., 1992), found that, among public officials, conservatives are less complex in their thinking than are political liberals ( $r = -0.37$ , 95% CI  $[-0.47, -0.26]$ ); in contrast, among private citizens, the same relation did not manifest ( $r = -0.01$ , 95% CI  $[-0.07, 0.05]$ ). Perhaps relatedly, growing evidence suggests that relations between political conservatism and psychological variables vary considerably across cultures and contexts. Hence, an overrepresentation of highly WEIRD, highly politically engaged samples in the literature may overstate ideology’s relations with psychological variables for the general population.

Further, concerning method bias due to instrument characteristics, meta-analytic evidence suggests that political conservatives tend to score highly on self-report measures of cognitive rigidity, yet these left-right differences are greatly diminished, or occasionally reversed, for performance-based measures of rigidity (Costello et al., 2020b; Van Hiel et al., 2016). Failing to account for bias due to sampling or mono-method bias may result in the appearance of political left-right differences.

Finally, *item bias* occurs when individuals with the same levels of a trait are not equally likely to endorse a given item (Van de Vijver & Leung, 1997). For example, “I often visit art museums” is a commonly used openness to experience item that may well be a sound indicator of openness among liberals, who tend to live in cities and, therefore, have access to many museums. Among conservatives, however, who tend to live in sparsely populated areas, this item may function relatively poorly (see also Charney, 2015). Similarly, Stanovich and Toplak (2019) found that religious individuals respond differently than non-religious individuals to actively open-minded thinking (AOT; Stanovich & West, 1997) scale items that include the word “belief.” Individuals with strongly held religious views generally take “belief” to mean “religious beliefs,” whereas non-religious individuals generally take “belief” to mean “opinion.” After the offending items were removed, Stanovich and Toplak (2019) found that AOT-religiosity correlations were reduced from roughly  $r = -0.60$  to roughly  $r = -0.20$ .<sup>1</sup> Further, several critics of the Symbolic Racism Scale have argued that many items confound value judgments about meritocracy and hard work with racism (e.g., “It’s really a matter of some people not trying hard enough; if blacks would only try harder, they could be just as well off as whites”), such that individuals who believe that hard work usually leads to success (i.e., conservatives) will score artificially highly (Sniderman & Tetlock, 1986; Redding, 2001; Reyna, 2017).

## Theory-ladenness

For many psychological variables, measurement is a foundational element of theory development and vice versa (Loevinger, 1957). To assess latent or unobservable variables, such as depression or extraversion, one usually develops indicators (i.e., items on a self-report measure) that are, in theory, caused by the unobservable variable (Michell, 1997). To use an example from physics, heat cannot be directly observed, but heat causes mercury to expand, so one can assess temperature using a mercury thermometer.

As such, early self-report measures of a psychological variables are often informed by a priori theories, without which the development of indicators would be mostly arbitrary (e.g., without a preliminary theory of depression, it would be challenging to construct potential items for a depression scale). Critically, these early measures can then be used to modify the theories on which these are based (Westen & Rosenthal, 2003). If, for example, a mercury thermometer described the

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<sup>1</sup>Perhaps notably, several other oft-used measures in social and personality psychology frequently use the word “belief” in a similar manner, including Altemeyer’s (1996) DOG Scale, the most popular psychological measure of dogmatism, which does so in 6 of its 22 items. Given the ongoing debate concerning ideological symmetries vs. asymmetries in dogmatism, sensitivity analyses with potentially biased DOG Scale items removed may be merited in future research (Costello et al., 2020b).

temperature as -10 degrees Celsius on a hot summer day, one might conclude that (a) the law of thermal expansion is incorrect and should be modified, (b) the thermometer is poorly constructed and should be modified, or (c) both. In this manner, the development of theory and measurement (of variables that cannot be directly observed) proceeds iteratively and mutually, with theory shaping measurement and measurement, in turn, shaping theory. This process is known as construct validation bootstrapping or “exploratory test construction” (Tellegen & Waller, 2008).

The interdependence of theory and measurement limits opportunities to identify biases that are simultaneously embedded in a measure and the theory underlying said measure. Consider the perils of measuring temperature with a mercury thermometer during a test of the law of thermal expansion—problematically, the theoretical hypothesis under investigation is already presupposed as part of the measurement instrument. This apparent paradox can be resolved by adopting multi-method approaches (e.g., if one has calibrated a mercury thermometer against another thermometer that does not presuppose the law of thermal expansion, using a mercury thermometer in a test of the law of thermal expansion is less problematic; Franklin et al., 1989). For political constructs, however, these issues are rarely accounted for.

For instance, scholars have long theorized that political conservatives are more prejudiced than political liberals (e.g., Adorno et al., 1950), and, indeed, an impressive body of research, dating to the 1950s, has consistently found this to be the case (Hodson & Dhont, 2015). Nevertheless, emerging evidence suggests that these conservatism-prejudice relations are a function of bias in measures of prejudice (Crawford & Brandt, 2020). Specifically, psychologists have generally assessed prejudice toward members of disadvantaged and/or low-status groups. Because these groups tend to be politically liberal, conservatives score highly on such prejudice measures. Yet measures of prejudice toward groups that tend to be politically conservative (e.g., rich people, Christians, businesspeople, the military) show the opposite effect—liberals are roughly as prejudiced toward these groups as conservatives are toward groups that tend to be liberal (Brandt & Crawford, 2019; Crawford, 2017). Hence, although researchers’ apparent inclination to primarily study prejudice toward disadvantaged groups is understandable, doing so may have detracted from their ability to accurately understand the psychological processes underlying prejudice writ large.

A similar example of political bias can be found in tests of the “rigidity of the right” hypothesis, the notion that a constellation of interrelated psychological attributes comprising cognitive inflexibility, dogmatism, intolerance of ambiguity, needs for closure, order and structure, and cognitive miserliness foster right-wing political attitudes (Jost et al., 2003). To avoid criterion contamination, a fair test of this hypothesis requires measures of cognitive rigidity that are free of explicit political content and vice versa. Yet a considerable proportion of tests of the model have used proxy measures of conservatism that rest on the theoretical assumption that conservatism is heavily imbued with rigidity. In Jost et al.’s (2003) seminal meta-analysis of the rigidity of the right model, for example, 60% of the studies assessed ideology using either the Fascism scale (Adorno et al., 1950), the right-wing authoritarianism

scale (Altemeyer, 1996), or the conservatism scale (Wilson & Patterson, 1968). The F scale is intended to assess “fascist receptivity at the personality level” (e.g., “Most of our social problems would be solved if we could somehow get rid of the immoral, crooked, and feebleminded people,” “A person who has bad manners, habits, and breeding can hardly expect to get along with decent people”), but because it is strongly correlated with political conservatism (cf., Lindgren, 2012), it has been used in many studies as a stand-in for political ideology. The right-wing authoritarianism scale is intended to assess unquestioned reverence for authority, aggression toward outgroup members, and strict adherence to a set of socially conservative norms (e.g., “Our country desperately needs a mighty leader who will do what has to be done to destroy the radical new ways and sinfulness that are ruining us”). And the C scale asks participants to indicate their support for “general attitudes concerning uncertainty avoidance” (Jost et al., 2003, p. 340), artistic movements that often involve ambiguity (e.g., jazz music, modernism), and specific social-political issues that carry authoritarian or prejudicial connotations (e.g., censorship, white superiority, church authority, women judges).

Hence, many reported positive associations between political conservatism and cognitive rigidity may merely reflect the covariance of different types of rigidity-related content (see Malka et al., 2017, pp. 119–121). Indeed, Jost (2017) meta-analytically estimated the overall relations between political conservatism, on the one hand, and dogmatism and cognitive/perceptual rigidity, on the other, to be  $r = 0.51$  and  $r = 0.38$ , respectively. In contrast, after removing criterion-contaminated measures such as the F scale, RWA scale, and C scale from the study pool (i.e., leaving only relatively “pure” measures of ideology, such as policy preferences or self-identification as a liberal vs. conservative), Costello et al. (2020b) reported these same relations to be  $r = 0.21$  and  $r = 0.10$ , suggesting that the inclusion of politically biased measures had substantially distorted conclusions about left-right asymmetries.<sup>2</sup>

## Hidden Invalidity

A growing chorus of authors have argued that a major but largely invisible cause of psychology’s replication crisis is poor validity in measurement (e.g., Hussey & Hughes, 2020; Schimmack, 2019). After testing the structural validity of 15 widely used self-report measures in nearly 145,000 experimental sessions, Hussey and Hughes (2020) found that only 1 of the 15 measures demonstrated satisfactory internal consistency, test-retest reliability, factor model fit, and measurement invariance.

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<sup>2</sup>Moreover, these estimates do not account for content related to political conservatism that is present in popular measures of cognitive rigidity. The Gough-Sanford rigidity scale, for instance, includes items that almost certainly reflect social conservatism, such as “I never miss going to church.” Future work using non-contaminated measures will be needed to better characterize the population effect size of these associations.

The authors concluded that social and personality psychology relies on numerous structurally invalid measures, theorizing that this invalidity stems from “(a) the staggering degrees of freedom available to researchers when they assess the structural validity of their measures and (b) the fact that researchers are heavily motivated to conclude that their measures are valid in order to test their core hypotheses” (p. 16). Among the 14 structurally invalid measures were the RWA scale, the social dominance orientation scale, the Protestant work ethic scale, and the belief in a just world scale, all of which are widely used in political psychology and broadly reflect efforts to capture the psychology of political conservatism. Therefore, the possibility that systematic structural invalidity is present in political psychology merits consideration in the context of political bias.

Furthermore, the construct validity of many measures in psychological science is unknown, at best, and questionable, at worst (Flake et al., 2017; Schimmack, 2019). Perhaps because robust construct validation investigations are time-consuming and resource intensive, requiring multi-method tests of convergent and discriminant validity based on detailed theoretical models (Cronbach & Meehl, 1955), quantitative claims concerning the degree of validity demonstrated by popular measures are relatively rare (Westen & Rosenthal, 2003). This rarity is quite problematic, as valid measurement is necessary for replicability and, as such, governs the confidence that we can place in research findings. If measures are invalid, noisy, and/or systematically biased, the principle of “garbage in, garbage out” suggests that open science procedures (i.e., pre-registration, open data, and registered reports) may be insufficient to combat non-replicable or false findings. Further, robust tests of construct validity are perhaps our best check on problems stemming from theory-ladenness (Franklin et al., 1989).

## **Authoritarianism: A Case Study in Political Bias**

Given the interdependence of measurement and theory for many or most psychological constructs, systematic measurement bias carries broad implications. Over time, measurement bias may lead to questionable theoretical conclusions that appear to rest on a solid evidentiary foundation. Indeed, as noted by Reyna (2017), “because science is inherently incremental and iterative, [political bias in measurement] can skew future research on the topic, leading to biased perspectives that can dominate our thinking, and ultimately our field, over time” (accessed online). Merely detailing bias in items, self-report instruments, and individual studies, therefore, risks missing a forest of bias for its psychometric trees. With this in mind, let us take a “big picture” account of political bias in one of the oldest constructs in political psychology: authoritarianism. Authoritarianism has been an object of psychological research for 70 years (e.g., Adorno et al., 1950), and debate concerning political bias in authoritarianism research has existed for nearly as long. *Right-wing authoritarianism* (RWA) has been referenced in thousands of papers and studied in relation to hundreds of psychosocial variables. Yet contrasting with RWA’s ubiquity in the

literature, until recently, there was scant published systematic evidence for the existence of *left-wing authoritarianism* (LWA), a putatively allied construct that describes authoritarians on the political left. Nevertheless, Costello et al. (2020) recently conducted a systematic evaluation of LWA and found strong evidence for LWA's import and existence. Hence, the possibility of political bias in the authoritarianism literature merits exegesis.

### ***A Brief History of Authoritarianism Research***

Authoritarianism research can be traced to 1930s Germany, when and where a cohort of psychoanalysts and social scientists strove to understand the psychological processes underlying Hitler's appeal (Adorno et al., 1950; Fromm, 1941; Reich, 1933/1976). The earliest among them was Reich (1933), who asserted that submission to powerful figures is anxietytic, followed by Fromm (1941), who argued that surrendering one's autonomy to authority fulfills fundamental psychological needs, especially a "simultaneous love for authority and hatred against those who are powerless" (p. 72).

It was not until Adorno et al.'s (1950) *The Authoritarian Personality* (TAP), however, that authoritarianism emerged as a central construct in political psychology. In the wake of World War II, TAP popularized the notion that susceptibility to totalitarianism and political conservatism are rooted in personality, positing that the principal attributes of authoritarianism are obsequiousness to authority figures and dominance toward subordinates, a superficially paradoxical pair of traits amounting to strict adherence to hierarchy. Seven additional traits were also alleged to accompany authoritarianism, including adherence to in-group norms, superstitiousness and fatalism, rigid thinking, exaggerated concern with toughness and power, and cynicism, as well as psychoanalytically oriented traits such as anti-intracception (i.e., a dislike of subjectivity, imaginativeness, tender-mindedness), projectivity, and sexual repression. To identify authoritarian individuals, Adorno et al. (1950) constructed the fascism (F) scale, a self-report measure of authoritarianism. Arguably the first scientific measure to bridge political behavior and psychology, the F scale galvanized social science, serving as a point of genesis for an untold number of influential research findings.

F scale scores manifested large correlations with what Adorno et al. termed "pseudo-conservative" ideology (i.e., aiming to abolish traditional American values and institutions while claiming to uphold and defend them). Yet many authors soon objected to this claim of political specificity, in part because many real-world authoritarian regimes are left wing. As noted by McCloskey and Chong (1985):

[T]he findings derived from the available research studies, and especially those using the F-Scale, do not correspond to what is obvious from even the most casual observation of actual political regimes of the far left and far right. No particular expertise is required to discern the striking similarities in political style, organization, and practice among, on the one side, such left-wing dictatorships as the Soviet Union, Communist China, East

Germany, Cambodia under Pol Pot, Cuba under Castro, Albania, Bulgaria, Ethiopia and Angola; and on the other side, such right-wing dictatorships as Fascist Italy, Spain under Franco, Nazi Germany, Portugal under Salazar, Argentina (especially from 1976 to 1983), Uruguay, Zaire and Chile under Pinochet. One can cite, in addition, a number of highly repressive dictatorships in which left-wing and right-wing elements (or at least left-wing and right-wing rhetoric) are so heavily intermingled that even experts might find it difficult to decide whether to place them on the left or the right. Possible examples include Ghana, Libya under Khadafi, Syria, Iraq and Iran under Khomeini. (p. 331).

Fromm (1950) similarly criticized Adorno et al. (1950) for ignoring authoritarians in the Soviet Union, “[who] will find a thousand and one reasons why Russian nationalism is not nationalism, why authoritarianism is democracy, why slave labor is designed to educate and improve anti-social elements... arguments used to explain racial or sexual prejudices are illustrations of the same rationalizing capacity” (p. 56). Shils (1954) raised a similar criticism, proposing that a companion to the F scale be constructed, the R scale (“R” being short for “red”), to assess authoritarianism on the left. Eysenck (1954) sought to empirically establish value-neutral authoritarianism, which he conceptualized and measured as *tough-mindedness* (i.e., an attitudinal manifestation of extraversion comprising practicality, lack of sentimentality, and intractability). Rokeach (1960) also rejected the notion that authoritarianism is specific to political conservatives, conceptualizing the authoritarian personality as an identifiable species of general cognitive rigidity that lists toward absolutism in the face of ideological threat, which he termed *dogmatism*. Ray (1983), too, defined authoritarianism value-neutrally as *directivity* (i.e., the tendency to seek power and control others via socially sanctioned power). Despite these many attempts to understand authoritarianism in a value-neutral manner, none succeeded. Critics dismissed tough-mindedness, dogmatism, and directivity as distinct from authoritarianism (Christie, 1991; Stone, 1980; Stone & Smith, 1993) and/or methodologically problematic (e.g., Billig, 1985; Duckett, 1983; Sidanius, 1988; Stone, 1983; Ward, 1988).

TAP’s methodology and conceptual minutiae are now considered largely obsolete. Indeed, the nine facets of authoritarianism outlined in TAP, and measured by the F scale, were developed in an armchair fashion and there is little evidence to suggest they offer a comprehensive or accurate description of authoritarianism writ large. Further, the F scale is psychometrically unsound and has been roundly criticized in the research literature, leading TAP to be called by one author “the most deeply flawed work of prominence in political psychology” (Martin, 2001, p. 1). Lindgren (2012) goes so far as to note that:

Given that the F-Scale was designed to identify “pre-fascist” people (the “F” stands for “Fascism”) and Altemeyer describes his RWA Scale as having a “Hitler end” (Altemeyer, 1996), one would expect the authoritarianism scales to include more items that would appeal to mid-twentieth century Nazis and fascists and fewer items that would probably be opposed by fascists. Adorno et al. (1950) did not include many of the primary aspects of fascism’s appeal to non-Jewish, non-immigrant Germans, such as German fascism’s collectivism, price controls, guaranteeing of jobs, environmentalism, supplanting of religion, appeal to youth, love of danger and struggle, hostility to the status quo, destruction of the traditional social class system (and its planned replacement with a new class structure based

on race and performance), hostility to the traditional family, and so on. Other conservative beliefs that Nazis opposed, such as religion, are often coded as fascist in authoritarianism scales, particularly Altemeyer's... At its best, then, the Adorno F-Scale is an extraordinarily biased scale of Nazi-like tendencies. More realistically, some of the items in the F-Scale should be reverse coded. (pp. 6–12)

Nevertheless, for all of its flaws, Adorno et al.'s descriptive account of authoritarianism remains largely intact (if reduced) in modern iterations of the construct. Indeed, RWA's three constituent higher-order dimensions were directly adapted from TAP. Perhaps consequently, once-robust debates concerning the possibility of LWA were effectively abandoned until quite recently.<sup>3</sup> This radical asymmetry across LWA and RWA, despite the empirical basis of both constructs being roughly equivalent, may be a manifestation of repeated instances of political bias. Such bias has seemingly occurred not only at the level of measurement but also in Adorno et al.'s original theory and methodology and in the differing standards of rigor applied to papers championing right-wing vs. value-neutral and/or left-wing authoritarianism (see Jussim, 2019).

### *Identifying Political Bias in Authoritarianism Measures*

At the broader societal level, evidence of LWA abounds. Although, of course, anecdotal evidence cannot support a hypothesis, it may be sufficient to falsify a null hypothesis: if LWA exists, then authoritarianism is not entirely exclusive to the political right. Moreover, considering the numerous atrocities committed in the name of left-wing authoritarian regimes (e.g., the USSR, China, Cambodia, North Korea), certain anecdotes may carry more weight than others: if the prospect of LWA is unduly dismissed, we risk losing an opportunity to better understand the

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<sup>3</sup>Altemeyer (1996) also created the first published measure of LWA. He concluded that LWA is effectively non-existent after finding that subjects rarely scored above his scale's midpoint. Still, there is little reason to consider the scale's midpoint meaningful: Individuals who are high on a latent LWA construct would score well below the midpoint on a scale marked by levels of extreme item difficulty. Indeed, the LWA scale contains numerous items such as "The conservative, right-wing Establishment will never give up its power peacefully, so a revolutionary movement is justified in using violence to crush it" (Altemeyer, 1996, p. 225), whereas even the most severe items on the RWA scale are far less extreme in comparison (e.g., "There are many radical, immoral people in our country today, who are trying to ruin it for their own godless purposes, whom the authorities should put out of action"). Moreover, in constructing his LWA scale, Altemeyer used only direct parallels of the three RWA dimensions. There is little reason to believe that RWA provides a sufficient account of authoritarianism writ large and, therefore, that LWA runs precisely parallel to RWA. Similarly, Conway et al. (2018) constructed a measure of LWA by rewriting RWA scale items to deliberately confound authoritarianism and liberal political views (i.e., the RWA scale, in contrast, confounds authoritarianism and conservative political views). Taken together, Conway et al.'s work offers preliminary evidence that LWA may be present in US samples, yet does not allow for the possibility that Adorno et al.'s conceptualization of authoritarianism does not generalize to LWA.

psychological antecedents of authoritarianism and political violence. It is with this in mind that I will add one further anecdote to the pile. Friedrich Engels, who, alongside Karl Marx, developed what is now known as Marxist theory, explicitly championed authoritarianism:

...the anti-authoritarians demand that the political state be abolished at one stroke, even before the social conditions that gave birth to it have been destroyed. They demand that the first act of the social revolution shall be the abolition of authority. Have these gentlemen ever seen a revolution? A revolution is certainly the most authoritarian thing there is; it is the act whereby one part of the population imposes its will upon the other part by means of rifles, bayonets and cannon — authoritarian means, if such there be at all; and if the victorious party does not want to have fought in vain, it must maintain this rule by means of the terror which its arms inspire in the reactionists. Would the Paris Commune have lasted a single day if it had not made use of this authority of the armed people against the bourgeois? Should we not, on the contrary, reproach it for not having used it freely enough? (as quoted in Tucker, 1978, p. 733)

On an empirical front, Costello et al. (2020) recently explored and described left-wing authoritarianism's nature and structure in six samples. We sought to address questions concerning LWA's constituent features and how these features are organized by systematically deriving a new conceptualization of LWA. Beginning with a broad preliminary conceptualization of LWA, we used exploratory and empirical strategies of test construction to iteratively construct a measure of LWA with good content validity, refine our conceptualization based on the measure's structural and nomological validity, and update the measure to reflect these changes, repeating this process three times. We then evaluated LWA's relations with over 50 criterion variables, finding that the LWA Index manifested a highly similar pattern of relations to both right-wing authoritarianism's and social dominance orientation's pattern of relations with those same variables.

To reconcile these data with LWA's reputation as "the Loch Ness Monster [of political psychology]" (Altemeyer, 1996, p. 216), let us first consider the outsized influence of Adorno et al.'s conceptualization of authoritarianism. By most standard definitions, political conservatism involves upholding the status quo and protecting the present hierarchy (Jost et al., 2013). Accordingly, Adorno et al.'s conceptualization of authoritarianism is fundamentally tied to and imbued with conservatism. Indeed, individuals who are disposed to (a) favor absolutist forms of government and (b) weaponize the *presently dominant* hierarchy to facilitate said absolutism (i.e., individuals who, per Adorno et al., are authoritarians) are necessarily also political conservatives. In contrast, individuals who are psychologically disposed to favor absolutist forms of government, but who believe that the dominant hierarchy should be overthrown (i.e., what might be considered left-wing authoritarians), do not fall within the scope of Adorno et al.'s conceptualization. Thus, from the outset, the construct of authoritarianism conflated conservatism and authoritarianism. Even critics of LWA have readily acknowledged this assertion. Stone (1980), who argued vehemently against the significance of LWA, wrote that "Almost by definition, [TAP] treated authoritarianism as a right-wing phenomenon. Had the F Scale not correlated with conservatism, something would have been wrong with its

conceptualization” (p. 7). In other words, the F scale (and RWA scale) systematically differ in its validity across the political left and right and, as such, represent a fairly clear-cut example of political bias in measurement.

In recent years, there have been several psychometrically sophisticated attempts to construct value neutral measures of authoritarianism (e.g., Duckitt et al., 2010; Dunwoody & Funke, 2016) by eliminating item bias from the RWA scale (e.g., references to religion, conservative norms). Yet given that conservatism is “baked in” to the RWA scale’s conceptualization of authoritarianism, offsetting item bias, alone, is not enough to mitigate political bias in authoritarianism measures. Indeed, parsing the RWA scale’s authoritarian wheat from its conservatism chaff may be nigh impossible without alternative conceptualizations of authoritarianism. Consider the following three items, one from each factor of Duckitt et al.’s ostensibly value-neutral measure of authoritarianism: “People should be allowed to make speeches and write books urging the overthrow of the government (R),” “It is important that we preserve our traditional values and moral standards,” and “What our country really needs is a tough, harsh dose of law and order.” If we assume, for the sake of illustration, that authoritarians on both the right and left are dogmatic, adherent to in-group norms, disposed toward social uniformity, aggressive and prejudiced against different others, and intolerant of opposing views, but that only authoritarians on the right are subservient to the *current* hierarchy, left-wing authoritarians would not score highly on Duckitt et al.’s measure.

Construct bias notwithstanding, hidden invalidity has also contributed to the paucity of research able to falsify the notion that authoritarianism is exclusive primarily to the political right. Rigorous tests of RWA’s and LWA’s relative merits presumably require measures of authoritarianism that do not presuppose core elements of Adorno et al.’s conceptualization. Such measures, by and large, do not exist. Further, fascistic and anti-democratic behaviors are, for the most part, rare among members of the general population in liberal democracies, limiting the feasibility of adopting a multi-method approach (e.g., comparing RWA’s and LWA’s ability to predict authoritarian behaviors). Indeed, to account for the lack of fascist behavior in the United States, the F scale was designed to reflect “pre-fascist” traits (i.e., one’s liability to support totalitarian regimes under the right conditions), which are sufficiently imprecisely defined as to border on unfalsifiable. Without stringent tests of construct validity that are independent of the theory on which a measure is based, seemingly robust, decades-old bodies of literature may be considerably less informative than they appear.

Moreover, construct validation examinations of the F scale and RWA scale have often used criterion-related measures that are imbued with conservatism content, such as measures of ethnocentrism, prejudice, threat sensitivity, and dogmatism (Costello et al., 2020b). Scholars have sometimes interpreted this shared conservatism variance to be evidence that authoritarianism is particular to the political right (e.g., Jost et al., 2003), but an alternative explanation is that all of the measures are biased in the same direction. The RWA scale is also often used as a criterion-related variable in tests of newer measures’ construct validity, potentially further perpetuating political bias (i.e., politically biased measures will presumably

manifest larger relations with the RWA scale than non-biased measures; consequently, biased measures will evince better construct validity than non-biased measures). In this manner, it is plausible that a vicious cycle of sorts has occurred, whereby political bias has been gradually woven into the nomological networks of political constructs. Robust tests of construct validity would serve to mitigate this sort of bias, but, as described previously, such tests are relatively rare.

Hence, from its very origins, the authoritarianism literature has suffered from pervasive political bias at the level of both theory and measurement.

## Recommendations

Scientific procedures are useful largely for their ability to guard against confirmation bias, the natural human tendency to seek out evidence that supports one's prior beliefs and minimize evidence that runs counter to them (Hart et al., 2009; Nickerson, 1998; see also Lilienfeld et al., 2009). Scientists, being human, are not immune to bias. Evaluating our research and measurement tools with this spirit in mind may be the foremost means of mitigating measurement bias. Indeed, it is likely that political values and assumptions are embedded in many constructs not mentioned in the present chapter (Duarte et al., 2015), and we encourage researchers to carefully evaluate political measures before using them for research purposes.

More specifically, at the measure development stage, researchers should consider employing *political decentering*, a modification of *cultural decentering* (Werner & Campbell, 1970) whereby a measurement instrument is developed simultaneously by several researchers with different political perspectives, and only the common elements across the different versions are retained. At the analysis stage, researchers should conduct tests of measurement invariance across the political left and right. It may also be useful to examine whether respondents with different political ideologies respond anomalously to certain items. Differential item functioning analysis is used to investigate anomalous responding across cultures and could be easily adapted for political ideology (Zumbo, 1999). Finally, rigorous, structured, multi-method tests of construct validity, using phenotypically diverse criterion-related outcomes, may be one potent measure of countering test bias. To that end, Westen and Rosenthal's (2003) metrics for quantifying construct validity provide effect size estimates and significance tests of the degree to which an observed pattern of correlations between a measure of interest and relevant external criteria accord with a predicted patterns of correlations (see Furr & Heuckeroth, 2019 for implementation of these metrics in *R*).

We encourage future researchers to adopt these and other practices when developing and evaluating measures of political constructs. Above all, as scientists, there are few better safeguards against bias than diligently attempting to disprove our own hypotheses. So long as we have not "kicked the tires" of the measures we use, there is little reason to be confident that our research findings, be they favorable or to our hypotheses or not, are anything other than interesting noise.

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# Chapter 23

## The Politics of Sexual Misconduct Allegations: A Memory Science Framework



Quincy C. Miller , Kamala London, and Elizabeth F. Loftus

Over the past three decades, two high-profile US Supreme Court judiciary confirmation hearings featured women coming forward with sexual misconduct allegations against the nominees. In 1991, Professor Anita Hill levied allegations of ongoing sexual harassment against then Supreme Court Justice nominee Clarence Thomas. In 2018, Professor Christine Blasey Ford reported an allegation of sexual assault against then Supreme Court Justice nominee Brett Kavanaugh. Despite the 27-year gap between allegations, Hill and Ford's claims before the Senate Judiciary Committees share common facets. Both women brought forward claims of sexual misconduct that they alleged took place a decade or more earlier. Professor Hill alleged Thomas sexually harassed her 10 years earlier. Professor Ford alleged Kavanaugh sexually assaulted her 36 years earlier. In both cases, after highly contentious hearings, the nominee ultimately was confirmed and now serves a lifetime appointment in the highest court of law in the United States.

The allegations of Hill and Ford garnered far-reaching national attention, and over 40 million Americans tuned in to watch the confirmation hearings (Reuters, 2018; Rucinski, 1993). But why did these allegations engender widespread American interest? How were the allegations evaluated and perceived by members of the Senate Judiciary Committees? In addition to the case facts, what sociopolitical factors may have influenced decision-making processes? Did public opinions of

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Professor Hill in 1991 vary from those of Professor Ford in 2018? What social transformations occurred in the time between the allegations of Hill and Ford?

Assessing the validity of these allegations was and still is a battleground fought both on scientific and political grounds. Perceptions of sexual misconduct allegations are influenced not only by case facts but also by political agendas. In this chapter, we first review the memory science literature relevant to the scope of the allegations of Hill and Ford. We apply a three-pronged framework for memory reliability: deterioration, distortion, and deception. Next, we discuss the impact of political orientation on views of sexual misconduct allegations. We also examine the influence of political orientation on susceptibility to misinformation and false memory production in political contexts. Lastly, we explore the influence of social media and social movements on public opinions of sexual misconduct allegations. The purpose of this chapter is not to dissect the allegations at hand but to demonstrate how evaluations of sexual misconduct allegations are influenced by political agendas.

## Memory Reliability for Past Events

### *Deterioration*

One of the most robust findings in the memory research is that memory naturally deteriorates and fades over time (Ebbinghaus, 1885/1964). Moreover, despite common belief, memory does not operate like a video recorder. Memories are not simply recorded by our senses then stored in a brain bin that preserves their initial quality. Nor are our memories mechanically accessed in their original state at a later time of recall. Rather memory involves a reconstructive process (Bartlett, 1932; Loftus, 1995; Roediger et al., 2001). Memories evolve alongside normal processes of forgetting, distortion, and reconstruction (Otgaar et al., 2019). Details of memories may become forgotten or altered due to the fading of the original memory trace or the encoding and storage of new experiences or bits of information that replace or interfere with elements of the old experience.

### *Distortion*

In addition to deterioration, compromising memory reliability over time, exposure to misinformation can also distort memory for past events. When people encounter misinformation, it impairs their ability to accurately recall lived experiences, leading the actual event to be remembered differently than how it occurred. Loftus et al. (1975) demonstrated that aggressive post-event questioning led witnesses to remember a relatively mundane past event as violent and antagonistic. Exposure to misinformation can not only alter details for past events but also generate false memory

production. For over 50 years, researchers have shown that individuals can incorporate details suggested by outside sources into their memories for past events (see Loftus, 2005, for a review) or even develop rich false memories for events that did not happen (see Scoboria et al., 2017, for a mega-analysis).

Researchers have demonstrated that people can create entirely false memories for events that did not take place, a testament to the power of suggestion. A common procedure in the experimental literature is to present participants with false information suggesting an event happened to them, when in fact, it did not. Participants are then asked to report everything they remember for the fictitious event. In a seminal study, adult participants received a suggestion that they were lost in the mall as young children, rescued by an elderly person, and reunited with family. One quarter of participants came to remember the fictitious event as true, assenting to the suggestive misinformation (Loftus & Pickrell, 1995). These rich false memories have been experimentally created for even more bizarre or emotional events such as vicious animal attacks (Porter et al., 1999), alien abductions (McNally et al., 2004), and even witnessing demonic possession (Mazzoni et al., 2001). Rich false memories have been experimentally implanted across variations of participants, modes of information delivery, and measurements of memory for the event (Zaragoza et al., 2006).

Memories of sexual misconduct are not inoculated from effects of deterioration and distortion (Loftus & Ketcham, 1991). The length of time between the alleged event and coming forward, the number of times the event has been re-experienced, and the number of intervening experiences and outside knowledge, which have also become encoded and stored, can have a strong impact on the strength and organization of the original memory. In the following sections, we detail these components of memory reliability and the implications of the memory research relevant to the allegations of Professors Anita Hill and Christine Blasey Ford.

## Historic Allegations

Memory performance declines as the length of time between the target event and memory report widens (Dilevski et al., 2020; Schacter, 2002). As time passes, the reliability of memory for historic events from the distant past is compromised due to the concomitant impact of outside information on weak memory traces. Hence, misinformation effects increase as memory traces for the original event deteriorate over time (Loftus et al., 1978). Stated another way, memories become increasingly prone to suggestion as more time passes. Therefore, the most accurate memory reports are typically those made closest in time to the target event before opportunities for deterioration or distortion have taken place.

Fuzzy-trace theory (Brainerd & Reyna, 2004) provides a useful theoretical framework for understanding memory reports in forensic contexts, specifically after a delay in which years or decades have passed before coming forward with allegations. Delay may further complicate the adjudication of sexual misconduct cases, forging obstacles to prove or disprove historic allegations – as memory testimony is

often the sole piece of evidence in these cases. At the same time, many victims of sexual harassment and sexual assault report waiting years or decades before coming forward with allegations (Balogh et al., 2003; McDonald, 2011; Miller & London, 2020).

Professor Hill alleged Thomas sexually harassed her a decade before she came forward with allegations. Professor Ford alleged Kavanaugh sexually assaulted her 36 years earlier. According to the principles of fuzzy-trace theory, memory traces for verbatim case information, or specific details of an event such as the location, are much more likely to naturally fade and be forgotten over time in comparison to more gist case information, or the overall essence of an event (Brainerd & Reyna, 1995). Additionally, memory traces for verbatim case information are increasingly susceptible to distortion or sources of outside information versus gist case information (Brainerd & Reyna, 1993, 1996; Koriat et al., 2003; Reyna, 1995).

Nonetheless legal fact finders may erroneously perceive verbatim case-relevant information provided in witness testimony to carry more weight than gist information. In the confirmation hearing of Kavanaugh, Senator Sheldon Whitehouse stated, “You have vivid, specific and detailed recollections, something prosecutors look for,” after hearing testimony by Professor Ford. Additionally, then Senator Kamala Harris stated, “And what I find striking from your testimony is you remember key searing details of what happened to you” (Washington Post, 2018). Fact finders may consequently perceive victims as credible if they recount highly detailed testimony laden with verbatim versus gist case-relevant information, regardless of whether years or decades have passed between the alleged events and memory report. In an experimental study, mock jurors rated witnesses who provide detailed testimony as credible and to have a reliable memory for the event, even when the details offered little probative value (e.g., Bell & Loftus, 1989).

In the confirmation hearing of Thomas, members of the Senate Judiciary Committee queried Hill for her verbatim recollection of information that likely would have faded within minutes of the interaction (from Miller, 1994, p. 35):

The Chairman: If you can, in his own words—not yours—in his words, can you tell us what, on that occasion, he said to you? You have described the essence of the conversation.

In order for us to determine—well, can you tell us, in his words, what he said?

Prof. Hill: I really cannot quote him verbatim.

Professor Hill went on to describe gist information from the alleged conversation with Thomas 10 years earlier. In prompting Hill to recall verbatim details for the long-ago alleged event, the Senate Judiciary Committee failed to realize that verbatim memory traces become rapidly inaccessible as time passes (Brainerd & Reyna, 2004). Moreover, the Senate Judiciary Committee failed to recognize that memory for the verbatim content of past conversations is sparse among adults (Duke et al., 2007), especially after a delay of 10 years. Some members of the confirmation hearing incorrectly attributed Professor Hill’s inability to recall Thomas’ verbatim words from 10 years prior to lend support to her non-credibility as a witness, failing to realize her lack of memory for the verbatim details is indeed consistent with the

memory science literature. Therefore, common beliefs may run counter to the memory science when examining sexual misconduct allegations.

Despite the previously mentioned reactions of Senators Whitehouse and Harris, others expressed skepticism of Professor Ford's testimony and credibility as a witness. Some critics of Ford perceived her lack of memory for verbatim details as reason for doubt. For example, former president Donald Trump criticized Ford's allegations stating, "Thirty-six years ago, this happened. I had one beer. Right? I had one beer. How did you get home? I don't remember. How'd you get there? I don't remember. Where is the place? I don't remember. How many years ago was it? I don't know. I don't know. I don't know. What neighborhood was it in? I don't know. Where the house? I don't know. Upstairs, downstairs, where was it? I don't know. But I had one beer. That's the only thing I remember" (Montanaro, 2018). Taken together, these examples demonstrate that fact finders and pundits alike commonly attribute credibility to witnesses who provide verbatim versus gist testimony, regardless of whether time has passed between the alleged events and memory report.

## Repetition

The number of times an event has been experienced can affect memory reports. Typically, our memories are strengthened by the number of times we encounter a stimulus or piece of information (e.g., Foster et al., 2012; Wright et al., 2013). Repetitions precede feelings of recognition and familiarity over time. However, repetition effects for experienced events are complicated by a host of factors, which include the saliency of the event. Professor Hill alleged repeated incidents of sexual harassment, whereas Ford alleged a one-time incident of sexual assault. Individuals tend to provide more details about a single event versus repeated events (Howe, 1997; Johnson et al., 1993; Theunissen et al., 2017). Those who experience a single event often recall specific details of the event, while those who experience repeated events often recall more general information for how the events usually happened (Deck & Paterson, 2021). Repeated traumatic experiences can become represented in memory as a generic "script-like" event (Howe, 1988). While a one-time traumatic event may be relatively well remembered, memory for a specific instance in repetitive traumatic events may become blurry as individuals encode and store new experiences that replace or interfere with past events. Overall, with increasing repetition, gist memory details for past events tend to outlast verbatim details (Snow et al., 2020). In the confirmation hearing of Thomas, Professor Hill was asked to provide an estimate for the number of times Thomas allegedly suggested the two go on a date (Miller, 1994, p. 51):

Senator Leahy: Did he ask you—well, you have said that he asked you for dates many times. By many, what do you mean? Can you give us even a ball park figure?

Professor Hill: Oh, I would say over the course of—

Sen. Leahy: Of both the Department of Education and the EEOC.

Prof. Hill: I would say ten times, maybe, I don't know, five to ten times.

Professor Hill provided gist versus verbatim information when she reported on the alleged repetitive requests for dates. Hill's memory for gist versus verbatim details is aligned with the memory science literature regarding not only repetition but also historic allegations. Consistent with fuzzy-trace theory and a "script-like" representation, Hill recalled gist versus verbatim case-relevant details in her testimony describing her alleged repetitive sexual harassment from 10 years prior.

### **Post-event Information**

Exposure to post-event information can affect memory for an event or events. The source monitoring framework provides a theoretical explanation as to why memory distortions occur as individuals are exposed to post-event information (Johnson et al., 1993). Memories are not stored with tags that identify their source (Murphy et al., 2019). Multitudes of post-event information, including past conversations with others, can impact the reliability of memory reports for past events (Belli et al., 1994; Brainerd & Reyna, 2004). When assessing whether a target event actually occurred, individuals use their prior knowledge of facts, previous experiences, and present attitudes and expectations to reconstruct the memory. Generally, these processes produce fairly accurate reconstructions for past events but other times result in errors. Whether post-event information exerts deleterious or beneficial effects on memory for past events depends upon the veracity of that information.

The possibility of misinformation introduction is critical when weighing memory reliability for long-ago events. Was misinformation introduced in conversations with others after some key event(s) occurred? Was misinformation introduced in therapy? If we engage in conversations involving specific details about a long-ago event, the plausibility and familiarity of the details increase. Over time and repeated conversations, whether informally with friends or formally in therapeutic contexts, individuals may conflate familiarity and reality, raising alarm for false memories (Brainerd & Reyna, 2004). Additionally, suggestive psychotherapy techniques can lead to memory distortion or false memory production (Lilienfeld, 2007; Lindsay & Read, 1995; Loftus & Davis, 2006). As time passes and memory traces weaken, source monitoring errors can occur in which the post-event misinformation becomes confused with the original event at retrieval (Reyna & Lloyd, 1997).

Over the 10 and 36 years that elapsed between the alleged events and the testimonies of Professors Hill and Ford, both women self-reportedly discussed the target events with others informally and formally. Hill testified that she discussed her alleged ongoing sexual harassment with two friends and a boyfriend (Miller, 1994, p. 45):

Senator Leahy: Did you discuss it with anybody at that time?

Professor Hill: Yes, I did.

Sen. Leahy: And with whom did you discuss it at that time?

Prof. Hill: Well, Sue Hoerchner, I did discuss it with Sue Hoerchner, she was a friend of mine and someone I confided in. And I spoke of this to two other people also.

Ford testified discussing her alleged sexual assault both informally with friends and her husband and formally in therapeutic contexts. Ford testified in her opening statement, “Over the years, I told very, very few friends that I had this traumatic experience. I told my husband before we were married that I had experienced a sexual assault. I had never told the details to anyone—the specific details—until May 2012 during a couples counseling session.” Ford continued, “Occasionally, I would discuss the assault in an individual therapy session... I had confided in some close friends that I had an experience with sexual assault... I do not recall each person I spoke to about Brett’s assault” (Washington Post, 2018).

With repeated conversations and reconstructions, Hill and Ford’s memory traces for the original alleged events may have become distorted. Nonetheless, without knowing the basis of the past conversations, we have no way of discerning whether these conversations anticipated distortion or accurate renditions of the past alleged events. We must also consider that memory for past events depends entirely upon whether the alleged experiences did indeed occur. Is there a valid experience to be (mis)remembered, or is the individual confused or lying?

## *Deception*

Sometimes, individuals distort the truth for some motivation (e.g., Moscovitch, 1995). Deception cannot be automatically ruled out without careful scrutiny. Is it possible that Hill or Ford intentionally and wittingly came forward with false allegations due to self-motivated reasons? False memories may also start out as intentional lies, but over time and repeated reconstructions, the accuser may come to truly believe their false statements – conflating familiarity and reality (Loftus & Hoffman, 1989). Like the adage, if we tell a lie enough times, we may come to believe it. Similarly, recipients of false allegations may further spread the misinformation, contributing to a “perfect storm” of memory distortion. In the confirmation hearing of Thomas, fact finders expressed concern regarding Hill’s motivation to fabricate allegations (Miller, 1994, p. 58):

Senator Heflin: Now, in trying to determine whether you are telling falsehoods or not, I have now got to determine what your motivations might be. Are you a scorned woman?

Professor Hill: No.

Sen. Heflin: Are you a zealoting (sic) civil rights believer that progress will be turned back, if Clarence Thomas goes on the court?

Prof. Hill: No, I don’t—I think that—I have my opinion, but I don’t think that progress will be turned back. I think that civil rights will prevail, no matter what happens with the Court.

Sen. Heflin: Do you have a militant attitude relative to the area of civil rights?

Prof. Hill: No, I don’t have a militant attitude.

Sen. Heflin: Do you have a martyr complex?

Prof. Hill: No, I don’t.

Sen. Heflin: Well, do you see that, coming out of this, you can be a hero in the civil rights movement?

Prof. Hill: I do not have that kind of complex. I don't like all of the attention that I am getting, I don't—even if I liked the attention, I would not lie to get the attention.

Sen. Heflin: Well, the issue of fantasy has arisen.

Like that of Thomas, some members of the Senate Judiciary Committee in the confirmation hearing of Kavanaugh expressed skepticism regarding Ford's motivation to come forward with historic allegations of sexual assault, although not all members held paralleled views. Senator Lindsey Graham stated, "This is the most unethical sham since I've been in politics... I hope the American people can see through this sham" (Washington Post, 2018). However, then Senator Kamala Harris expressed antithetical conviction in Ford's motivation to come forward. Harris stated, "I want to thank you, I want to thank you for your courage and I want to tell you I believe you. I believe you. And I believe many Americans across this country believe you" (Washington Post, 2018). Ultimately, legal fact finders and laypersons alike possess little means to substantiate an individual's motivation to distort (e.g., Edelstein et al., 2006).

In conclusion, the memory science is not without limitation. Perceptions of sexual misconduct allegations are largely a function of the specific case facts such as the length of time between the alleged event and coming forward, the number of times the event has been experienced, and exposure to post-event information. However, fact finders may not possess knowledge of the memory science literature (or processes of memory deterioration and distortion), limiting the validity of their evaluations of the allegations at hand. How does one move from all these "mays" to a rational appraisal of whether it did or didn't happen? This will not be easy. Psychological scientists can present the research for fact finders to render informed decisions based upon the specific case facts at hand. However, it is virtually impossible without independent corroboration to distinguish a real memory from one that is a product of suggestion or some other process (Bernstein & Loftus, 2009). Rather than solely applying the scientific literature to the case facts, views of sexual misconduct allegations may be unwittingly affected by sociopolitical factors.

## Political Orientation and Evaluations of Sexual Misconduct

Consider the opposing reactions between Senator Graham and then Senator Harris toward Ford's allegations against nominee Kavanaugh. What leads to these varied perceptions? A fundamental aspect of cognition is that humans have limited working memory and operate in daily life using mental shortcuts or heuristics (Tversky & Kahneman, 1974). Evaluations of sexual misconduct allegations are not exempt from biased decision-making processes. Factors including gender and political orientation have been shown to affect decision-making in sexual misconduct cases (e.g., Lucarini et al., 2020). Decades of research indicate that women tend to express a truth bias in believing victims of sexual misconduct compared to men (e.g., Frazier & Borgida, 1988). Recall Harris's pro-accuser statements in the confirmation hearing of Kavanaugh compared to those of Graham. Additionally, a burgeoning line of

research indicates that one's political agenda can affect decision-making (e.g., von Sikorski & Saumer, 2020). Harris identifies as a Democrat while Graham as a Republican. Could their political agendas have influenced their perceptions of Ford's allegations?

In the confirmation hearings of Thomas and Kavanaugh, it is important to note that both of the accused were Republican candidates nominated by Republican presidents, which may have swayed perceptions (e.g., Costa et al., 2020). Populations of US adults were polled on their reactions to the 1991 and 2018 confirmation hearings. In a survey of 501 adults conducted shortly after the confirmation hearing of Thomas, political orientation was predictive of perceptions; however, gender effects did not emerge to the same degree. Sixty-nine percent of Republicans rated Thomas as more believable than Hill versus 46% of Democrats. Additionally, 78% of men perceived Thomas as more believable than Hill compared to 74% of women (Kohlbert, 1991).

Perceptions of the confirmation hearing of Kavanaugh varied with both political orientation and gender. In a survey of 1183 adults conducted shortly following the confirmation hearing, 76% of Democrats indicated believing Ford was telling the truth and 5% Kavanaugh; 8% of Republicans indicated believing Ford and 76% Kavanaugh. Compared to ratings of Thomas' believability between political parties in 1991 (46% versus 69%), the increased magnitude of differences between Republicans and Democrats in 2018 may be partially attributable to the current partisan divide in US politics. Men's perceptions of the allegations were evenly split with 39% believing Kavanaugh and 37% Ford. However, women's perceptions were notably unbalanced with 52% believing Ford and 27% Kavanaugh (Montanaro, 2018). Hence, in 2018, women were twice as likely to believe Ford over Kavanaugh compared to women's likelihood of believing Hill over Thomas in 1991 (52% versus 26%). Additionally, gender differences in ratings of accuser believability were more robust in 2018 versus 1991. Overall, these estimates suggest both gender and political orientation are of heightened importance when weighing public opinions of high-profile allegations of sexual misconduct in 2018 versus 1991.

In an experimental study, von Sikorski and Saumer (2020) examined reactions to a fabricated news article describing an alleged incident of sexual harassment involving a conservative politician and employee. Political orientation significantly predicted evaluations of the alleged incident of sexual harassment in that those who identified as politically conservative versus liberal expressed increased victim blaming attitudes. Gender effects did not emerge. Thus, political agendas have been shown to affect evaluations of sexual misconduct allegations, specifically when the accused is a politician. Replication and extension of von Sikorski and Saumer (2020) is needed. For example, does political orientation exert similar effects if the politician is described as liberal? Are the effects of political orientation moderated by gender? Do effects of political orientation extend beyond sexual misconduct cases? In the following section, we discuss the burgeoning line of experimental research examining political orientation and memory distortion in domains outside of sexual misconduct. This research may offer future scholars novel ideas and experimental paradigms to further investigate the impact of political orientation on evaluations of sexual misconduct.

## Political Orientation and Memory Distortion

Political orientation has been demonstrated to influence not only our decision-making processes but also our susceptibility to misinformation and false memory production. A burgeoning line of research indicates that people are highly susceptible to misinformation in political contexts (see Walter & Murphy, 2018, for a meta-analysis) and prone to forming false memories for fabricated events that are congruent with their political views (and preexisting beliefs and attitudes; Frenda et al., 2013; Murphy et al., 2019; Nash, 2017; Sacchi et al., 2007; Strange et al., 2011). Using the well-established memory implantation experimental paradigm, researchers have presented participants with misinformation suggesting a fabricated political event took place. Participants are then asked to report everything they remember for the fictitious event.

For example, Frenda et al. (2013) showed participants doctored photographs of Democrat and Republican politicians. Nearly half of the participants reported remembering the fictional events, especially those aligned with their political orientation. Participants who identified as politically conservative were more likely to falsely remember a photo of a liberal politician engaging in a negative action (i.e., Barack Obama shaking hands with the president of Iran), while those who identified as politically liberal were more likely to falsely remember a conservative politician engaging in a negative action (i.e., George W. Bush vacationing with a baseball celebrity during Hurricane Katrina). Additionally, Murphy et al. (2019) gave participants fabricated news stories describing Ireland's abortion referendum during the ongoing political campaign. Nearly half of the participants reported remembering at least one of the fabricated events. "Yes" voters (i.e., those in favor of legalizing abortion) were more likely than "no" voters (i.e., those against legalizing abortion) to falsely remember a fictional scandal regarding the campaign to vote "no," and "no" voters were more likely than "yes" voters to falsely remember a fictional scandal regarding the campaign to vote "yes." Overall, participants were relatively poor at identifying the fabricated stories even after they had been alerted to the study's purpose, further demonstrating the ease of false memory production and maintenance in political contexts. This growing line of research demonstrates that memories can be created for past and ongoing fabricated political events, especially when aligned with one's political agenda.

False memories can arise when reconstructions lead individuals to unwittingly manufacture thoughts and images and mistake them for prior experiences (Murphy et al., 2019; Sacchi et al., 2007; Strange et al., 2011). These errors may be partially explained by the source monitoring framework. Memory reconstruction is influenced by one's current knowledge, attitudes, and beliefs. Individuals may erroneously remember a fictional political event as having occurred when the event is aligned with one's current worldview. Fictional events aligned with one's worldview generate feelings of recognition and familiarity, which impact source attributions (Frenda et al., 2013). These memory errors or source misattributions may be self-generated or a product of social influence, such as conversations with others or the media.

## Misinformation in the Media

In recent years, an infodemic of misinformation and fake news has pervaded US mainstream media. Fake news can be defined as news stories that are fabricated, but presented as if from legitimate sources, and promoted by the media to deceive the public (Lazer et al., 2018). Nearly four in ten Americans (38%) indicate having knowingly encountered some sort of misinformation or fake news in the media. About one quarter (23%) report having shared fake news sources, whether wittingly or unwittingly (Barthel et al., 2016). Many politicians utilize a political strategy in which they falsely label news stories and sources that do not advance their positions as unreliable or fake news (Vosoughi et al., 2018), using the ongoing political divide to further spread misinformation. Sixty-four percent of Americans express that the political divide within the United States is the greatest obstacle in addressing fake news (Mitchell et al., 2019).

Once received, misinformation in politics can be challenging to overcome, especially when aligned with one's preexisting beliefs, encountered repetitively, and the source is perceived as credible. Repeated exposure to information bolsters the sense that that information is familiar and in turn more accurate (Dechene et al., 2010; Foster et al., 2012). Repetitions of misinformation are particularly detrimental as people are increasingly likely to believe a fake news headline that they have seen repeatedly (Pennycook et al., 2018). Moreover, individuals are more likely to share and spread misinformation and fake news that they have encountered more than one time (Effron & Raj, 2019). Susceptibility to misinformation is mediated by the perceived credibility of the source. Individuals are relatively easily influenced by misinformation that is provided by a source perceived as credible, whereas they are often resistant to suggestion that is provided by a source perceived as noncredible or intentionally misleading (Dodd & Bradshaw, 1980; Smith & Ellsworth, 1987; Underwood & Pezdek, 1998). Effects of repetition and credibility of the source are exacerbated when the information encountered is congruent with one's political agenda.

One commonly proposed solution to combat fake news is warnings. These warnings alert people either before or after encountering misinformation that some of the information they read may be inaccurate (Greenspan & Loftus, 2021). However, effects of misinformation can persist even after people have received a valid correction (Ecker et al., 2010; Johnson & Seifert, 1994; Lewandowsky et al., 2012; Murphy et al., 2019, 2020; Thorson, 2015), and corrections are less effective if the misinformation was attributed to a credible source (Walter & Tukachinsky, 2019). Furthermore, misinformation that is repeated is increasingly challenging to counter, especially when time has passed between the delivery of misinformation and the correction (Walter & Tukachinsky, 2019). Correction to misinformation is most likely to exert the greatest effect when it is delivered immediately, aligned with one's political agenda, and attributed to the same source that delivered the misinformation (Walter & Tukachinsky, 2019). Even if individuals update their beliefs after a correction or warning of fake news, they may refuse to subsequently update their attitudes about the issue or the source spreading the misinformation (Nyhan et al.,

2020; Porter et al., 2019; Swire-Thompson et al., 2019). Rather than reactive methods that attempt to dispel misinformation after people have already been exposed to it, proactive methods that seek to prevent exposure to misinformation are more likely to be effective long term (see Greenspan & Loftus, 2021, for a review). Despite their limited efficacy, many social media platforms have implemented warnings to prevent the spread of misinformation (Hegeman, 2020; Roth & Pickles, 2020; Smith et al., 2017).

## *Social Media*

In 2020 alone, 2.8 billion individuals were active on Facebook (Tankovska, 2021). Every second, about 6000 tweets are sent on Twitter, which amass to 350,000 tweets per minute and 200 billion tweets per year (Smith, 2020). An eminent development over the past decade has been the shift of news consumption away from traditional mass media sources to social media platforms including Facebook and Twitter. The surge of social media as a mode of news consumption may play a role in the infodemic of misinformation and fake news. Many individuals report consuming news coverage via social media (Gottfried & Shearer, 2016), which is problematic given the ease with which misinformation and fake news are created and shared on these platforms (Shane, 2017). In discerning facts from fiction, fake news articles reach more people and circulate more quickly than fact-checked articles on social media. In analyses of the top performing news articles on Facebook and Twitter, fake news articles outperform fact-checked articles in terms of shares, likes, and comments (Silverman et al., 2016; Vosoughi et al., 2018).

People have a strong motivation to rebuff the credibility of stories that do not align with their political orientation (Flynn et al., 2017). In contemporary media, consumers can identify sources of information that are consistent with their political agenda. If individuals routinely consume partisan news coverage congruent with their political orientation, they run risk of receiving one-sided, partial information. Social media algorithms that recommend and deliver content based on personalized relevancy and past online behavior further exacerbate these effects. The consumption of incomplete news coverage may compromise informed opinions and decision-making processes.

Social media platforms have the far-reaching capacity to influence social issues such as voting behavior and public opinions of sexual misconduct allegations. Many Americans take a vested interest in confronting allegations of sexual misconduct, and high-profile cases are portrayed in the media on a near daily basis. Media coverage plays a critical role in societal perceptions of these allegations (e.g., Sacks et al., 2017), which is particularly relevant during the age of social media news consumption. Comprehensive case knowledge is seldom offered in media coverage, and rather opinions are often formed on the basis of incomplete or biased sources. Partisan media coverage may drive individuals to develop staunch, one-sided perceptions of sexual misconduct allegations. Far-leaning political media consumption

diminishes the opportunity to critically consider all sides of information and reach an informed decision.

## *Social Movements*

Turning back to the allegations of Professors Anita Hill and Christine Blasey Ford, many public opinions circulated at the time regarding the veracity of the complaints. Only 18–22% of Americans surveyed shortly after the confirmation hearings of Thomas and Kavanaugh were reportedly unsure of whether to believe the accuser or the accused (Kohlbert, 1991; Montanaro, 2018). In the hearing of Thomas, 58% of respondents reportedly believed Thomas, while 24% believed Hill. Many respondents indicated holding unfavorable views of Hill (41%), while fewer held favorable views of her (17%). In the hearing of Kavanaugh, 45% indicated they believed Ford was telling the truth, while 33% believed Kavanaugh. Many respondents reportedly held favorable views of Ford (41%), compared to those who held unfavorable views of her (32%). Overall, respondents attributed much more validity to the allegations of Professor Ford in 2018 compared to Professor Hill in 1991.

Among Ford's supporters were many psychological scientists. The 2018 president of the American Psychological Association released a statement in support of Ford (APA, 2018). Additionally, the American Psychological Foundation now offers a grant in Ford's honor to fund researchers investigating the "understanding, prevention and/or treatment of the consequences of exposure to traumatic events such as sexual assault, sexual harassment, and/or rape" (APF, 2020). Reactions to these allegations suggest that societal opinions have shifted away from believing the accused to believing the accuser in the 27 years that have passed, but what serves as the catalyst of this sociopolitical transformation?

First, differences in public opinions of sexual misconduct allegations from 1991 to 2018 may have arisen as a by-product of the onset of news consumption via social media. Social media serves as a far-reaching outlet to receive and communicate allegations of sexual misconduct to the public. Additionally, the outreach of social movements tied to sexual misconduct, such as the #MeToo movement, has been advanced via social media. In 2017, the #MeToo movement went viral across social media platforms, bringing national attention to the sexual harassment and assault of women. The #MeToo movement brought historic allegations of sexual misconduct to the media forefront. Since #MeToo, the reporting of sexual misconduct has increased within the United States (Levy & Mattson, 2020; Morgan & Truman, 2018). Hence, social media and the #MeToo movement may have generated familiarity with sexual misconduct allegations and in turn bolstered pro-accuser versus pro-accused attitudes.

Gender and political orientation mediate attitudes toward the #MeToo movement. Since the onset of #MeToo, the gender gap has widened in political party identification. Studies of US adults glean evidence that women are more likely than men to endorse the #MeToo movement. Compared to Republicans, Democrats are more likely to express endorsement of #MeToo (Castle et al., 2020). Democrat

identification of women has risen exponentially since the movement began, especially among young women aged 20–40 years. However, the majority of men continue to identify as Republican, and there has been little shift of party identification in recent years (Pew Research Center, 2018). Overall, women and Democrats express more positive attitudes toward the #MeToo movement and attribute increased credibility toward accusers of sexual misconduct. Nonetheless, in a longitudinal study of US adults' perceptions of sexual misconduct allegations pre- and post-#MeToo, dismissal of allegations by men and women was reduced following the movement, and the reduction persisted after 6 months (Szekeres et al., 2020), suggesting lasting change in public opinion.

Compared to the allegations of Hill in 1991, the allegations of Ford in 2018 were subject to the influence of social media and social movements linked to sexual misconduct. Within 3 days of Kavanaugh's confirmation hearing, over 700,000 tweets amassed around the allegations at hand (BBC News, 2018). While many #MeToo allies backed Ford's claim, others fiercely attacked her credibility. A counter-social movement led by hashtagged tweet #HimToo became the inversion of #MeToo, defending Kavanaugh's innocence (Morris, 2018). Ford was also the target of widespread social media misinformation (Roose, 2018), which may have lent ammunition to critics of her credibility. Ford's allegations also came to light directly after the #MeToo movement. Given the impact of #MeToo on national awareness and public opinions of sexual misconduct allegations, the far-reaching social movement may partially explain the increased credibility Americans attributed to Ford versus Hill. Additionally, Ford may have been viewed as increasingly credible, as her allegations were similar to other high-profile allegations portrayed in the media during #MeToo. The sociopolitical shift from pro-accused to pro-accuser may have arisen due to the transformation of media coverage and consumption from 1991 to 2018.

However, the "believe the accuser" movement began long before #MeToo. The Memory Wars are one of the best-known controversies in psychology (Crews, 1995). The debate centers around the validity of repressed memory for trauma. Repressed memory cases began to crop up in the 1990s, in which adult accusers commonly claimed to have recovered memories of severe child sexual abuse in therapeutic contexts. Supporters have argued that memory for trauma is stored, rendered unconscious, and inaccessible for some time yet can later be reliably recovered in detail (e.g., Dalenberg et al., 2012; DePrince et al., 2012; Freud, 1916/1949; Freyd, 1994; Van der Kolk & Fisler, 1995). On the other hand, skeptics have contended there is no empirical evidence that people can accurately recover repressed memories of trauma (e.g., Holmes, 1990; Lindsay & Read, 1995; Loftus, 1993; McNally, 2012). A robust scientific literature emerged in response to the controversy, and experts have argued both sides in the legal arena (see Davis & Loftus, 2009, for a review).

Memory wars played out vividly in the famous Ramona case of 1994 (see Johnston, 1997). Holly Ramona claimed to have recovered repressed memories of more than a decade of abuse, including rape, allegedly perpetrated by her father, Gary Ramona. Her memories were recovered through individual and group therapy, along with sodium amytal, the "truth serum" believed to aid memory recovery.

First, Holly sued her father, and in a separate action, Gary sued the therapists and the hospital for implanting false memories. Gary Ramona was awarded \$500,000 by a California jury. But his life was permanently altered, as he lost his family, house, and job in the process.

Some claim that memory wars have been effectively resolved (e.g., Barden, 2016; McHugh, 2003; Paris, 2012), yet contemporary research reports yield evidence that the controversy rages on today (see Otgaar et al., 2019). Beliefs in repressed memory persist among 71–90% of the general public (Dodier & Patihis, 2021; Otgaar et al., 2020; Patihis et al., 2014) and 66–70% of clinicians (Magnussen & Melinder, 2012; Ost et al., 2017; Patihis et al., 2014). In the years since the Ramona case, hundreds of criminal and civil cases have surfaced involving claims of repressed memory for trauma (Loftus, 2018). Although the allegations of Hill and Ford appear to involve continuous versus repressed memories, it is worth mentioning that memory wars may have influenced public opinions about these claims as well. Hill came forward in 1991 at the onset of memory wars, and the debate on memory for trauma thrived among clinicians, psychological researchers, and the general public. Ford's allegation came after memory wars had been fought for decades. However, her allegation may not have been inoculated from effects as brush fires and embers of the wars still remain.

## Conclusions

Our purpose here was not to analyze the accuracy of the allegations of Anita Hill and Christine Blasey Ford but to demonstrate that assessing the validity of sexual misconduct allegations was and still is a battleground fought both on scientific and political grounds. We are not advocating for belief or disbelief in allegations of sexual misconduct. Rather, we are suggesting careful scrutiny by those who receive all case information, not just that provided by the media. Additionally, we encourage readers to act as critical consumers of the (mis)information sold in our far-leaning political media. In the words of Anita Hill, we must “refrain from pitting the public interest in confronting sexual harassment against the need for a fair confirmation hearing” (Hill, 2018). Uncritical disbelief in all claims harms true victims. But uncritical acceptance of all claims, no matter how dubious, harms many.

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# Chapter 24

## Predicting, Controlling, and Engineering Humans: Eugenic Sciences in American Psychology



Oksana Yakushko

Many scholars maintain that US psychology is grounded in impartial scientific pursuits and unbiased engagement in pressing social issues (Pickren, & Rutherford, 2010, 2018; Schultz & Schultz, 2015). In contrast, however, a growing number of historians of psychology recognize that its beginnings were significantly influenced by problematic ideological movements (Guthrie, 2004; Saini, 2019; Tucker, 1996, 2002; Walsh et al., 2014). Among the most influential of these movements were social Darwinism and eugenics (Guthrie, 2004; Tucker, 1996; Saini, 2019; Yakushko, 2019a). Social Darwinism is the extension of Darwin's own works on evolution of biological organisms to human social differences, such as in his 1871 *Descent of Man and Selection in Relation to Sex*. Charles Darwin and subsequent social Darwinists claimed to have found empirical evidence of superiority of certain groups over others (e.g., Nordic/British over other ethnic groups, men over women) was established during ancient "cavemen" (i.e., Pleistocene era) times in ways that biologically determined capacity to survive and become the fitter members of the human species (Bannister, 2010; Weikart, 2004; Yakushko, 2019a, b). According to Darwin (1871), human evolution was marked by "the western nations of Europe, who now so immeasurably surpass their former savage progenitors... stand at the summit of civilization" (p. 141), while "man has ultimately become superior to woman" (p. 329). With direct encouragement from Darwin, his scientific colleague and relative, Francis Galton (1869, 1883, 1904), further proposed that Darwinian scientific views could be used to hasten human evolution via an empirical program he termed eugenics, which was later termed the science of racial betterment. Galton (1907) defined eugenics as:

The science of improving stock, which is by no means confined to questions of judicious mating, but which, especially in the case of man, takes cognisance of all influences that tend in however remote a degree to give to the more suitable races or strains of blood a better

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chance of prevailing speedily over the less suitable than they otherwise would have had. (p. 3)

Galton (1869, 1883, 1904, 1907) claimed to have used extensive scientific methods, including emerging statistical methods (e.g., comparing Cambridge university graduates versus London's poor) as well as his observations of traveling across the British colonies, to prove that human genius was hereditary and exemplified in the male British elites. Galton's (1865, 1869, 1883) works focused exclusively on his utopian visions of improving humanity via methods of negative eugenics (i.e., ridding the world of evolutionary unfit through controlling their procreation) and positive eugenics (i.e., encouraging procreation and moral development in select evolutionary fit individuals). In his words, "eugenics co-operate with the workings of nature by securing that humanity shall be represented by the fittest races. What nature does blindly, slowly, and ruthlessly, man may do providently, quickly, and kindly" (Galton, 1904, n.p.).

Karl Pearson (1905, 1911), who is recognized for his formal contribution to establishing the field of statistics, was a close collaborator with Galton. Pearson claimed to have developed statistical methods of averages, means, and normality curves to support the eugenic vision of social human betterment by ridding the world of all undesirable groups, including indigenous tribes, African Blacks, Jews, people living in poverty, or people with disabilities. In his book entitled *National Life from the Standpoint of Sciences*, Pearson (1905) celebrated genocides against indigenous groups, proclaiming these to lead to the "masterful human progress following the inter-racial struggle" (p. 25) as well as proving Darwinian theories "chiefly by way of war with inferior races" (p. 44).

Eugenicists, starting with Galton, produced numerous scientific studies (especially intelligence and personality testing) and programs (e.g., mental and sexual hygiene efforts) that used social Darwinian views to claim hereditary (e.g., genetic, biological, brain-based) inferiority of non-Nordic ethnic groups, women, people with disabilities, sexual minorities, people living in poverty, women seeking liberation from oppressive gender roles, and other groups (Davenport, 1910; Galton, 1904; Goddard, 1920, 1948; Hall, 1920; McDougall, 1914; Melendy, 1914; Pearson, 1905; Popenoe & Johnson, 1935; Yerkes, 1920, 1921, 1923).

Without doubt, legacies of eugenics are counted as among the most socially violent and oppressive (Bashford & Levine, 2010; Black, 2003; Guthrie, 2004; Lombardo, 2011; Selden, 1999; Smith, 1985; Stern, 2015; Tucker, 1996). The most recognized application of eugenics as the science of racial betterment is found in the Holocaust and other Nazi racial purity practices (e.g., "mercy" killings of people with disabilities, persecution of LGBT individuals) (Kuhl, 2002; Wiekart, 2004). However, other significant detrimental applications of eugenics in the USA and worldwide included Jim Crow laws, school and vocational segregations, involuntary sterilizations, colonialism, xenophobic immigrant policies, abusive asylum systems, medical experiments (e.g., Tuskegee syphilis study), the Apartheid in South Africa, miscegenation laws, homophobic policies (e.g., Nazi concentration camps, forced sterilizations, claims of unfitness to work), and oppressive restriction on women to be breeders and happy housewives promoted in numerous books, films,

pamphlets, and scholarly works (Bashford & Levine, 2010; Black, 2003; Guthrie, 2004; Lombardo, 2011; Selden, 1999; Smith, 1985; Saini, 2019; Stern, 2015; Tucker, 1996; Yakushko, 2019a, b). Although revelations in regard to eugenics and its impacts have aided in recognizing it as a profoundly violent ideological use of sciences, especially after the World War II, commitments to social Darwinism and eugenics as supposedly neutral and valid form of empirical social pursuit of evolutionary betterment continue (Saini, 2019; Tucker, 1996; Yakushko, 2019a, b). Western, and specifically US academic psychology, has served as a cultivating ground for these ideological uses of sciences (Gould, 1996; Tucker, 1996; Yakushko, 2019a, b).

## Eugenics and the Discipline of American Psychology

Commitment to social Darwinism and eugenics can be traced to founding members of varied branches of American psychology. Eugenic publications frequently celebrated leading psychologists, many of them presidents of the American Psychological Association (APA), as leaders and contributors to eugenic social practices (e.g., immigration laws, sexual hygiene campaigns). For example, the most recognized US-based eugenic publication entitled the *Eugenical News* (1916–1922) lauded “new active members of Eugenics Research Association: ... C. C. Brigham, Psychological Laboratory, Princeton, N. J., G. Stanley Hall, Clark University... John B. Watson, Johns Hopkins Hospital” (p. 53). The inaugural issues of first eugenic journal *The Eugenics Review*, edited by Galton and Pearson, featured full text contributions of G. Stanley Hall (1910) and H. H. Goddard (1910). Eugenic textbooks and popular contributions routinely justified eugenic efforts via studies by American psychologists who supposedly empirically verified its tenants (Davenport, 1910; Guyer, 1916; Popenoe & Johnson, 1935). John B. Watson and K. Lashley (1922), both of whom served as presidents of the APA and were considered pre-eminent US psychologists, worked with one of the most active American eugenicists (e.g., Ronald Fisher) – on studies of utilization of eugenic propaganda films with focus on sexual hygiene (i.e., heteronormative, self-controlled, miscegenation-based sexual behavior). Psychologist, eugenic leader, and founder of psychological testing, Lewis Terman was recognized as the primary contributor to involuntary sterilizations of supposedly unfit women and girls (Stern, 2015). US psychologist H. H. Goddard (1911, 1912, 1920) was known worldwide for his studies on “feeble-mindedness” and was praised by Nazi eugenicists for his key contributions to their policies and practices (Kuhl, 2002). The eugenics were fueled by empirical contributions authored by prominent US psychologists, many of them APA presidents, and eugenic epistemological practices and rhetoric are featured centrally in their early scientific contributions (Guthrie, 2004; Tucker, 1996; Yakushko, 2019a, b).

Among the key eugenic-based practices and empirical commitments in American psychology was focus on socially engineering human beings via prediction (e.g., intelligence testing) and control of their behavior. In words of one of the most

prominent leader of American eugenics and American psychology, Robert Yerkes (1923), in his treatise entitled the *Eugenic Bearing of Measurements of Intelligence in the United States*, stated, “eugenics, the art of breeding better men, imperatively demands reliable measurement of human traits of body and mind... Scientific method has been commanded effectively to make available facts concerning bodily form and physiological processes” (p. 225). Yerkes specifically claimed that psychology was best position as a discipline to accomplish eugenic goals because “eugenics needs accurate and reasonably complete description of human behaviour as partial basis for methods of control” (p. 226). H. H. Goddard (1920), leading US psychologist, in one of his eugenic-focused books, declared that US society required the “exact science” tools for “the Human Engineer who will undertake the work” of creating evolutionary superior Americans (p. vii). Brigham (1923), who summarized eugenic Army mental tests, claimed that “the deterioration of American intelligence... to insure a continually upward progress toward evolution... must of course be dictated by science” (p. 210).

G. Stanley Hall, the first president of the American Psychological Association and a recognized founder of American psychology as a discipline, was an avowed eugenicist who promoted social Darwinism and eugenics in majority of his scholarly contributions (Yakushko, 2019a, b). Hall’s (1903) writings focused on topics such as psychology’s role in relation to “civilized” and “lower races” (p. 83). He warned other psychologists against influences of other supposedly dysgenic scholars such as Freud, whose amoral theories could supposedly plunge Americans down the evolutionary ladder (Hall, 1917). Like other eugenicists, Hall (1906) cautioned against girls’ and women’s education, claiming that “over-activity of the brain during the critical period of the idle and later teens will interfere with the full development of mammary power and of the functions essential for the full transmission of life” (p. 592).

As the editor of the *Journal of Applied Psychology*, Hall (1917) not only promoted social Darwinism and eugenic-based theories but encouraged publications of studies such as by Sunne (1917), who claimed to have found that “black” children had inferior “facility in control of words,” reduced “fertile imagination,” inferior “resistance to suggestion,” inferior “kinaesthetic discrimination and motor control,” and inferior “logical capacity” (pp. 82–83). In his writing about “genetic philosophy of education” related to “race pedagogy,” Stanley G. Hall (1910), along with his coauthor and student, Partridge, claimed that both African Americans and Native Americans were to be treated like undeveloped children and trained only in accordance with their “nature”:

Two different problems of race culture at home demand our attention... the problem of the negro and of the Indian... He [person of color] can no more be made a white man in habits and in nature than his colour can be changed... He must be trained according to his own nature. His life is normally an out-of-door life, and industries on the land are his best opportunity. (pp. 379–380)

Thus, eugenics appeared behind the development of many sub-disciplines in American psychology, including educational, vocational, cognitive (intelligence testing), comparative (animal), and behaviorism. Robert Yerkes’s (1907) *The*

*Dancing Mouse* not only claimed that human experiences could be understood via experiments on starved, mutilated, and caged animals but that such comparisons provided Darwinian-based insights into human social differences. Yerkes' animal psychology specialty was named comparative psychology, and under his editorial leadership, the *Journal of Comparative Psychology* routinely compared varied animal and human subspecies on their supposed differences and behavioral capacities. Examples of human difference studies published in this journal included Hunter and Sommermier's (1922) discovery of "positive correlation between increasing degree of white blood in the American Indian and... intelligence" (p. 277), Young's (1929) claim about the "noticeable decrease of intelligence as we go from white children to light negroes and then to dark negroes" (p. 344), and even the proof of superiority of White over non-White individuals via their color preferences (Hurlock, 1927). Although claims can be made that these efforts in psychology are influenced by but are unrelated directly to eugenics, such claims lose their substantiation when these psychologists openly use eugenic rhetoric or are listed as leaders of varied eugenic groups (Tucker, 1996; Yakushko, 2019a, b). The empirical works by these scholars primarily focus on differentiations between supposedly fit and unfit groups (e.g., Nordic White vs. other racial groups, men vs. women, "gifted" vs. the "feeble-minded") and were central to eugenic vision of "prediction and control" of human behavior by psychologists (Bashford & Levine, 2010; Guthrie, 2004; Tucker, 1996; Yakushko, 2019a, b).

Another sub-discipline in American psychology grounded in eugenics was behaviorism. John B. Watson's (1914, 1919) writings on behaviorism were filled with eugenic slogans, ideas, references, and goals. Watson's (1914) so-termed behavioral manifesto can be recognized as a eugenic manifesto, in which Watson claimed that there is no difference between humans and animals, that psychology must focus on prediction and control of behavior, that focus on social environment and introspection play no role in scientific studies, and that goal of behaviorism was to explain human behavior in purely physiological genetic or "physicochemical" and genetic terms (Watson, 1914, p.1). Watson's (1914) manifesto was originally included and expanded in his book entitled *Behavior: An Introduction to Comparative Psychology*, which included sections with titles such as *Hereditary Character of Certain Instinctive Acts and Traits* (p. 144). In his *Psychology from the Standpoint of Behaviorist*, Watson (1919) claimed that "until psychology recognizes this [i.e., that human behavior as entirely animal like and physico-chemical in its origin and nature] and discards everything which cannot be stated in the universal terms of science, she does not deserve her place in the sun" (p. vii).

Watson is celebrated as a leader in numerous eugenic groups, including closely collaborating with some of the most notorious eugenic leaders as Charles Davenport (*Eugenical News*, 1916–1920) and Fisher (Watson & Lashley, 1922). Abusive, even cruel experiments on infants, children, and caged animals define Watson's (1914, 1919, 1928) psychological oeuvre, just as other eugenic-based studies and practices worldwide (Kuhl, 2002; Tucker, 1996). His works seem exemplary of eugenicist vision that perceived human beings and experimental animals as expandable tools toward creating a eugenicist vision of supposedly human-evolved utopian societies.

Watson, along with other eugenicists such as Galton, used the term utopia to offer moral visions of predicting, controlling, and engineering individual and collective human behavior (Morawski, 1982).

In his *Psychology from the Standpoint of Behaviorism*, Watson (1919) stated that behaviorism was intended only for “civilized nations” who supposedly needed to be taught “how to dwell together wisely and happily” through the “objective” empirical efforts resulting in “the prediction and control of human action” (p. vii–ix). Watson’s (1914, 1919, 1928) efforts were directed, he claimed, at identifying hereditary (genetic) patterns of behavior among infants and young children in order to control what eugenicists identified were the most problematic human struggles with emotions of anger, fear, and sexual desire (i.e., lust) (Guyer, 1916; Kellicott, 1915; Melendy, 1914; Nearing, 1912; Popenoe & Johnson, 1935). Every eugenic scientist, starting with Galton (1907) himself, stressed that the key feature of eugenicist work was to control hereditarily well-born individuals to behave according to empirical principles of “positive” eugenics. Specifically, eugenicists such as Kellicott (1915) declared that the most important task of eugenic education was to teach children “self-denial and self-control” (p. 183), a task taken up by Watson and other eugenicists (Morawski, 1982).

In his most popular book – *Psychological Care of Infant and Child* – Watson (1928) delivers his earlier promise related to positive eugenics imperative to develop methods of controlling human behavior starting during early childhood development: Watson encourages parents to “produce” a child “who finally enters manhood so bulwarked with stable work and emotional habits that no adversity can quite overwhelm him” (p. 10). Watson (1919) also routinely re-publishes eugenic-based empirical claims such as discussions of higher morality and capacity to manage addictive substances by members of the “civilized” nations versus “uncivilized” ones:

If one examines the history of races, the fact appears that the stronger nations have always been the largest consumers of alcohol and have used the most varied forms of it. That alcohol has had any serious effect upon the efficiency of the French, English, Scandinavian, German and Austrian nations cannot be put forth seriously. (pp. 364–365)

These typical discussions of national and racial differences mark all eugenicist writings (Bashford & Levine, 2010). He warns that certain groups, such as African Americans, may be hereditarily predisposed to experiencing biologically predetermined pattern-reactions that could not be controlled by behavioral interventions (see Watson, 1930, on expressions of fear among African Americans). Moreover, Watson’s single famed color-blind statement, beginning with “give me a dozen healthy infants, well-formed, and my own specified world to bring them up... regardless of race of his ancestors” proceeds with a discussion of varied inborn differences between children and ends with a significant clarification of his position on race and heredity: “educate a white child and a negro child in the same school — bring them up in the same family (theoretically without difference) and when society begins to exert its crushing might, the negro cannot compete” (p. 84).

Watson’s (1928) parenting books are also filled with homophobic sciences and parenting advice, claiming that only heterosexual individuals and activities were

behaviorally wholesome. Certainly, following social Darwinian emphasis on survival of the fittest via heterosexual procreation, only heteronormative monogamous behavior was considered acceptable, and numerous eugenic efforts, including those undertaken by the sexual hygiene movement led by psychologists, stressed exclusively heterosexual behavior as evolutionary normative (Hall, 1910; Melendy, 1914; Popenoe & Johnson, 1935; Watson & Lashley, 1922).

All non-monogamous non-heterosexual behavior, including masturbation, were considered evolutionary dangerous. Shannon and Truit's (1916), in their *Nature Secrets Revealed: Scientific Knowledge of Sex Life and Heredity or Eugenics*, stated that "self-abuse causes perversion of feeling and debility" (p. 155) because "by far the worst form of venereal indulgence is self-pollution, or as it is called by medical writers, onanism, or masturbation" (p. 257). In addition, eugenicists connected any sexually "deviate" behavior to lack of evolutionary progress and were behind sexual and moral "hygiene" movements. In words of Guyer (1913) who produced a noted eugenic text *Being Well Born*:

As to sexual vice, the skein is indeed a tangled one. Since nine-tenths of the difficulty centers in a lack of self-restraint, and inasmuch as the mating instinct is one of the strongest that tugs at the flesh of humanity, it is obvious that those by nature deficient in volitional control will almost without exception give way to the call... The true situation is finally dawning on society and the reformer's call for instruction in "sex-hygiene" resounds through the land. The whole matter is one of the most perplexing and momentous that confronts us to-day. (p. 285)

Sterilizations, promoted by early eugenicists, included castration for males and removal of ovaries (i.e., full abdominal surgery) for women. According to US scholar Daniels (1927), eugenic controls such as sterilization and behavioral interventions were needed for "sodomy, bestiality, pederasty, and habitual masturbation" (p. 289). Proponents of sterilization, such as California's Gosney and Popenoe (1929), in *Sterilization for Human Betterment*, which detail successes of eugenic sterilization program in California, of which Stanford psychologist Lewis Terman was a central part, assured the readers that sterilizations were empirically proven to control sexual behavior, prevent masturbation, and make individuals more pliable to moral education. Popenoe and Johnson (1935) encouraged parents to submit their children for sterilization, especially if they suspected masturbation, same sex behavior, premarital sexual activity, and any other unfit sexual behaviors.

In fact, the entire moral hygiene movement was primarily directed at eugenic efforts to control sexual behavior of both fit and the unfit, especially girls and women of color (Stern, 2015). Like Watson, eugenic scholars offered numerous behavioral efforts toward eugenic "brain training" of supposedly evolutionary fit Americans to behave in ways that comported with eugenic goals of sexual and emotional self-control (Guyer, 1916; Kellikott, 1919; Melendy, 1914; Nearing, 1912; Popenoe & Johnson, 1935). Just like numerous scientific eugenic contributions, Watson's (1914, 1919, 1928, 1930) writings are filled with eugenic-based moral rhetoric, research, and "positive eugenic" interventions directed at supposedly "civilized" White affluent groups.

Among the most detrimental and impactful eugenic studies conducted by American psychologists were the Kallikak study of inheritance of “feeble-mindedness” and the Army mental tests (Bashford & Levine, 2010; Black, 2003; Guthrie, 2004; Lombardo, 2011; Selden, 1999; Smith, 1985; Stern, 2015; Tucker, 1996; Yakushko, 2019a, b). The Kallikak study was conducted and published by American psychologist and a student of G. S. Hall, H. H. Goddard (1912). In this study of “beauty” and “ugliness” (i.e., from Greek words that combined fictitious last name Kallikak), Goddard (1912) claimed to have used scientific observations and extensive intelligence testing to prove that borderline levels of intelligence are inherited and socially dangerous. The focus of his study was a young orphaned girl he named Deborah Kallikak (her actual name was Emma Wolverton), whom Goddard claimed to have descended from a genetically bad line of an amoral or immoral affair between a “revolutionary hero,” Martin, and a “nameless tavern girl” (Goddard, 1912, pp. 6, 8). Goddard’s claims in regard to both inherited nature of intellectual and moral inferiority and supposed horrific dangers of these forms of genetic feeble-mindedness on communities were promoted as empirical truths (Selden, 1999; Smith, 1985; Tucker, 1996; Yakushko, 2019a, b). The Kallikak study was used in a supreme court case of involuntary sterilization of Carry Buck, a young woman who was raped in her adoptive family but accused of feeble-mindedness and sterilized against her will (Lombardo, 2011). Nazi scientists translated the book and praised it as essential to their development of Nazi eugenic purity campaigns (Kuhl, 2002). It was popularized in books and shows, promoted in all of eugenic literature, and upheld as a standard of eugenic scholarship (Selden, 1999; Smith, 1985; Tucker, 1996; Yakushko, 2019a, b). Biology textbooks throughout the 1960s included the Kallikak study as a proof of behavioral genetic origins of human unfitnes (Selden, 1999). For example, the most used college biology textbook by Hunter (1914) stated that:

Hundreds of families such as [the Kallilaks]... exist today, spreading disease, immorality, and crime in all parts of this country... they not only do harm to others by corrupting, stealing, and spreading disease, but they are actually protected and cared for by the state out of public money. Largely for them the poorhouse and the asylum exists. They take from society but they give nothing in return. They are true parasites. (p. 263)

Another famed eugenicist Fisher (1924) promoted Goddard’s Kallikak study as essential for US government efforts to rid the country of the “feeble-minded, alcoholic, criminalistics, epileptic, insane, migranious, neurotic, paralytic, tuberculous, and tramps” (p. 114).

Goddard’s study was not only horrific in regard to its methods, claims, and applications; it was roundly discredited as not only non-scientific but also dishonest and misleading (Gould, 1996; Selden, 1999; Smith, 1985; Tucker, 1996; Yakushko, 2019a, b). Emma Wolverton most likely had a severe learning disability (Selden, 1999; Smith, 1985) as well as was severely traumatized as an abused orphaned child (Yakushko, 2019b). Moreover, Goddard intentionally misrepresented background and even images of Emma’s ancestors including the fact that Emma Wolverton was not even related to Martin “the revolutionary hero” (Gould, 1996; Smith & Wehmeyer, 2012). Despite these revelations, subsequent eugenic psychologists

such as H. E. Garrett (APA president in the late 1940s), Columbia university psychologist, leader of eugenic funding group the Pioneer Fund and a founder of “behavioral genetics” (i.e., a sub-discipline of psychology that remains closely related to social Darwinism and eugenics), re-published the Kallikak study in introduction to psychology textbooks used across the country (Tucker, 1996).

There were socially detrimental studies conducted by numerous leading American psychologists, including Yerkes (founder of comparative psychology), Brigham (developer of SAT exam), John B. Watson (founder of behaviorism), E. Thorndike (founder of educational and vocational psychology), L. Terman (founder of psychological testing), and many others (Gould, 1996; Tucker, 1996; Yakushko, 2019a, b). These studies were published and promoted to the public, including in both scholarly and popular press, with a culminating work by Brigham (1923) entitled *A Study in American Intelligence*. This book, filled with statistical graphs, tables, and summaries, repeatedly claimed to be unbiased, highly scientific, and incontrovertible in regard to its results. Yerkes’ (1923) introduction to the book stated, “it behooves us to consider their reliability and their meaning, for no one of us as a citizen can afford to ignore the menace of race deterioration or the evident relations of immigration to national progress and welfare” (p. viii). Among the main outcomes of the study reported in this book were claims such as “our results showing the marked intellectual inferiority of the negro are corroborated by practically all of the investigators who have used psychological test on white and negro groups” (p. 190). Numerous recommendations to the public and the government were also offered such as recommendations for racial school segregation because “the average negro child can not advance through an educational curriculum adapted to the Anglo-Saxon child in step with that child” (p. 194). The book proclaimed that intelligence levels of average Americans were supposedly declining because of the influx of non-Nordic immigrants, including Jews, and that closing borders to prevent evolutionary racial deterioration of America and Americans was the primary way of ensuring the evolutionary progress (Brigham, 1923). Among many problematic influences of this study were the long-standing xenophobic policies and cultural views in regard to immigrants and migration as dangerous and problematic (Yakushko, 2018).

In other publications related to Army mental tests, which was developed and completed by leading U.S. psychologists, Yerkes (1920) explained that American Jim Crow laws and policies were based on:

Fact, which was brought into clear relief by the wholesale examining of colored and white men in the draft is the intellectual inferior of the negro. Quite apart from educational status, which is utterly unsatisfactory, the negro soldier is of relative low grade intelligence... this also is in the nature of a lesson, for it suggests that education alone will not place the negro race on a part with its Caucasian competitors. (p. 376–377)

Yerkes (1920) further explained that the Army mental tests and their follow-up studies proved that in the military “the negro lacks initiative, displays little or no leadership, and can not accept responsibility... petty thieving and venereal disease are commoner than with the white troops” (p. 742). Without doubt, the Army mental tests study had horrific lethal impact on people of color, especially in the military,

who were denied vocational advancements and sent into the most dangerous armed conflict situations because they were viewed as inferior and dispensable (Black, 2003).

As noted throughout this chapter, despite revelations of the socially violent nature of eugenics, advocacy for it as a form of natural sciences continued, including in Western psychology (Tucker, 1996). The eugenic-based Pioneer Fund, noted by the Southern Poverty Law Center (2017) as the most racist organization of the twentieth century, funded and promoted social scientists, most of them psychologists, who used psychology sub-disciplines such as behavioral genetics, social biology, evolutionary psychology, neuropsychology, and cognitive psychology as breeding grounds for continuing promotion of eugenic-influenced research (Guthrie, 2004; Saini, 2019; Tucker, 1996; Yakushko, 2018, 2019a, b). Starting with H. E. Garrett (1961), scientists espousing eugenic (i.e., racist, xenophobic, sexist, anti-Semitic) views began to claim status as martyrs for scientific truth, vehemently claiming that that they were not racist (or xenophobic, sexist, anti-Semitic) but merely empirically accurate and neutral and that any scholarship that focused on social justice was merely an “equalitarian dogma” (Garrett, 1961, title). Among the most recognized promoters of eugenic-based sciences were psychologists such as A. Jensen, P. Rushton, R. Herrnstein, C. Murray, L. Gottfredson, and S. Pinker (Saini, 2019; Tucker, 1996; Yakushko, 2019a, b). For example, the mythic and anthropologically inaccurate interpretations of Pleistocene era (i.e., cave-men ice-age era) continue to emerge as supposedly empirically valid foundations for theories of claims of superiority of Nordic races over all non-Nordic groups as well as males over females. P. Rushton’s (1994) *Race, Evolution, and Behavior: A Life History Perspective* is one of examples of using social Darwinism to promote eugenic agendas. According to Gottfredson’s (1996) glowing review and a staunch defense of Rushton’s racist sexist claims, Rushton empirically proved that among “the three major races (Mongoloid, Caucasoid and Negroid)” (p. 141), evidence has proven that “averages” prove that the “Negroids” are characterized by “smaller head size, lower intelligence, higher rates of crime, promiscuity, and higher social disorganization... earlier physical maturation, larger body size... higher rates of ovulation and multiple births, higher extraversion than introversion” (p. 142) and therefore are more detrimental to evolution. Psychologists Herrnstein and Murray (1996) in their eugenic and racist book *The Bell Curve* similarly claim numerous scientific foundations for their assertions that wealthy Whites constitute “cognitive elites” and non-White minorities should be discouraged from having children.

Most of the above scholars, including Jensen, Herrnstein, Murray, and Gottfredson, were the recipients of funding by the Pioneer Fund (2013). Rushton (2002), who penned a lengthy laudatory history of the Pioneer Fund, which he directed for many years, openly stated that Fund’s goal is:

To conduct or aid in conducting study and research into the problems of heredity and eugenics in the human race generally and such study and such research in respect to animals and plants as may throw light upon heredity in man, and... research and study into the problems of human race betterment [eugenics] with special reference to the people of the United States. (p. 258)

Promotion of eugenic sciences and scientists as neutral and unbiased and claims that they are persecuted for their scientific endeavors by followers of dogmas and are martyrs for scientific truth remain among the most common defenses for their work (Gottfredson, 1994, 2012; Pinker, 2002, 2018; Whitney, 1997, 1999). For example, Pinker (2018), an ardent promoter of Galton, social Darwinists, and eugenicists, in his feel-good promotion of sciences entitled *Enlightenment Now* claimed that only those who follow “anti-scientific propaganda” question eugenics (p. 400) or that scientists who engage in social criticism (e.g., Fanon, Derrida, C. West, Foucault) are “morose cultural pessimists” who promote “suffocating political correctness” (p. 406). Pinker’s (2002) popular books routinely include statements such as “racial differences [in intelligence and character] are largely adaptations to climate” (p. 143) or that “people’s stereotypes are generally consistent with the statistics, and in many cases their bias is to underestimate the real differences between sexes or ethnic groups” (p. 204).

Numerous continuations of original claims by eugenicists also persist in scholarship of contemporary eugenicists. Not only do they claim that non-White racial minorities and women are hereditarily confined to particular roles and capacities (Herrnstein & Murray, 1996; Pinker, 2002), eugenic claims in regard to superiority of certain groups in regard to addictions persist (Saini, 2019). One of the most famous twentieth-century psychologists – UK-based Hans Eysenck, who is considered the founder of psychometrics, was funded by the Pioneer Fund (2013), and openly promoted eugenics – has recently been discredited for his empirical work, funded by tobacco companies, that claimed that only evolutionary superior individuals were immune to becoming addicted to tobacco (Fleischfresser, 2019). Leading US psychologist and psychometrics expert Cattell (1987) published a eugenic racist book endorsing a scientific utopian realm he called the Beyondism, which encouraged selective procreation only by superior individuals (i.e., “cognitive elites”).

Eugenic sciences, past and present, have direct and visible impact on culture, society, politics, and internal lives of human beings. Despite claims that these empirical pursuits merely explain but not support oppression, most historical and contemporary groups that uphold socially violent and prejudicial views openly draw on these sciences. David Duke’s (1999) famed White and KKK eugenic White supremacy manifesto, entitled *My Awakening*, is filled with scientific studies, noted in this chapter. According to Duke:

Every awakened White person becomes an Aryan, a racially conscious White person dedicated to our survival and evolutionary advancement... Our real strength can only come from our utter dedication to the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. That truth can be hard, it can be costly, it can generate our persecution from those who cannot stand its light, but truth, utter truth, is the only possible path to our eventual victory. (p. 470)

Moreover, Duke’s book is introduced and verified as scientific and unbiased by an American psychologist and one-time president of the American Behavioral Genetics Association, G. Whitney. Whitney stated that “as a scientist who specializes in the field of Behavioral Genetics, I must tell you that I have gone over David Duke’s considerable data on genetics and race and find it in line with the latest scientific

discoveries and knowledge in this area” (p. 5). Echoing the writings of many contemporary eugenic-based scholars, Whitney further claimed that:

David Duke’s awakening is presented here in three interconnected major themes of his discoveries of honest truths that are politically incorrect. One of his honest truths is that from a thorough immersion in modern science he became convinced that racial egalitarianism is the scientific equivalent of the flat-Earth theory. He rejects the smear of “racist” while maintaining that the true data are very different from those that most of us have been led to believe. A second of his sets of honest truths is that a powerful and cohesive self-serving group has promoted a dishonest and hypocritical version of egalitarianism that is inimical to the interests of Western Christian Civilization. (p. 2)

Similarly, numerous misogynists, White supremacy, and xenophobic groups (e.g., the Return of Kings, the American Renaissance) have claimed to have been inspired by and based on scientific evidence provided by past and present eugenic-based psychology scholars (Anti-Defamation League, 2019; Yakushko, 2019a, b).

Throughout the last century, many scientists, journalists, social critics, and others, have sought to expose and reject eugenic and similar oppressive forms of scientific rhetoric (Saini, 2019; Tucker, 1996; Yakushko, 2019a, b). Founder of anti-colonial movement and African-based psychoanalyst Frantz Fanon (1959) called these forms of sciences “shameful sciences” (p. 121), showing:

This is how they have been able to tell themselves that “the black man makes all the animals behave like a lower order of human intelligence”... Others have advanced the theory, with straight faces, that these stories are not reactions to the conditions imposed on the Negro in the United States but are simply survivors of Africa... the Negro must be branded as an outlander down to his chromosomes. Ever since slavery began, his Christian and democratic guilt as a slave-owner has led the southerner to describe the Negro as an animal, an unchangeable African whose nature was determined as protoplasm by his “African” genes. If the black man found himself relegated to the Limbo of mankind, he was the victim not of Americans but of the organic inferiority of his jungle ancestors. (p. 174)

Similarly, leading feminist philosopher Simone de Beauvoir (1949) in her *Second Sex* emphasized that:

In proving woman’s inferiority, the anti-feminists then began to draw not only upon religion, philosophy, and theology, as before, but also upon science – biology, experimental psychology, etc. At most they were willing to grant ‘equality in difference’ to the other sex. That profitable formula is most significant; it is precisely like the ‘equal but separate’ formula of the Jim Crow laws aimed at the North American Negroes. As is well known, this so-called egalitarian segregation has resulted only in the most extreme discrimination. (p. 8)

Journalists such as Walter Lippmann (1922) took on eugenic scientists and their empirical proclamations, questioning the oppressive statements in regard to intelligence levels of racial minorities, orphans, or the poor. Social critics such as G. K. Chesterton (1922) called eugenics an evil and a tyranny. Scientists such as evolutionary biologist S. Gould (1996) showed that many eugenic scientists, past and present, engaged in significant efforts of the “mismeasure of man” (title). Certainly, numerous other scientists and scientific groups discredited supposedly empirical claims of eugenic-influenced researchers in regard to intelligence, rape, criminalistics personality, and genetic inferiority of certain groups (Guthrie, 2004;

Lewontin et al., 1984; Saini, 2019; Tucker, 1996; Yakushko, 2018, 2019a, b). Just as far right ideologies cannot be merely erased from democratic societies but exposed in regard to their values, funding, and rhetoric, scientists who espouse social Darwinian-Galtonian and eugenic perspectives in psychology should be openly critiqued rather than purposefully silenced (which appears to only spur them on as supposed martyrs and truth-seekers) (Saini, 2019; Tucker, 1996). Eugenic scientists, from Galton and Pearson to Garrett, Gottfredson, and Pinker, attack all efforts to recognize that sciences of social equality and human justice as empirically invalid and scientifically non-rigorous “dogmas.” In response, genuine efforts in psychology should turn toward radical efforts to examine history, to recognize the ideological values behind all sciences, to acknowledge violence endorsed via some scientific efforts, as well as to refuse the false claims that science and scientists are unbiased, neutral, or non-aligned with social norms.

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# Chapter 25

## Controversies in Differential Psychology and Behavior Genetics: A Sociological Analysis



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### Introduction

The history of science has featured many empirical discoveries and theoretical developments that have occasioned sometimes intense controversy. This has happened often because such discoveries and developments were thought to challenge popular worldviews or to otherwise have offensive moral, metaphysical, aesthetic, and/or political implications. An obvious case would be the theory of evolution “by common descent through natural selection,” independently developed by Charles Darwin (1809–1882) and Alfred Russel Wallace (1823–1913) (Mayr, 1991). Another would be the astronomical (but also mathematical and philosophical) work associated with the Copernican Revolution (CR), so named because of the seminal contributions of Nicolaus Copernicus (1473–1543). The CR laid the foundations for advances that would culminate in the development of the current heliocentric model of the Solar System (on controversies related to the CR, see Kuhn, 1985; Moss, 1993).

One important observation that stands out from a contemporary perspective on these controversies is that moral, aesthetic, etc. objections alone were not sufficient to prevent these theories from becoming orthodox science. We would attribute this to scientists’ historical tendency to aim to achieve epistemic rationality. Despite the many philosophical complexities surrounding this concept (see Eder, 2021), it is reasonable to highlight a basic distinction that it brings out. On the one hand, scientists seek to form accurate beliefs about the world guided by standard rules of logic,

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evidence, and probability (i.e. epistemic rationality) that is largely independent of personal desires or emotions. On the other hand, scientists could allow such irrelevant factors to dominate their thinking—with the effect that epistemic rationality is compromised. Being in a state of epistemic irrationality may happen for any number of reasons, including simply having stronger interests in reaching and maintaining pleasing beliefs as opposed to accurate ones.

We do not mean to naively deny that good scientists have biases, or desires that their favored theories will turn out to be correct, for reasons of pride or some such. It is just to say that a scientist, or any other person, *can* be psychologically oriented such that factors with no apparent relation to the truth of some matter will not play a *decisive* role in the formation of their beliefs about that matter. Instead, sound assessment of evidence; reasoned reflection on germane assumptions and presuppositions; and consideration of the overall logical coherence of whatever explanation, theory, or worldview is at issue will have an overriding role in belief formation. We submit that it is almost always clear to at least reasonably intelligent observers when some matter bears on a belief in an epistemically rational way and when it does not; this basic fact should not be disappeared under elaborate philosophical reasoning. That a town of people would be upset about a destructive earthquake happening imminently does not have any bearing on whether seismic activity in the area indicates that such an earthquake will likely occur. Anyone who denies this is obviously not being rational. Unfortunately, epistemic irrationality of exactly the sort that would be involved in such a denial pervades in discussions about the two scientific fields with which this chapter is concerned: differential psychology and behavior genetics.

Peter Visscher is easily one of the most influential geneticists alive today, with special expertise in the genomics of complex human traits. In a recent article that in part summarizes key results from the field of behavior genetics in particular, Visscher (2022) presents the following stark claims:

Genetic variation for ability and learning is ubiquitous in animals, including in humans for physical, cognitive and social abilities. Empirical evidence supporting the thesis that individual differences in humans for cognitive ability and socio-economic outcomes are in part due to genetic factors is overwhelming. . . . *Nature is not fair* . . . (p. 1; emphasis added)

[G]enes matter when it comes to educational performance and *social outcomes* (as they do for how tall you are and your risk of many diseases). There are multiple ways of dealing with this “inconvenient truth”, from *ignorance or denial* to embracing the knowledge . . . (p. 1; emphasis added)

It is a sad fact that for a large, and possibly increasing, number of laypeople and academics (most of the latter with no training or meaningful publication records in germane areas of research), the immediate reaction to such claims is not to seriously consider their evidential bases, but to dismiss them out of hand as “eugenicist” or “racist,” therefore beyond the pale and unworthy of serious thought. That (entirely accurate) claims of the sort quoted above concern *individual*, not group (racial, ethnic, population, or otherwise), differences somehow does not deter the “racist”

charge. Eugenics requires deliberate manipulation of human breeding, or of the human gene pool by other means, which is a separate *practical* issue apart from mere *descriptive* claims. Each member of the authorship team opposes eugenics for various reasons, collectively including moral, pragmatic, and religious ones, whatever the genetic facts may be. However, considerations of this kind seem not to deter the “eugenicist” charge. The dismissal of descriptive claims because of their unpalatable alleged moral or political implications is plainly fallacious. Samorodnitsky (2022) offers a recent example of what we would consider to be an irrational “critique” of, *inter alia*, such ordinary individual-differences behavior genetics, which he falsely brands as “crypto-race science.”

What exactly underlies this kind of behavior? It is difficult to give a confident answer. On the one hand, there is the long-standing effort to associate any kind of hereditarianism (a term capturing genetic or at least partially genetic explanations of phenomena) with coercive eugenics, genocide, and other horrific moral crimes. Opposition to such evils is to be admired and supported, but adherence to ideologies promoting these terrible things needs to be distinguished from scientific research (a matter dealt with in more detail later). On the other hand, the extraordinary hostility with which behavior genetics and related fields, such as differential psychology and the subfield of intelligence research, are met may in part result from the popular morality that seems to emerge in highly modernized societies and which is especially championed by the political left. Rubin (2015) refers to this morality as the “morality of self-fulfillment,” to which he attributes a number of features, but a good general sense of which is provided in the following: “[P]eople must be treated as equal because each person is a self with his or her own life path. Each person should be able to choose that path and derive as much fulfillment as he or she can from its momentary pleasures and its overall design” (Rubin, 2015, p. 179). We believe that the preceding is an accurate description, but, in our view, Rubin is wrong on the following: “The equality involved is equality of opportunity, not equality of result” (p. 179). In reality, it seems that the desire, or really expectation or demand, for “fulfillment” is so strong in contemporary wealthy societies that any suggestion of any factor putting a check on it is often unbearable, whether or not some formal equality of opportunity is in place. If the fundamental “unfairness” of “nature” to which Visscher refers means that in any realistic scenario, genetic variation among people will result in variation in the degree to which (more or less universally agreed to be) desirable outcomes are achieved, then some inequality is effectively unavoidable. This means that it is hard to imagine a realistic scenario where some are not more fulfilled than others, *i.e.*, equal fulfillment across individuals is effectively excluded. Thus, Samorodnitsky’s statement about behavior-genetic research: “It’s ethically abhorrent, pinning societal-scale failures and inequalities on individuals.”

These unfortunate intersections between political/moral beliefs and behavior-genetic and related research are, in any case, not limited to the political left. Elements of the political right clearly misunderstand and misapply science in these areas for ideological reasons. For example, some of these persons seem to believe that measured intelligence (IQ) is some sort of *omni-determinative* variable in the social

world, almost fully explaining social success across many important domains—the reality of the generally small-to-moderate-magnitude relationships of IQ to these outcomes is somehow lost on them (see Strenze, 2015). Conversely, there are still Nazi sympathizers and adherents of variant National Socialist ideologies who emotively and irrationally reject intelligence research, tending especially to spurn it as “Jewish” (Cofnas, 2020 discusses the historical basis of this in National Socialism). Further afield, speculative evolutionary theorizing in need of far more testing and general evaluation is snatched up as definitely correct because it seems intuitively convincing to, and consistent with the worldviews of, certain rightists (some of our own work has met with this depressing fate; Woodley of Menie et al., 2022). Others of a genuine “extreme right” character maintain, or even insist, that, for specific genetic reasons, e.g., “outbreeding depression,” particular harms affect people of mixed-race ancestry (e.g., Whitney, 1999); the evidence for such effects is effectively nonexistent, however (Tucker, 2004). *Polygenism* (the belief that human races should be classified as distinct biological species) is also in this category. This idea originated in the early nineteenth century. Despite its adherents having mostly died out, it still attracts a small following on the modern “extreme right” (see Woodley, 2010 for detailed discussion and criticism of one such instance). A more subtle case of (generally)<sup>1</sup> right-wing distortion of such science is in the denial that the apparently relatively high average intelligence of Ashkenazi Jews is only due to a verbal ability advantage, not an advantage on the “substance” of intelligence, i.e., general cognitive ability (for a review of relevant studies, see te Nijenhuis et al., 2014). Whatever one thinks of such claims about relatively high average Ashkenazi intelligence, and they are controversial, partly due to reasonable concerns about data quality, this particular spin on the matter appears to be motivated by nothing more than dislike or hatred of Jewish people. Evidence for it is absent (te Nijenhuis et al., 2014); instead, the basic problem seems to be that these individuals of an anti-Jewish bent do not want to attribute anything they see as good or admirable to

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<sup>1</sup>We address a misrepresentation of Woodley (2010) in Graves 2011, who states that “Woodley ... cites  $F_{ST}$  between sub-Saharan African and Australian Aborigine SNPs at  $F_{ST} = 0.33...$  This value exceeds Wright’s threshold compared to other species-level differences” (p. 165). Graves notes that  $F_{ST}$  values will vary greatly based on the use of genetic markers under different selection pressures and also that “there is no direct comparison between  $F_{ST}$  as calculated by autosomal genes and mtDNA” (p. 166). Graves claims that “[t]he implication is that this comparison between two anatomically modern human populations shows  $F_{ST}$  higher than Wright’s threshold and higher than even some species differences!” (p. 165). Graves has clearly misread Woodley (2010) as the latter author actually makes the very same points in relation to these data! The purpose of including these  $F_{ST}$  values was to lay out some of the claims presented in a 2008 book written by Richard D. Fuerle (1941-2014) in support of polygenism—not to affirm his position, but to refute it. In a section entitled “Criticisms of Fuerle’s arguments,” Woodley (2010) states that “different measures of genetic distance involving mtDNA and autosomal loci are simply inappropriate for the purposes of inter-specific comparison as the different genes involved will have been subject to markedly different selection pressures ... To illustrate this point, this author listed alternative estimates of the distance between the gorilla species and the common chimpanzee and bonobo, based on various nuclear loci and autosomal DNA. The much higher numbers reflect the extreme variation that can be expected when different genes are considered” (pp. 198-199, italics added for emphasis).

Jews. The results of misunderstandings and misapplications of this sort (the foregoing is not exhaustive), often grotesque, are frequently found online.

An especially horrendous example of racist misappropriation of scientific research happened in May 2022, when, tragically, a White man in New York State murdered ten Black Americans. We mention this specific incident because, before carrying out his crime, this person posted a manifesto on the internet discussing a number of topics, including his reasons for his racist attitudes that motivated the killing. In doing this, he drew on a welter of scientific literature. A great deal of these papers appear in eminent peer-reviewed scientific journals: “[the killer] posted a long screed . . . using, among other things, links to a series of genetics studies—peer reviewed, and published in prestigious journals like *Nature*—as citations” (Samorodnitsky, 2022). Among the features of this manifesto was a pre-existing image taken from the internet and inserted into the text. The ostensible goal of whoever made this image was to collect evidence that race is biologically real—it includes a number of figures and tables, either taken from seemingly scientific papers or allegedly based on data from such papers. One of these tables, out of a total of 16 graphical figures and tables, indicates that its data are from an article by the lead author (Woodley, 2010).<sup>2</sup> The purpose of that paper was to defend a view that no author on this contribution currently endorses or has endorsed for some time, i.e. so-called race realism, more specifically the view that there are human population groups that can be identified as geographical races or subspecies (the “subspecies” concept is purely descriptive but is frequently misunderstood as suggesting some sort of hierarchy of population groups). (The prominent use in the manifesto of a *New York Times* article by Nicholas Wade, who is often identified as a race realist or even a “Jensenist”, seems to have been conspicuously ignored by major media companies that have fixated on the alleged inclusion of the work of other individuals).

In June, once attention was drawn to this exceptionally tenuous connection to the lead author, a pressure campaign involving activists and a number of media organizations began, aiming to (among other things) remove his academic affiliation with Vrije Universiteit Brussel. There was a concerted effort in the media coverage to cast the lead author as a racist, neglecting both available evidence that his views on race and race differences had changed, as well as arguments that neither “race realism” nor belief in race differences entails racism (for some such arguments, see Tibayrenc, 2017b, 2019).<sup>3</sup> It must be stressed that nothing whatsoever in the paper

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<sup>2</sup>It must be stressed, then, that the table depicted *does not actually appear* in the paper of Woodley (2010), despite media efforts to attribute the table to that publication.

<sup>3</sup>To give a sense of the dangerously absurd nature of some of this media coverage, one article in one Belgian tabloid gives the distinct impression that the first author’s research played some special role in “inspiring” the mass shooting. More recently, problematic claims referring to relevant news media, have begun to appear in academic publications. Davies and MacCrae (2023) make the following unqualified statement: “Woodley was . . . cited by the gunman who in June [sic] 2022 killed ten Black people in a racist attack in Buffalo, US” (p. 20). At best this statement is extremely misleading, as a commonly understood requirement for citation (be it direct or indirect) is awareness of (in the form of direct reference to) the work in question, yet neither the paper

of Woodley (2010) supports racism, let alone violent extremism. The history of human genetics makes it plain that there is no logical contradiction here—for example, the preeminent evolutionary biologist and geneticist Theodosius Dobzhansky was “an ardent anti-racist person [who also] defended the view that human races correspond to geographical races or subspecies” (Tibayrenc, 2019, p. 774).<sup>4</sup> There is similarly no logically necessary conclusion from views attributing at least some level of genetic causation to between-group differences (whether those groups are “races,” ethnic groups, or population groups of another kind) to extremist ideologies or racism:

[E]ven more concerning is the very strategy of using scientific arguments to try and disqualify racism and any extremist ideology. If scientific data seemed to add fuel to intolerant ideologies, should we accept intolerance? The concern raised by the use of scientific data to reject intolerant ideology is that the progress of science is perfectly unpredictable. In particular, the study of brain genes and of neurogenetics is still in its infancy. Moreover, the same data can be interpreted in various ways. There are differences among human geographical groups according to many phenotypic traits. Ill-intentioned authors will always be tempted to equate differences with hierarchies. (Tibayrenc, 2019, p. 774) (See also Singer, 2011, pp. 24–28.)

To be as clear as possible, the lead author has not been a biological race realist or a hereditarian about race differences for some time (neither have the other two authors here), and, as indicated, evidence of this was available prior to the mass shooting. On April 8, 2022, the three authors on this chapter, along with another co-author, published a study providing molecular-genetic evidence indicating that racial discrimination contributes to differences in general cognitive ability among a large sample of individuals associated with three socially identified racial/ethnic groups. The mechanism through which it does so involves suppression of the expression of genes associated with cognitive ability. We highlighted the fact that the results directly challenge a controversial argument of Rushton’s (1999) for a hereditarian view of race differences in cognitive ability (Peñaherrera-Aguirre et al., 2022, p. 20). Further, we concluded that paper by emphasising the potential that such gene-by-environment interactions hold to provide a basis for an environmental, as opposed to a hereditarian, explanation for race differences in cognitive ability, i.e., the kind of explanation favored by egalitarians (Peñaherrera-Aguirre et al., 2022, p. 20). It is in light of this research—and other research on gene-by-environment interactions, some that we have conducted ourselves—that we now see the role of

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nor its author is mentioned anywhere in the text of the shooter’s manifesto. To state matters plainly, there is no evidence that the shooter had any knowledge whatsoever of the lead author, or of the paper at issue. The purpose of the adverse media seems to have simply been to “make an example” of the lead author, who had no benefit of tenure, or accumulated social capital (unlike several of those who can be credibly described as having been cited by the shooter) *pour encourager les autres*, or in other words, to produce a chilling effect on highly disliked research.

<sup>4</sup>“It is a mistake to state that ‘His [Dobzhansky’s] transformation from defender to detractor of the race concept in biology still resonates.’ Although Dobzhansky changed his mind several times about the definition of race, he never adhered to the ‘absolute paradigmatic shift’ [that race has no biological meaning]” (Tibayrenc, 2019, p. 774).

environmental factors in regulating genetic ones as potentially much more important than we were previously inclined to think. As a result, we are no longer hereditarians on the matter of inter-population differences in behavioral traits, but instead withhold judgment on the causes of these differences, a matter explored later on in this chapter.

Further, regarding the biological status of race itself, we noted in that study, drawing in part on research of ours from 2020, that “[i]t has been found that ‘race’ as a concept may, to a substantial degree, be a byproduct of social coalitional categorization, the significance of which can be ‘erased’ once alternative social cues are presented that more accurately map onto relevant coalitional structure ... thus, there is likely much about ‘race’ and related phenomena that exists purely in the psychological (and also sociological) realm and that is wholly divorced from outward markers of biogeographic ancestry” (Peñaherrera-Aguirre et al., 2022, p. 20). This we also explore later on in the current contribution.

Nevertheless, as the work of Tibayrenc (2017a, b, 2019) demonstrates, clearly biological perspectives on race and hereditarianism about population differences, while not held by the current authors (and seemingly not by Tibayrenc himself), have not been authoritatively excluded by existing scientific knowledge. Moreover, they are still taken seriously in parts of the relevant scientific communities, as we later show.

Unfortunately, it is not difficult to see that a great deal of evolutionary and genetic science, even some that is highly mainstream, can be easily framed to incense academic and lay audiences who have no real understanding of the state of such work. Both academics and laypeople frequently operate under the assumption that this research, when legitimate, never presents anything that might offend uncritical belief in inter-individual or inter-group equality of capacity for life success or of levels of other traits or outcomes considered desirable. Some examples will be useful here. One should not assume from our discussing any of the following cases that we endorse the claims mentioned. The point is to show what scientists in these areas *take seriously*, but would almost certainly be at the receiving end of left-wing invective for suggesting, if they were presented to certain audiences in particular ways.

Alexey Kondrashov is among the most notable living evolutionary geneticists. In 2017, he published a scientifically rigorous text, *Crumbling Genome*, arguing, among other things, that improvements in standards of living related to modernization *may* be allowing harmful mutations to accumulate in the human gene pool, as these improved conditions have limited the opportunity for selection to act, through mortality at least, compared to past periods in human evolutionary history, with potential negative effects for human fitness and wellness. (A no less distinguished geneticist, Michael Lynch (2016), has made essentially the same argument, but perhaps more forcefully.) In his book, Kondrashov writes of the “quality” of human phenotypes and genotypes, making clear his view that these factors are objective and measurable against hypothetical “perfect” genotypes and phenotypes, and that they can be adversely affected by mutations, but also noting that non-genetic factors also affect phenotypic quality (2017, p. 167). Evolutionary scientists frequently discuss “genetic quality” in humans in major journals (e.g., Lie et al., 2008). One can

imagine how easily this research could be spurned as “eugenicist” for frankly pro-pounding, and offering evidence for, the idea that there is a meaningful sense in which people differ among themselves in the “quality” of their genes and phenotypes. Examples from utterly mainstream evolutionary research can be readily multiplied, for example, the idea that nepotism/ethnocentrism related to shared ancestry has potential fitness payoffs for groups in competition with other groups (Jones, 2018), that ancestral human warfare likely contributed positively to the evolution of desirable social behaviors (Bowles, 2009), or that social norms may contribute to the evolution of behavioral traits generally considered desirable (see Krasnow et al., 2015). Such standard evolutionary theorizing could be irresponsibly labeled, or hysterically exaggerated into, dangerous manifestations of war-mongering, pro-eugenics, or normativist attitudes.

The problems here are seemingly due in part to the choice of those with an “extreme” egalitarian bent, who are dominant in academic contexts (about which more below), to deal with “inconvenient truth[s]” of the kind to which Visscher refers through “denial.” Particularly good responses to recent superficially sophisticated “denial” efforts aimed at behavior genetics especially are available from the illustrious computational biologist Nick Patterson (2022, unpublished). Those hoping to take a sledgehammer to the entirety of behavior genetics tend to hold the field to “standards of rigor . . . that they would never demand in another context” (Patterson, unpublished) or offer arguments that “would invalidate an enormous amount of modern genetics” (Patterson, 2022). Moral urgency can be given to such disreputable tactics by selectively pointing to instances of particularly horrendous misuse of disliked scientific research, as by the mass murderer discussed above, which is supposed to make obvious why such work should not be tolerated. Indeed, Samorodnitsky (2022) calls for the “de-platforming” of “human behavioral genetics” altogether because of his belief that it is “bad science” and is dangerous. Mysteriously, Samorodnitsky and those of a similar ideological orientation do not call for research on climate change to be suspended because of its role in influencing the views of persons such as the violent environmental activist and domestic terrorist responsible for the 2010 Discovery, Inc. hostage crisis. Further, are we to demand that the works of academic Peggy McIntosh, most famous for promoting the concept of “White privilege”, be censored because witnesses to the horrifying murder of medical doctor Michael Mammone (1964-2023), at the hands of a self-described mixed-race individual, claimed that the killer “was screaming racial slurs about ‘white privilege’” (Alexander, 2023)? Should not the works of Lenin, Mao, Marx, Trotsky and other communist intellectuals be banned because of their direct role in inspiring extraordinary violence and terrorism? Commenting on leftist antifascism generally, Gottfried (2021) notes that “[f]rom 1968 onward the Rote Armee Fraktion in Germany went on a rampage against supposed Nazis in the German government and business community. Before it came to an effective end in 1978, this German antifascist underground managed to murder *thirty people* while unleashing other forms of physical destruction. At the same time antifascist terrorism was launched by Red Brigades in Italy, which resulted in, among other casualties, *the death of Premier Aldo Moro* in 1978. In England since 1985 acts of terror

against an alleged fascist threat have been perpetrated by, among others, Anti-Fascist Action (AFA)” (p. 2, italics added for emphasis). If every academic, or otherwise intellectual, book or article, or even statement or bit of text, that could in any way *affect* the thoughts of a criminally inclined person, and which might go on to be associated with their later crimes, must be censored, what exactly would remain?

## Tensions between science and politics

Belief in equality among certain demographic groups (defined by class, sex, and/or race) is a key feature of contemporary leftism. Leftism views equality not just in terms of abstract “moral worth” (a concept explained by, e.g., Husi, 2017), but groups’ capacity for social success in modern societies. We might call this belief “capacity egalitarianism.” It has been commonly observed that Western academia generally, and the social sciences specifically, exhibits a strong, possibly overwhelming, left-wing/egalitarian tilt (e.g., Clark & Winegard, 2020; Duarte et al., 2015; Honeycutt & Freberg, 2017; Honeycutt & Jussim, 2020). Research findings that are in tension with the capacity-egalitarian tenet of contemporary leftism<sup>5</sup> tend to rattle egalitarians (both non-academic and academic) and lead them to engage in motivated cognition to discredit such results (see Winegard & Winegard, 2017). This typically involves an unusually high level of scrutiny of relevantly contrarian writing (consider Patterson’s comments above on the absurdly strong standards of rigor to which motivated critics hold behavior genetics). Poor research that favors egalitarian beliefs, by contrast, is typically “given a pass” or even celebrated as

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<sup>5</sup>The terms “leftist” and “egalitarian” will be used in this piece more or less interchangeably, mostly, but not always, to refer to those who are at minimum “capacity egalitarians” (it will be clear when we are discussing leftists or leftism of a non-capacity-egalitarian sort). It is recognized that there are kinds of leftism (such as certain forms of “luck egalitarianism”) that are compatible with hereditarianism (a concept explained later on) applied to individuals and groups (e.g., Fox, 2007), whereas other kinds are not. Almost all forms of leftism have in common the belief that equality (in at least one domain, e.g., status, wealth, etc.) among all people (generally at least in one population, real or idealized, but, in contemporary times, more often in the world as a whole) is right or good in some sense (an exception would be orthodox Marxism, which, “on paper,” is non-moralistic and “scientific”). What the practical implications of this belief are taken to be varies, but has certainly included advocacy for *recognition* of allegedly already existing equality where this recognition is thought not to be present and efforts to *bring about* equality (e.g., in wealth, political participation, and/or social status) where such equality is thought to be lacking to an objectionable degree.

A point that is important for later parts of this chapter is that genuine racism and/or racial supremacist and separatist ideologies are not necessarily incompatible with leftism. If an individual sought to bring about communism in some nation, but the nation was of one race and the individual was insistent that it remain that way, and therefore was a racial nationalist, it seems clear to us that this person would nevertheless, by virtue of their communism, be a leftist.

excellent by mainstream social scientists and media.<sup>6</sup> This dynamic shows the implicit operation of a *fact-value conflation* at the core of this morally motivated cognitive style (Cofnas, 2016), where interpretations of the scientific quality of empirical research are strongly conditioned by perceptions of the moral implications of that research. Unsurprisingly, differential psychology, and intelligence research in particular, has been a favorite target for these attacks over roughly the past century, since it has offered evidence for the following four claims (among others).<sup>7</sup>

1. Human psychological traits predictive of social success vary substantially between individuals within populations of various kinds, but with the full range of values being found within each population (see, e.g., Jensen, 1998; Musek, 2017; Rindermann, 2018; Strenze, 2015; Warne, 2020; Wilmot & Ones, 2019).
2. Variation in traits predictive of social success within populations is at least partly, and in some cases potentially mostly, due to genetic variation (e.g., Polderman et al., 2015; Plomin & Deary, 2015; Schwabe et al., 2017; Sesardic, 2005, pp. 79–80; Veselka et al., 2009; Warne, 2020).
3. Measured levels of at least one cluster of important psychological/behavioral traits (cognitive abilities) vary on average between, not just within, human population groups—but there is disagreement about the magnitudes and temporal stabilities of these differences. Some find the claim about the bare existence of these differences to be scandalous. And yet it is overwhelmingly accepted by intelligence researchers across the political spectrum, including those with strong egalitarian commitments (see, e.g., Flynn, 2012, 2016; Gottfredson, 1997; Hunt, 2012; Neisser et al., 1996; Nisbett et al., 2012; Rindermann, 2018; Warne, 2020; Wicherts et al., 2010).
4. [Highly controversial:] Genetic differences between human population groups contribute, in the case of at least some inter-group comparisons, to variation in these traits (mentioned in point 3) between those groups (see, e.g., Murray, 2020; Warne, 2020, 2021; Winegard et al., 2020; for discussion of debates related to this issue, and some other matters covered by our list of four points, see Sesardic, 2005).

It should be stressed that point 4 (and claims with the same or similar essential content), as already indicated, is easily the most controversial in the above list within the field of differential psychology. To reiterate, the three authors on this chapter are *uncertain* as to the cause(s) of differences in cognitive test score averages between

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<sup>6</sup>For example, note how easy it was for scientific fraudster Diederik Stapel to garner positive media attention for (now retracted and discredited) leftist-friendly research on topics such as how meat-eating makes people more “selfish,” how litter makes at least certain people more racist, etc. (see, e.g., Dutch Daily News, 2011; Phillips, 2011).

<sup>7</sup>It is important to note that the fact that there is *evidence* for a claim does not entail that it is *true*; as we discussed earlier and will go on to explain in greater detail, *none* of the authors of this chapter is prepared to accept claim 4 in the list that follows in the main text, but rather each maintains that more research is needed to resolve the controversy with real confidence.

human population groups (some of which are more controversially called “racial” or “ethnic” groups). *None* of us is committed to any complete genetic, environmental, or mixed explanation of the origin of these group differences. Instead, and to reiterate, we hold merely that more research is required for a confident answer to be reached. As mentioned previously, this uncertainty has arisen because of original genetically informed research that we have recently conducted, alongside another colleague, which yielded a rather unexpected, in our estimation, finding for the hereditarian hypothesis<sup>8</sup> of population differences in cognitive ability, but one that fits with popular forms of the environmental hypothesis about such differences (Peñaherrera-Aguirre et al., 2022).

The main relevant finding of this study is the existence of negative (racial and ethnic) discrimination-by-polygenic-score interactions predicting participants’ general cognitive ability or *g*, an effect robust to statistical controls for a large number of main effects and interaction terms. In the course of this same research, we found that the magnitude of gene-by-environment interactions involving discrimination, which vary across different intelligence subtests, exhibited significant positive comoderation with subtest-level estimates of *g* loading, shared environmentality, and average magnitude of population differences in performance across subtests. This is important because it implicates discrimination-by-polygenic-score interactions as a possible environmental cause of the population-level differences posited by contemporary forms of Spearman’s hypothesis (the idea that the group differences in cognitive ability between Blacks, Whites, and certain other ethnic groups, such as Hispanics, are largely moderated by the *g* factor). This clearly contradicts a major hereditarian argument advanced by Rushton (1999), who maintained that important cognitively relevant and at least prospectively primarily environmental variables, such as the Flynn effect, should not cluster with clearly genetic and prospectively

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<sup>8</sup>In this context, the “hereditarian hypothesis” refers to the idea that population, or biogeographic ancestry group, differences in cognitive ability are substantially due to genetic differences between such groups—all formulations of the hypothesis of which we are aware posit that at least 50% of the between-group variance is due to such posited genetic differences. By contrast, the environmental, sometimes called “environmentalist,” hypothesis in this context *usually* refers to the idea that 100% of the between-group differences in cognitive ability are due to environmental factors, with therefore 0% attributable to genetic factors; there is no obvious reason, however, that the term “environmental hypothesis” could not be taken to refer to the view that more than 50% of these between-group differences in cognitive ability are due to environmental (or, more broadly, non-genetic) differences between the groups of interest—in other words, the view that the differences are *primarily* environmental (or at least non-genetic) in origin. It similarly seems more logical for “hereditarianism” to be the view that differences in a trait or outcome of interest are *primarily* genetic in origin.

But the term “hereditarianism” should not be taken to apply only in debates and discussions about the causes of inter-population variation in cognitive ability or other psychological/behavioral traits (or outcomes). The term has been, used in behavior genetics and differential psychology to refer to any view ascribing at least 50% of any kind of broad-scale human psychological/behavioral trait (and outcome) variation to genetic variation. Someone who believes that 80% of within-group variation in human cognitive ability is due to genetic differences within the group(s) would be a hereditarian on this understanding, even if they rejected the view that there is any genetic contribution to between-group variation in any psychological or behavioral trait or outcome.

genetic variables such as inbreeding depression and subtest  $g$  loadings. It was in light of the loading of Black-White cognitive ability differences on this “genetic variables” factor that Rushton claimed, in this context, to have found evidence that such differences were substantially genetic. Our finding of clear evidence of environmental contributions to these differences (indeed, we found that discrimination has essentially no heritability and is thus a purely “environmental” variable) violates the logic of Rushton’s argument.<sup>9</sup> When considered alongside evidence that cuts the other way, i.e., in favor of the hereditarian hypothesis (see the sources in point 4 above), and when taking account of the distinct possibility of future findings unanticipated by existing models, we believe that it is highly likely that what the late James Flynn (1934–2020; who was inclined to environmentalism about human population group differences in cognitive ability) wrote several years ago on this topic still applies: “anyone who thinks the debate is settled is unaware of its complexity” (2013).

Whatever one may think of the four numbered points in the list above, they are straightforwardly empirical claims. Each is either true or false, and in principle, their truth or falsity could be established with good confidence<sup>10</sup> given sufficient empirical data and quality of (statistical, genomic, etc.) analysis. Regrettably, fixation on the political implications of these claims has consumed most of the attention directed to them, such that it has become almost impossible to secure funding for, or publish in mainstream journals, research that might allow differential psychologists to develop foundations for confident answers to the particularly controversial questions in their field.

In the worst cases, entire pieces are written about researchers and their work in differential psychology and human (especially behavior) genetics that seem to have no aim other than to impugn the motives and characters of those researchers. Here, the substantive scientific problems are almost completely ignored. We place the lion’s share of the blame for this situation on strongly motivated (capacity) egalitarians who are the source of most of the hostility directed toward differential psychologists/behavior geneticists and their research. We contend that this is the case because of the problems differential psychology tends to raise for capacity egalitarianism. This is because scientific findings *can* bear, in a limited way, on *certain* moral and political views (specifically, when those views depend on particular beliefs about the empirical world), even if one wishes this were not true because of the challenges this creates for research. Sensibly, Tibayrenc (2019) calls for politics and science to be “mutually sanctuarized”; were this done, political, and also moral, views could be held without potential developments of empirical knowledge posing any threat to them.

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<sup>9</sup>For a very recent example of Rushton’s argument being used to support a non-zero contribution of genetic factors to one between-group difference in general cognitive ability, see Warne (2021; note that Warne is careful to discuss limitations of the method of correlated vectors on which Rushton’s argument depends).

<sup>10</sup>We write of “confidence” because empirical propositions of this sort in the scientific domain are always defeasible in principle and cannot be formally proven.

That aside, and as we have already observed, the problem is not isolated to one side of the political spectrum. An evenhanded analysis reveals that many rightists—and in other instances anti- and non-leftists who are not clearly right wing—have allowed their work or academic identity to become politically contaminated, including by committing themselves to views that are flatly appalling. A particularly egregious instance of this was when the psychometrician Chris Brand (1943–2017), who was thought to be a classical liberal and took himself to be acting against “political correctness,” maintained that “non-violent paedophilia with a consenting partner over age 12 does no harm so long as the paedophiles and their partners are of above-average IQ and educational level” (Holden, 1996, p. 1045, quoting Brand). It goes without saying that Brand’s view, certainly in the eyes of the current authors, is abhorrent and his attempt to appeal to psychometric science to justify it could hardly do anything other than sully the field’s reputation. In another case, behavior geneticist Glayde Whitney (1939–2002), a professor at Florida State University and former president of the Behavior Genetics Association (1994–1995), had already raised a good deal of controversy by suggesting that there may be a genetic component to racial disparities in rates of violent crime (Holden, 1995). He then went on to utterly destroy his credibility through his denial of the Holocaust (Tucker, 2009), in addition to his providing the foreword to the right-wing extremist politician David Duke’s autobiography (Tucker, 2009). So much controversy surrounded Whitney that the Florida Senate passed a Resolution (No. 2742) “condemning the racism and bigotry espoused by Florida State University Professor Glayde Whitney.”

It should also be noted that a number of scientists and other researchers associated with differential psychology have supported eugenics, primarily historically, but in some cases in the present day. Some of these individuals, especially contemporary ones, are clear in their opposition to any approach to eugenics involving coercion (although, as we explain later on, none of us endorses eugenics, even in its non-coercive forms<sup>11</sup>). Others, however, depressingly have given a strong impression of being supportive of such abominable practices (e.g., Cattell, 1972).

To be sure, the current authors are not free of political bias. Two of us would self-describe as politically conservative and are therefore on the political right, whereas one of us would self-describe as a centrist. We have in some instances allowed political ideas to appear in our work. We have discussed hypotheses about the origins of political systems and ideologies and have called attention to possible problems related to extremely high levels of liberalism and individualism in wealthy societies. One reason we wish to be clear about this is that we suspect that some would be tempted to meet our argument in this chapter with what is basically a *tu quoque* fallacy—something to this effect: “You complain about politicized criticism

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<sup>11</sup>To be sure, it might be argued that coercive legislation forbidding incest or highly consanguineous mating is “eugenic” in that it aims to reduce the suffering caused by such unions stemming from severe inbreeding depression in offspring (e.g., Veit et al., 2021). None of the current authors would oppose laws against incest, but such legislation is typically not framed in terms of a “eugenics program.” Among the policies that we do *strongly oppose* are those aimed at removing reproductive freedoms from people deemed (by eugenicists) to have socially undesirable traits.

of certain areas of science, and yet here you are doing the same, attacking academics for what are really political reasons.”

A couple of things can be said to preempt such a line of critique. First, intelligence research is in the position of needing to be defended in large part due to the persistent efforts of egalitarians to attack the field and politicize its findings in such a way so as to discredit them and stifle further research (e.g., by claiming that social harms will come from this kind of work). After a certain point, efforts to “set the record straight” become imperative, and indicating political bias among those who have taken the initiative to criticize, often repeatedly, others for having it certainly seems to be “fair play.” Second, unlike most critics of differential psychology and related fields, we perform original and genetically informed research on the topics at issue—we do not merely, or even primarily, criticize what others do, certainly not in an effort to completely discourage further development in their areas of work, or to ruin their characterological reputations (something few of our detractors could honestly say). In our history of research, we have reached conclusions that might be more agreeable to the political left than the right (e.g., Woodley of Menie et al., 2021) and in other instances that might be more agreeable to the political right than the left (e.g., Woodley of Menie et al., 2018c).

We have, in other words, a proven record of reaching conclusions that would not be expected from the biases some of us have—hence the shift in our stance on the nature of race and hereditarianism about group differences mentioned earlier. By contrast, those we critique tend to go in only one direction. Specifically, whatever supports egalitarian aims and beliefs is good, correct, and above legitimate reproach, whereas whatever is inconvenient for those aims and beliefs is unacceptable and can only exist because of error and/or political bias or worse.

### ***Intelligence Research: A Controversial History***

It is likely that intelligence is the most inflammatory concept in the history of psychology. The rich history of controversy in the field of intelligence research has recently been scientometrically analyzed by Carl and Woodley of Menie (2019; for a response to a recent critique of this work see: Carl & Woodley of Menie, in preparation). The key findings of this study are as follows:

1. As of 2019, there have been a total of 111 distinct “incidents” (including denouncements, petitions, protests, threats, physical attacks, formal investigations, and sanctions) involving 56 individuals, since 1956, in Western liberal-democratic countries, a great majority of which stem from the actions of individuals motivated by egalitarianism.

2. Five researchers collectively account for the largest portion of all (severity-weighted) controversies<sup>12</sup>. In descending order of controversiality are Arthur R. Jensen (1923–2012), who brought large-scale academic and public attention to the existence of both the *g* factor (the common factor variance shared among diverse measures of intelligence) and racial (specifically Black-White) disparities in levels of *g*. A paper Jensen wrote for the *Harvard Educational Review* in 1969 occasioned significant and long-lasting controversy, as he suggested this group difference might be resistant to environmental interventions, possibly due to its having a (partial) genetic etiology (Jensen, 1969). Next is William Shockley (1910–1989), who won the Nobel Prize in 1956 for his co-discovery of the “transistor effect.” He is also sometimes credited with having “founded” Silicon Valley. In addition to physics, he was interested in both population IQ differences (holding views consistent with those of Jensen) and eugenics, and he used his scientific influence to advocate for policy on the basis of his beliefs (e.g., Shockley, 1972). Third is Hans J. Eysenck (1916–1997), a German-born refugee of Jewish descent, who settled in London and taught at the Institute of Psychiatry, where he founded the “London School” of differential psychology. He was involved in a number of intelligence research-related (and other) controversies throughout his long career (Andersen et al., 2021), since, as with Jensen and others, he held that there were heritable differences in intelligence between population groups. Fourth is Charles Murray, a political scientist who, with Harvard psychologist Richard J. Herrnstein (1930–1994), co-authored *The Bell Curve*(TBC), published in 1994 (Herrnstein & Murray, 1994), which resulted in a significant increase in public interest in controversies over race, class, and IQ, with much hostile attention directed to TBC's discussion of hereditarianism about “racial” differences in intelligence. Fifth and finally is J. Philippe Rushton (1943–2012), a British-Canadian researcher, who was responsible for a number of controversial sociobiological ideas, chief among which is the theory that a number of human traits, including IQ, fertility, and brain mass, are subsumed under a broader “life history factor” that varies among individuals and racial groups<sup>13</sup> (Rushton, 1995). He was also President of the Pioneer Fund (2002–2012), which specialized in funding group differences research, and became a lightning rod for controversy in the 1990s and 2000s.
3. The controversies can be grouped into four distinct “eras” over time, defined by spikes in the sums of severity-weighted incidents. The first occurred during the

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<sup>12</sup>Controversies were identified on the basis of the researcher having been subjected to petitions, denunciations, loss of professional standing, etc. as a result of public attention being drawn to their research or to statements made by the researcher. The severity of controversies was quantified on the basis of the number of distinct negative outcomes per controversy for a given researcher (e.g., one who was merely denounced in a newspaper for their research would score lower than one who was denounced, targeted by a petition, and forced to resign an academic position).

<sup>13</sup>Some of our own work has found that Rushton was incorrect, in that the factor structures of psychometric life history and intelligence are almost completely independent (see, e.g., Woodley, 2011).

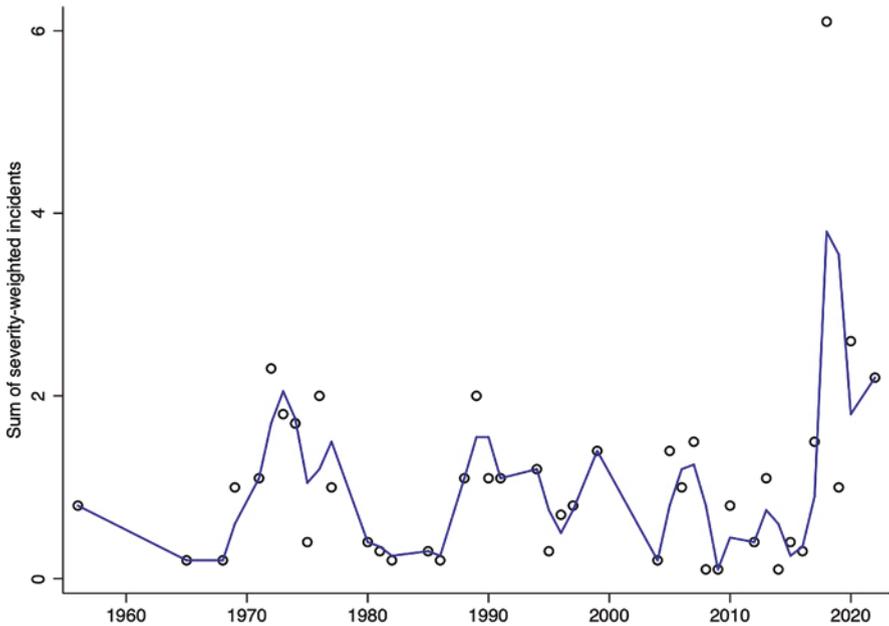
1970s and is termed the “Jensen era,” as most of the controversies in this period stemmed from Jensen’s 1969 publication. The second occurred in the 1980s and early 1990s and is termed the “Rushton era,” as Rushton’s hereditarian research played a disproportionately large role in the controversies of this time. The third is termed the “Watson era” and occurred during the 2000s. This era was dominated by DNA structure co-discoverer and Nobelist James Watson’s “gloomy” prospect remarks in about the socioeconomic developmental potential of African countries in light of relevant IQ test data, which caused outrage. The most recent, and also most intense period (in terms of number of incidents), is termed the “LCI era,” after the London Conference on Intelligence. These controversies were sparked in 2018 by political attacks against the conservative journalist Toby Young, who revealed that he had attended a “secretive” meeting, at which controversial academic topics related to intelligence research and behavior genetics were discussed (Young, 2018). Media attention led to a news cycle in which it was claimed that the conference was attended by “eugenicists,”<sup>14</sup> “White supremacists,” etc. (see Woodley of Menie et al., 2018a, for further discussion). Several of the attendees suffered reputational and career-related costs as a result of their involvement in this conference.

An updated version of the graph from Carl and Woodley of Menie (2019), plotting intelligence -research-related controversies over time, which includes both newer controversies (up to 2022), in addition to some recently identified older ones (a total of 135 incidents involving 66 individuals), is presented in Fig. 25.1.

Although it could not be precisely measured, Carl and Woodley of Menie (2019) noted that race and population differences in cognitive ability seemed to feature prominently among controversies. It is plain to see from the preceding summary that the major controversies in this area have resulted from offense taken at ideas and research findings widely understood, implicitly or explicitly, to be incompatible with capacity egalitarianism.

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<sup>14</sup>Although some LCI attendees were, as a matter of fact, eugenicists, it has unfortunately become *de rigueur* in academic circles to smear as “eugenicists” any researchers who find or make use of evidence that individual differences in intelligence, or other socially significant psychological/behavioral traits, are to any degree due to genetic differences (see Anomaly, 2022 for further discussion of this). In reality, one is not a eugenicist unless one actually favors deliberate efforts to “improve” the genetic traits of at least one human population, typically by shaping patterns of human reproduction in some way. One can believe that inter-individual (and/or inter-group) differences in socially significant traits are to at least some extent due to genetic differences while nonetheless *not* supporting, or even *opposing*, eugenics. As it happens, for example, all authors on the current chapter *oppose* eugenics, regardless of whether the involved practices take a “liberal” or authoritarian form, despite accepting the likelihood that *individual* differences in intelligence and other socially significant psychological/behavioral traits are substantially genetic. Our opposition to eugenics is rooted in a number of concerns, including that (1) genetic data for eugenic purposes could be used by states and other powerful organizations to immiserate and abuse people (e.g., large corporations in the healthcare sector could discriminate against individuals with genetic variants putting them at risk of diseases) and that (2) eugenic practices carry the risk of unforeseen catastrophic biological and resultantly social consequences. Apart from the aforementioned extant restrictions on incest and highly consanguineous mating, our view is that efforts to artificially manipulate patterns of human reproduction, whether indirect or direct, simply should *not* occur.



**Fig. 25.1** The sum of severity-weighted controversies in intelligence research over time (1956-2022)

### **Panofsky et al. (2021)**

While it cannot be denied that certain controversial right-wing differential psychologists and behavior geneticists took provocative—and sometimes quite disturbing—stances on some findings of the field, the overwhelming preponderance of aggressive politicisation of this area has come from moral-political egalitarians.<sup>15</sup> As egalitarians are dominant in academia (Clark & Winegard, 2020; Duarte et al., 2015; Honeycutt & Freberg, 2017; Honeycutt & Jussim, 2020), they have been able to exert profound influence on the framing of public debates about controversial issues and public perception of the characters of researchers. Egalitarian activists also have a pronounced tendency to “paint” their targets as politically motivated actors—by making the essential debates almost exclusively about politics rather than science. Thus, their targets’ research can be dismissed without having to seriously and fairly engage it at the empirical, analytical, or theoretical level (for notable examples of this, see Gould, 1981, 1996; Lewontin et al., 1984).

An exemplary and recent case of such efforts is a paper by three sociologists (Panofsky et al., 2021), which gives the strong impression of aiming to portray all

<sup>15</sup> Nevertheless, there is evidence that personnel working in the field of intelligence research skew leftward politically, consistent with the broader tendency for academia as a whole (Rindermann et al., 2020).

research supportive (in particular) of the existence of genetically based population group differences in IQ as mere “legitimation” of “White nationalism” and related ideologies. This narrative is substantiated by effectively clustering those who work in controversial areas of differential psychology and human biology and have professional research publications to their names (but in some cases may lack professional academic affiliations) with right-wing ideologues. Per Panofsky et al. (2021), these ideologues are writers who sometimes borrow from the research of legitimate scientists and scholars and who in some cases contribute to openly neo-Nazi websites (*Stormfront* is singled out). This neo-Nazi subgroup specifically attempts to use the findings of intelligence research and genetics to delimit boundaries for membership in their communities (e.g., in the construction of “White identities”).

Panofsky et al. (2021) maintain that these different groups collectively constitute a “loosely organized, mostly-online movement of amateur science enthusiasts (with a few ties to professional scientists) aiming to corral contemporary genetics toward racial realism and hierarchy” (p. 388). Panofsky et al. (2021) note that this grouping contains some degree of heterogeneity, as “[a]cross the cases we saw an increase in the sophistication of the engagement with genetic science as well as a decrease in the explicit articulations of White nationalism or alt-right politics” (p. 395). This quality may merely represent a sort of camouflage designed to more effectively insert justifications for the ideologues’ “metapolitical” program into professional discourse. This is achieved by cultivating links with “professionals” who (in some cases) also allow certain of these (allegedly) right-wing “amateur science enthusiasts” to place their outputs in “professional” science publications.

The sense given is that, when viewed through the authors’ egalitarian lens,<sup>16</sup> all work and opinion on the ultimate bases of human (especially group) differences that do not comport with the (capacity) egalitarian program are necessarily ideologically suspect. This means that it must be interpretively forced into association with right-wing<sup>17</sup> agendas (e.g., “White nationalism”), even when there is no good evidence

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<sup>16</sup>Panofsky et al. (2021) do not state their political bias explicitly in their article; however, it would certainly be shocking if they were not committed to capacity egalitarianism at least at the group level, given their thoroughly political disparagement of genetic research on group differences as little more than an attempt to “[rebrand]... racial genetic essentialism and biological explanations of hierarchies” (p. 395), or more broadly to serve the objectives of the “alt-right” and “White nationalist” political movements, along with their more general refusal to even leave open the mere possibility that scientific findings consistent with the hereditarian hypothesis could be accurate (this they foreclose with a cursory and highly selective review of the relevant literature, discussed later in the main text of this chapter). One might consider by contrast the much more balanced assessments of Tibayrenc (2017a, b, 2019), an evolutionary scientist and anti-racist, who does not allow his moral and political convictions to prevent his taking a scientific attitude to controversial questions about “race” and group differences (Panofsky et al. conspicuously do not cite or discuss his work). Such “oppositional framing” seems to do little other than indicate the authors’ membership in the egalitarian moral-political community.

<sup>17</sup>An unfortunate aspect of Panofsky et al.’s (2021) argument is that certain views that are not right wing as a matter of strict logical necessity (e.g., “White nationalism”) are used in such close association with various terms for extreme right-wing political views (e.g., “alt right,” “far right”) that the boundaries of the ideological “space” of Panofsky et al.’s critical targets are far from clear. If a

for inferring such a connection. Any professional publications can be dismissed simply on the basis that even those “professional scientists” who choose to work and publish on more controversial questions are “contaminated” via direct or indirect affiliations with the individuals and/or groups involved in this alliance among rightist “metapolitical” activists.

The focus here will be on deconstructing Panofsky et al.’s (2021) model of the relevant research community. After discussing various problems with it, we build a case for the position that the authors’ rightist “metapolitical” activist thesis is:

- (a) Not a good explanation of the relevant data, as there appear to be a number of contradictions that cannot be accommodated by their thesis in such a way that would strengthen, rather than weaken, its core assumptions.
- (b) Ultimately suggestive of its own antithesis, namely, the existence of leftist “metapolitical” activism. We argue that the preponderance of evidence is in fact more consistent with the existence of the latter kind of activism. This is because an alliance of sorts between certain professional scientists conducting original, empirically grounded genetic research—in particular those associated with newly emerging “impact” fields such as sociogenomics—and scholar-activists in fields known for their left-leaning ideological tilt (such as sociology and anthropology) does indeed appear to have arisen in recent years. We speculate that the former might be employing the latter to ideologically neutralize potential threats to status and funding stemming from “amateurs” and “rogue professionals” choosing to tackle controversial but nevertheless scientifically

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*communist* who was also an explicit White nationalist subscribed to hereditarian views, would Panofsky et al. simply ignore the communist commitments of this individual to lump them in with the “far right”? Would Panofsky et al., implicitly or explicitly, consider *any* person with “racist,” “racialist,” or “race realist” views (or whatever term they might prefer at the moment—they in any case do not seem particularly concerned about the distinctions that might exist between them) to be right wing or even far right? We frankly do not know the answers to these questions, but suspect that they are all “yes,” with at most minimal qualification needed. The closest that Panofsky et al. (2021) come to giving any insight here is in the following: “The public face of human biodiversity includes, on one side, writers for the far right, White nationalist outlets. ... and, on the other, people who are not ostensibly political but willing to write provocatively about topics like race and eugenics. ... or centrist liberals like Steven Pinker. ... who legitimates human biodiversity ideas like the evolution of Jewish intelligence” (p. 391). It is evident that Panofsky et al. feel the need to qualify an individual’s non-political orientation as “ostensibl[e]” if they “write provocatively about topics like race and eugenics,” presumably because they doubt any person who writes on such topics in such a way is anything but a rightist at best and a far-right “metapolitical activist” at worst (but would Panofsky et al. ever take any discussion of race and eugenics not in keeping with their views to be non-“provocative”?). This places us in a difficult position, because any effort to show that hereditarianism is not mere right-wing activism will be difficult to get off the ground if “racism” is immediately inferred from hereditarianism, and the former is necessarily considered right wing or sufficient to render someone right wing. As indicated earlier, we proceed on the assumption that hereditarianism is not intrinsically racist or right wing and that both racism in general and ideologies such as racial nationalism and supremacy in particular can occur on the political left or right. But in discussing Panofsky et al.’s *claims*, we will not attempt to charitably disentangle their running together of rightism and racism (or cognates or terms that they use in close association with these).

legitimate questions within their fields. The latter might employ the former to gain political influence over the public framing of the findings of these impact fields. This could conceivably advance their own “metapolitical” and professional goals (e.g., through manufacturing the impression that no sound science could ever seriously challenge the most important aspects of capacity egalitarianism and possibly also through the creation of new academic employment opportunities in, e.g., “the sociology of genetics”).

This chapter will conclude with discussion of constructive ways in which both those on the political left and right (who are interested in seeing to it that social science gets at empirical truth) might effectively challenge the negative effects of increasing political polarization on discourse in fields such as differential psychology.

### *Motivated Reasoning and Scientific Facts*

A key problem with Panofsky et al.’s (2021) paper is the degree to which it is seemingly taken for granted that there are no legitimate interpretations of the relevant data that would open *any* reasonable doubt regarding claims of equal genetic potential across human populations for the development of traits generally thought to be socially advantageous. The authors, to the extent that they discuss relevant scientific work at all, align themselves with what they suggest to be a consensus of the “[perhaps] overwhelming majority” of “biological anthropologists and human geneticists” that “race is not a genetic concept” (Panofsky et al., 2021, p. 388).

It is in light of this alleged “overwhelming majority” position that they take the view that “race is a distinctly genetic concept and that genes cause racial differences in cognition, behavior, and culture” (p. 388) to be utterly discredited. Panofsky et al. do not mention the research of Nelson et al. (2018), involving data from 515 “genetics professionals” who responded to a survey about their views on “race, ancestry, and genetics”: “Our findings suggest that for many genetics professionals, the questions of what race is and what race means remain both professionally and personally contentious” (p. 222). Nelson et al. (2018) present the following claim, which contradicts Panofsky et al.’s statement that would lead one to think that the relevant scientists “overwhelmingly” believe that it is effectively indisputable that “race is not a genetic concept”: “While there may be consensus in the scientific community that socially defined races are not discrete taxonomic, biological, or genetic groups, disagreements remain about whether and to what extent race is a useful proxy for *genetic* or *other biological differences* between individuals” (p. 222; emphasis added). Nelson et al. (2018) clearly take their findings to indicate that understandings of race are conceptually rather muddy among the relevant professionals, instead of suggesting some ironclad consensus that race is genetically meaningless or nearly so, as capacity egalitarians often insist. They highlight certain responses to their survey, one of which helps clarify how extreme the conceptual uncertainties in this area can be, perhaps often are:

I have somehow managed to hold seemingly mutually exclusive views that (1) races don't exist and are biologically meaningless and (2) races have a genetic basis and biological influences on health. The contradiction, [in my opinion], stems from the way we colloquially define race. (Nelson et al., 2018, p. 227)

Given all of the preceding in this section, what seems to be Tibayrenc's (2017b) personal conclusion on the race concept, to the effect that its applicability to the human species is *unclear*, appears particularly appropriate: "for rather comparable genetic data, various animal and human populations may be attributed different taxonomical statuses. Taxonomy is a difficult art with, quite often, considerable subjectivity and no clear-cut answers: 'Nature laughs at our classifications'" (p. 644).

Pronouncements against biological views on race, and hereditarianism about race differences, of the kind from Panofsky et al., therefore either (1) concern, implicitly or explicitly, an obviously incorrect understanding of race that defenders of the "hereditarian hypothesis" simply do not endorse<sup>18</sup> or (2) appeal to the

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<sup>18</sup>A perfect example of this would be the American Society of Human Genetics' (ASHG) recent (ASHG Perspective, 2018; cf Tibayrenc, 2019) statement on "attempts to link genetics and racial supremacy." In that statement, one finds claims such as the following: "Genetics demonstrates that humans cannot be divided into biologically distinct subcategories. *Although there are clear observable correlations between variation in the human genome and how individuals identify by race*, the study of human genetics challenges the traditional concept of different races of humans as biologically separate and distinct" (p. 636; emphasis added) and "Most human genetic variation is distributed as a gradient, so distinct boundaries between population groups cannot be accurately assigned" (p. 636). Any effort to justify racial supremacist views with reference to genetic and differential psychological research can only do so through certain *moral* and/or *political* beliefs that are, in the most crucial respects, independent of whatever relevant empirical reality actually obtains. It is most reasonable for egalitarians to challenge those moral and/or political beliefs themselves, rather than make statements suggesting that non-racism is hostage to however the germane scientific findings ultimately turn out (as Tibayrenc, 2019 has argued, surely it would be appalling to suggest that racial supremacist ideologies *would be* justified if the hereditarian hypothesis about population group differences were to become as well-established as, say, modern evolutionary theory in the life sciences. For more on the hazards of conditioning moral equality upon empirical equality, see Anomaly & Winegard, 2020). It must also be noted that one *need not even be* an egalitarian to *oppose* racial supremacist and related ideologies, misogynist ideologies, and so on. Steinhoff (2015) makes explicit that there is nothing about moral inegalitarianism, in and of itself, that excludes opposition to racism (p. 143) or belief in the *irrelevance* of membership in various demographic groups (such as races, sexes, and so on) to moral worth (all the current authors firmly believe that such demographic group membership *is* irrelevant to moral worth).

In any case, as far as we are aware, all living hereditarian researchers working on group differences accept that "[m]ost human genetic variation is distributed as a gradient" and, in carrying out hereditarian research on human population group differences, take their key data to be the "clear observable correlations between variation in the human genome and how individuals identify by race" (though sometimes race as identified by others is also or alternatively taken into account). Any such researcher who in fact denies these claims of the ASHG is in error. (It is unclear whether the ASHG would reject even some understandings of race with which acceptance of their premises about human genetic variation are compatible, such as the "geographical races" concept. Their use of the term "biologically distinct subcategories" is ambiguous, but we assume that they mean to refer to the racial distinctions posited by essentialist or typological theories of race—this is also the reading of Tibayrenc, 2019.) One might consider the recent work of Charles Murray (2020)—a

erroneous idea of a virtual scientific certainty that there is insufficient genetic variation across human populations to allow the possibility that group differences (in at least certain traits) have a partly genetic cause. As already suggested, the illusion of such certainty is effected and maintained in part through careful omission of contrary views and information from qualified academics and other researchers (much relevant material is provided by Tibayrenc (2017a, b, 2019), who emphasizes that the relevant neurogenetic, behavior-genetic, etc. research is too immature to reasonably permit the highly confident rejections of hereditarian explanations and perspectives of the sort Panofsky et al. offer).

Panofsky et al. (2021) write nothing about the recent statements of prominent geneticists suggesting that we should prepare ourselves for evidence of the existence of this sort of genetic variation. David Reich,<sup>19</sup> for instance, certainly one of the most eminent human geneticists alive today and a member of the genetics faculty at Harvard Medical School, wrote the following in a book published by Oxford University Press:

The average time separation between pairs of human populations since they diverged from common ancestral populations, which is up to around fifty thousand years for some pairs of non-African populations, and up to two hundred thousand years or more for some pairs of sub-Saharan African populations, is far from negligible on the time scale of human evolution. If selection on height and infant head circumference can occur within a couple of thousand years, *it seems a bad bet to argue that there cannot be similar average differences in cognitive or behavioral traits*. Even if we do not yet know what the differences are, we should prepare our science and our society to be able to deal with the reality of differences

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researcher whom many leftists never tire of libeling as a “White supremacist,” or, perhaps even more absurdly, a “White nationalist”—who very clearly repudiates typological views of race, and seemingly the concept of biological race altogether, while maintaining that there is sufficient genetic variation among human population groups to accommodate psychological/behavioral differences among them. Consistent with our claims here, Whittle (2020) notes the very strong *convergence* in the treatments of the concept of race by a prominent critic of hereditarian views on group differences in intelligence, Adam Rutherford, and by Charles Murray, including that both reject “essentialist” understandings of race. For discussion relevant to matters in this footnote, see Cofnas (2016).

It is worth stressing that the status of race as a biological concept has become less clear and more complicated over time (see Ludwig, 2014). The nature of the dispute over the idea of human races appears to be primarily conceptual rather than empirical (Ludwig, 2014, p. 75). And, as we have already indicated, recent research has offered strong evidence, even in genetically informed study designs, of the significance of the purely social factors associated with “race” (e.g., Peñaherrera-Aguirre et al., 2022). Given the uncertainty that all of this has generated over the past several years, as indicated in the Introduction, we are not committed to “race realism.” When issues of genetic differences between “races” or “ethnic groups” are treated, we approach them in the sense suggested by the ASHG: it is the association between self- and other-identification (broadly, social identification) as belonging to racial or ethnic categories, on the one hand, and “variation in the human genome,” on the other, giving rise to “clear observable correlations,” which is relevant.

<sup>19</sup>It is often quickly inferred from passages such as those we reproduce above that Reich is a “race realist.” In reality, it seems that he is *not* a race realist. Given how vexed the race concept is, it makes little sense to jump from something as mild as a person’s openness to the possible existence of certain genetic differences between “populations” to that person’s being a “race realist.”

instead of sticking our heads in the sand and pretending that differences cannot be discovered. (2018, p. 258; emphasis added)

When asked about the possibility of biological differences among human populations, we have tended to obfuscate, making mathematical statements in the spirit of Richard Lewontin about the average difference between individuals from within any one population being around six times greater than the average difference between populations. We point out that the mutations that underlie some traits that differ dramatically across populations . . . are unusual, and that when we look across the genome it is clear that the typical differences in frequencies of mutations across populations are far less. *But this carefully worded formulation is deliberately masking the possibility of substantial average differences in biological traits across populations.* (2018, p. 254; emphasis added).

The genome bloggers take pleasure in pointing out contradictions between the *politically correct* messages academics often give about the indistinguishability of traits across populations and their papers showing that this is not the way the science is heading. What real differences do we know about? We cannot deny the existence of substantial average genetic differences across populations, not just in traits such as skin color, but also in bodily dimensions, the ability to efficiently digest starch or milk sugar, the ability to breathe easily at high altitudes, and susceptibility to particular diseases. These differences are just the beginning. I expect that the reason we don't know about a much larger number of differences among human populations is that studies with adequate statistical power to detect them have not yet been carried out. For the great majority of traits, there is, as Lewontin said, much more variation within populations than across populations. This means that individuals with extreme high or low values of the great majority of traits can occur in any population. *But it does not preclude the existence of subtler, average differences in traits across populations. The indefensibility of the orthodoxy [that there are no such differences] is obvious at almost every turn.* (2018, p. 255; emphasis added)

The point of reproducing the above passages from Reich is *not* to argue that there are in fact genetic differences between human population groups that underlie differences in “cognitive or behavioral traits” between those groups. Note that earlier we stated that we are not committed to any complete explanation about the origin of such “cognitive and behavioral” differences (to whatever extent they exist). That of course is not our point here. Rather, it is to indicate that the notion that even the *possibility* of such differences has been conclusively ruled out by the current state of human genomic science does not easily square with the fact that a leading human geneticist, at one of the top universities in the world, clearly thinks that this is not at all true. Indeed, he seemingly thinks that it is *unlikely* that there are no such differences. It should be appreciated that Oxford University Press books undergo a peer review process<sup>20</sup> (Oxford University Press, n.d.) and also that Reich's book attracted glowing endorsements from a number of prominent biologists, such as Daniel Lieberman, of Harvard University, and Robert Weinberg, of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. This all suggests that Reich's statements do not go outside of the bounds of contemporary genetic science.

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<sup>20</sup>“Peer review is an important component of OUP's evaluation process. Before any book can be accepted for publication by OUP, it is evaluated by our editorial staff and by outside readers and ultimately must be approved by the OUP Editorial Board” (Oxford University Press, n.d.).

Perhaps some readers will be tempted to doubt that the passages from Reich (2018) above accurately reflect his position, and to instead believe that they are somehow “out of context.” But in light of his exchange with the journalist Angela Saini for her book, *Superior*,<sup>21</sup> such potential doubts seem completely untenable (page numbers are not provided as the text is sourced from an electronic book):

[Reich] has become embroiled in controversy for suggesting . . . that more work needs to be done to understand cognitive and psychological differences between “population groups,” a phrase that most people have interpreted as meaning “racial difference.” His statement . . . has attracted angry emails from fellow academics. But he hasn’t backed down. (2019; emphasis added)

David Reich isn’t a racist. But neither does he adopt the staunch antiracist position of the old-school population geneticists . . . [Reich’s] own position on race is a . . . subtle one. Despite his research revealing the extent of interconnectedness between humans. . . Reich still suspects there’s something worth investigating about group difference. And he leaves open the possibility that this difference correlates with existing racial categories—categories that many academics would say were socially constructed, and not based in biology at all, except for in very unreliable ways . . . “There are real ancestry differences across populations that correlate to the social constructions we have,” he tells me firmly. “We have to deal with that.” (2019)

[Reich] suggests that there may be more than superficial average differences between black and white Americans, possibly even cognitive and psychological ones, because before they arrived in the United States, these population groups had this seventy thousand years apart during which they adapted to their own different environments. Reich implies that natural selection may have acted on them differently within this timescale to produce changes that go further than skin deep. He adds, *judiciously*, that he doesn’t think these differences will be large—only a fraction as big as the variation between individuals, just as biologist Richard Lewontin estimated in 1972. *But he doesn’t expect them to be nonexistent either*: as individuals we are so very different from one another that even a fraction of a difference between groups is *something*. (2019; emphasis in original for the final word of the passage, otherwise added)

Unfortunately, one popular gambit for dealing with statements such as those of Reich’s is to simply disparage the researcher making them, with the normal significance of scientific credentials (even as impeccable as his) seeming to drop away instantly once the scientist with them says something in tension with the core tenet of capacity egalitarianism. Sadly, we note an apparent instance of this in Panofsky et al.’s (2021) paper, where they dismiss one geneticist’s attempt to defend the work of certain individuals carrying out genetic analyses by linking them, and tacitly him, to “European” nationalism:

Playing their [European] nationalist interests close to the vest, some have interacted positively with professional geneticists. In a news feature in *Nature*, geneticist Doron Behar gushed “They are not amateurs. They are far from being amateurs.” (p. 390)

It should be recognised that the professional judgment of an actual geneticist in this instance is dealt with merely by framing it in an unflattering way, with no reason

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<sup>21</sup>Notwithstanding its useful insights into Reich’s views, Saini’s book has many problems and is generally unreliable (see Winegard & Carl, 2019).

whatsoever given to justify the dismissal of the scientist's substantive claim. Apparently, being disinclined to engage Behar's basis for his view, Panofsky et al. (2021) choose instead to present his statement with an implied sneer, employing as they do the word "gushed," instead of a neutral term such as "said" or "stated." The point here seems to be to give the impression that Behar's remarks are strangely or shamefully emotive or unbalanced. Yet nothing in Behar's matter-of-fact observation appears to suggest inappropriate effusiveness or anything that goes beyond a merely scientific appraisal of the matter at hand.

The implication of this is that nothing provisioning hereditarianism—or even the bare claim that *potentially* socially significant average genetic differences exist across biogeographic ancestry groups<sup>22</sup>—with intellectual support can be met with anything other than scorn. Even Reich was not spared controversy over his ideas about genetic population differences discussed above, as Saini's mention of "angry emails from fellow academics" makes clear (for information on some of the controversy over relevant work of Reich's, see, e.g., University of California Santa Cruz, 2019). This is unfortunately typical in the academic world. And it may, to no small degree, be the reason why the sort of scientifically uncertain "orthodoxy" that Reich criticizes is able to attract the mere *appearance* of overwhelming and relevant academic support (note how Reich suggests the role of inclinations to be "politically correct" in what he clearly regards as frequently misleading presentations of human genetic science by professionals). Very few people are willing to frankly and fairly discuss the evidence and (legitimate) debates associated with hereditarianism, because they risk receiving motivated criticism and personal attacks that can be extraordinarily damaging professionally and socially. It is hardly surprising therefore that the preponderance of statements that relevant academics will offer about it are, first and foremost, devised so as not to offend the ideological commitments that their peers, the most biased of whom are usually in unrelated disciplines (see relevant discussion below), frequently maintain.

Panofsky et al. (2021) seem to dismiss all such concerns by remarking that "metapolitical activism in this domain attacks academics as ideological in order to promulgate *certainty* about genetic causes of race and racial differences" (p. 395; emphasis in original). However, it could be argued that, precisely *because* Panofsky et al. represent a privileged academic position that is largely exempt from critical scrutiny, they appear to have thought it acceptable to merely suggest that there is nothing to substantiate complaints about ideological bias (of an egalitarian sort) among academics. Such complaints become merely a ploy of "metapolitical" activists in an instant, where in ordinary circumstances one would have to provide evidence for such a claim for it to be taken seriously. In reality, there is overwhelming evidence that this egalitarian bias exists, is of great magnitude, and carries severe negative consequences both for social science as a whole and for practitioners whose data and analyses challenge contemporary orthodoxies (see Carl & Woodley of Menie, 2019; Clark & Winegard, 2020; Cofnas, 2016; Davis, 1986; Duarte et al.,

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<sup>22</sup>It certainly seems that Panofsky et al. (2021) take issue with this idea (see p. 390).

2015; Honeycutt & Freberg, 2017; Honeycutt & Jussim, 2020; Hunt, 1998; Scarr, 1987; Segerstråle, 2000; Sesardic, 2005; Stevens et al., 2017; Wright, 1998). It could just as easily be alleged (and with better support) that egalitarian academics, such as Panofsky et al., attack hereditarian researchers as “ideological” to “promulgate certainty about” the non-genetic “causes of race and racial differences.” We believe that we have already shown that their evident certainty on this front is merely ideological and not reflective of the germane scientific evidence, as in our discussion of David Reich’s work above (again, the works of Tibayrenc (2017a, b, 2019) and Nelson et al. (2018) are particularly useful in showing the reasonable grounds to doubt the existence of the supposed consensus to which Panofsky et al. appeal).

Panofsky et al. (2021) next critique the credentials of researchers whose work transgresses the bounds of what they deem acceptable. Consider the following statement, in regard to the authors on a paper concerning the role of possible genetic factors in the etiology of the potential group difference in cognitive ability between Ashkenazi Jewish and non-Jewish (specifically Christian) individuals of European descent:<sup>23</sup> “Its first author, Curtis Dunkel is a psychologist at Western Illinois

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<sup>23</sup>In dealing specifically with Dunkel et al. (2019), Panofsky et al. (2021) make an attempt to engage with the relevant science by referring the reader to a non-peer-reviewed preprint (an odd choice of citation for such partisans of impeccably “mainstream science”; Freese et al., 2019) as a way of rebutting this paper. They go on to claim (on the basis of this preprint) that the overestimation of the phenotypic magnitude of the group difference in cognitive ability between those individuals of European descent who identify as Jewish and those who identify with two Christian denominations, when estimated with respect to their polygenic score (PGS) means, “is actually a function of population stratification” (p. 395). This explanation seems to be an example of a “just not so story” (Figueredo & Berry, 2002). Figueredo and Berry (2002) describe just not so stories as involving “[uncritical acceptance] of any alternative explanation as long as it is not an adaptationist hypothesis” (this could be extended to uncritical acceptance of any alternative explanation as long as it is not a *hereditarian* hypothesis). This amounts to an effort to insist on the correctness of an alternative explanation to some other one, simply because the latter is disliked, not because the former has been adequately supported—in this case, it is insisted that these group differences and associated genetic mediation patterns cannot be anything other than a consequence of population stratification. It is not explained why, despite the discrepant magnitudes of the phenotypic relative to genotypic differences, this population stratification would nevertheless align the vector of these differences in the comparisons of the populations under consideration, however; this is, needless to say, a complex matter (for recent discussion on the possible causes of these genotype-phenotype disparities in inter-population comparisons using PGSs, see Yair & Coop, 2022). Sadly, and in any case, neither Panofsky et al. (2021) nor Freese et al. (2019) seem to offer any scientific recommendations on how existing efforts (such as that of Dunkel et al., 2019) can be improved in future research. The point as usual is to suppress unpopular research.

It should finally be stressed that while the results of mediational analyses such as these are potentially *consistent* with the predictions of hereditarian models of the causes of human population group differences in cognitive ability means, they by no means provide *definitive* evidence for them, with the broader data on PGS painting a complex picture suggestive of extensive and poorly understood transactions between genes and environments, and various forms of “genetic nurture” (on this point the authorship team and Panofsky et al. would likely agree). Gene-by-environment interactions can potentially substantially modify patterns of gene expression in different populations, a phenomenon that our research team has accumulated a progressively greater body of evidence for, especially in very recent years; moreover, there are other pathways that can confound simplistic hereditarian interpretations of mediational models of this kind, for instance, indirect

University, the other[s] fit the amateur designation: Michael Woodley of Menie is listed as an affiliate with the far right Unz Foundation,<sup>24</sup> and Jonatan Pallesen ... list[s] no affiliation” (p. 394).

It should first be noted that Panofsky et al. *at no point* attempt to define or otherwise qualify their use of the term “amateur.” Clarity on what constitutes “amateurism” in science can however be found in a recent study by Mohlhenrich and Krpan (2022), which leaves the reader with a very different impression as to the role played by amateurs in psychology and the behavioral sciences more broadly than the one given by Panofsky et al. These researchers identify four types of scientific amateur characterized (basically) by different combinations of (high vs. low) expertise levels and distance. Amateurs of the *independent scientist* variety are those with high

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genetic effects, where the frequencies of variants present in an individual’s (or a group’s) social milieu will influence patterns of gene expression within that individual (or group of individuals). Put simply, the social conditions needed for the optimal development of a social trait, such as intelligence, or a social outcome, such as educational attainment, may be more complex than once thought, with the traits of individuals in one’s environment playing an important role in the expression of one’s genes (see Domingue et al., 2018, for empirical evidence of this phenomenon). Somewhat relatedly, evidence has been found that genetic variants present in parents (and close relatives), but not in offspring, can have substantial “genetic nurture” effects on educational attainment above and beyond the effects of the offspring’s own genotype (see Kong et al., 2018, for empirical evidence of these effects). The possibility that these processes might be at play was in fact *fully acknowledged* in Dunkel et al. (2019) as follows:

It is important to also stress the potential role played by social epistasis (the moderating effect of a group’s average PGS on the expressivity of an individual’s PGS on a trait of interest, as captured by the correlation between the PGS and that trait) in maintaining traits within a group. Social epistasis effects have been found to influence educational attainment in human populations (Domingue et al., 2018); the patterns and rules governing these genetic interactions might therefore constitute a source of *genetic nurture* and may potentially be an important component of the Jewish cultural inheritance system that could be profitably researched in future work. (p. 372; emphasis added)

<sup>24</sup>Controversies surrounding the lead author’s association with the Unz Foundation, for example, to the effect that this association indicates far-right political commitments on his part, should be addressed. Examination of publicly available documentation shows that the Unz Foundation has given grants to people from across the ideological spectrum, including self-described communist Norman Finkelstein (Grantmakers, 2019). Moreover, the Foundation’s research grants explicitly come with no expectations whatsoever in terms of the viewpoints taken or even the research agenda (the grants are “blue-skies” funding). In recent years, Ron Unz has unfortunately adopted objectionable views on the Holocaust, views that are *most emphatically rejected* by each author on this chapter—and we note that as with Woodley of Menie, another former recipient of Unz Foundation funding, Gregory Cochran, publicly rejects Unz’s views on the Holocaust. It is also clear that Razib Khan, another recipient of Unz Foundation funding, rejects Holocaust denial and antisemitism too. The lead author has been informed that the Unz Foundation is a legally distinct entity from the *Unz Review* website (where Unz and others have posted content related to these problematic matters), and Woodley of Menie was unaware that that site was to host Holocaust denial and related material and was oblivious to Unz’s personal views on this front at the time funding from the foundation was sought (early in 2017). Woodley of Menie no longer receives any funding from, or has any continued affiliation with, the Unz Foundation (the grant cycle expired early in 2020). It must also be noted that, considering the fact that Ron Unz is himself Jewish, revelations about his views on the Holocaust were baffling and highly unexpected to say the least.

levels of expertise (by virtue of, e.g., extensive formal training in science) and low expertise distance (by virtue of doing science in the field for which they are qualified), but who are working outside of the scientific or academic mainstream (by virtue of lacking academic affiliations or compensation for scientific or academic work).

A prominent example of one such amateur was Albert Einstein (1879–1955), who, while being fully qualified as a physicist, was employed as a patent office clerk in 1905, the year in which he published four papers that forever changed the field of physics. Those who have high levels of expertise but high expertise distance (by virtue of contributing to a field that is different from the field in which they have expertise, typically using their expertise in their “home field” to do so) are amateurs of the *outsider* variety. A prominent example of one such amateur is Alfred Wegener (1880–1930), who was trained as a meteorologist, but went on to develop the theory of continental drift, which fundamentally transformed scientific understanding of geological processes. Mohlhenrich and Krpan (2022) note that there are also those amateurs who combine mid-to-low expertise distance and low expertise level, such as *citizen scientists* and *undergraduates*, and what are termed *quantified self* researchers. Mohlhenrich and Krpan (2022) give as an example of a prominent *quantified self* amateur researcher, Sara Riggare, who was trained as an engineer and is also a Parkinson’s patient. For 1 month, she “tracked daily variations of the effects of her Parkinson’s disease medications . . . which ultimately helped her to improve the effectiveness of her treatment” (p. 2).<sup>25</sup> What all of these amateur types have in common is that they can (and do) make significant contributions to science. Moreover, a great deal of significant contributions in several areas of science have been made historically by amateurs of one sort or another. We note that both Einstein and Darwin are classified as having been amateurs at certain times when they made major scientific contributions in Mohlhenrich and Krpan’s (2022) analysis.

What are we to make therefore of Panofsky et al.’s claim in regard to the authorship of Dunkel et al. (2019)? First, they omit the fact that Woodley of Menie’s primary affiliation listed on the paper was with a transdisciplinary research department at a major European university, Vrije Universiteit Brussel (from which he formally resigned in July 2022), and that his Ph.D. work was in molecular-genetic ecology (for an example of this research, see Woodley of Menie et al., 2019). This is relevant as it could be argued that given his application of ecological and genetic knowledge gained in the study of plants and microbes to shed light on matters of human behavioral genetics and evolutionary ecology, he would be an amateur of the outsider variety (Mohlhenrich and Krpan (2022) note that the work of such amateurs “can often result in novel solutions and findings” [p. 2]). However, given the general applicability of various bodies of information in ecological, evolutionary, and

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<sup>25</sup>Such amateurs do not need high levels of domain-specific training or expertise to make valuable contributions to science (although it is hard to see how at least some minimum degree of general competency is not necessary); they simply need to be proficient observers (perhaps especially introspectively) and able to notice novel patterns (e.g., in their own, or others’, behaviors or responses to factors germane to the topic of their investigation).

genetic research (e.g., certain ecological and evolutionary rules generalize across taxa), a case might also be made that he is not operating in an outside area. Moreover, given his (then) affiliation with a center for transdisciplinary studies, this could also be used to argue for professional status in areas of research that involve more than one field. Ultimately, then, Woodley of Menie's then status as an amateur (based on a nuanced understanding of the term) is not even certain given the foregoing. Turning to Jonatan Pallesen, he is a graduate of a Ph.D. program in human genetics from another major European university (Aarhus University) and has participated in a number of other molecular-genetic studies of humans published in very well-regarded scientific journals (e.g., Demontis et al., 2019; Grove et al., 2019; Børglum et al., 2014). In light of his doctoral training in human genetics, and high-credibility publications in the area, Pallesen is at worst an amateur of the "independent scientist" variety—hardly a point against him given that he shares that status with such impressive researchers as Darwin and Einstein.

In using the word "amateur" without qualification, and by juxtaposing the term with "science enthusiast," Panofsky et al. give the impression of recasting "amateurism" (specifically as applied to the behavioral sciences and especially in relation to controversial topics) as disreputable and as an unalloyed negative. At best it wastes the valuable time of "professionals"<sup>26</sup> and at worst furthers the "metapolitical" objectives of ideological malefactors on the right (by, e.g., encouraging politicized discussion of the relevant science outside of the confines of the academy and its sanctioned organs). The distinct impression given by Panofsky et al., whether intentional or not, is that the behavioral sciences are *insufficiently elitist* when it comes to dealing with these "pesky amateurs," with more aggressive gatekeeping (specifically via increased "professional" awareness of the purported "metapolitical activism" latent in the research agenda of these "amateurs") being the optimal solution to the sundry problems posed by the activities of such individuals. Contrast this with Mohlhenrich and Krpan's (2022) nuanced discussion about the need for *more* amateurs of various sorts in the contemporary psychological and behavioral sciences, which they see as having effectively stagnated due to lack of fresh perspectives. Indeed, they are worth quoting at length on this issue:

Contemporary psychological and behavioral science suffers from a *lack of diversity* regarding the key intellectual activities that constitute it, including its theorizing, empirical approaches, and topics studied. We refer to this type of diversity as knowledge diversity. . . . we propose that knowledge diversity could also be attained in the short term . . . by *harnessing contributions from amateurs who can explore diverse aspects of psychology that are neglected in academia*. We identify six such "blind spot" areas within which amateurs could contribute and discuss how this could be practically achieved. We hope that our article will inspire professionals and academic institutions to be more open toward amateur contributions to create a diverse body of knowledge. (p. 1; emphasis added)

<sup>26</sup>Consider the following from Panofsky et al. (2021) in relation to an academic response to Dunkel et al. (2019): "[T]hey have *forced* a response from the experts at the center of this field" (p. 395; emphasis added).

Finally, we cannot help but notice an apparent double standard that seems to pervade the writings of certain egalitarian anti-hereditarians. There seem to be no complaints from them about the fact that the eminent psychometrician—and easily one of the most prominent and widely cited critics of hereditarianism—James Flynn, had *no science degrees at all*, but rather was formally educated in politics and philosophy, making him at best an amateur outsider with respect to psychometrics. Whenever anti-hereditarians wish to use Flynn’s research to mount arguments against hereditarianism about race differences in intelligence (e.g., Nisbett, 2009), their credentialist focus conveniently vanishes. This double standard is bought into even sharper relief when considered in the context of Panofsky et al.’s own *amateur* judgments on the merits of hereditarian research, at least with respect to their perspectives on its *scientific* validity (or lack thereof). *All three* authors of the Panofsky et al. (2021) paper are professional sociologists, as of the time of this writing—they are not geneticists or psychometricians.

### ***Are Sociologists Well-Positioned to Determine the Boundaries of “Acceptable Research” in genetics and psychology?***

As has just been observed, the authors on the Panofsky et al. (2021) piece are sociologists. We do not doubt that there is much value in this field (one of the authors of this chapter has published twice in *The American Sociologist*; see Cofnas et al., 2018a, b). Indeed, the current authors have maintained good relations with colleagues whose training is in the field of sociology, even in cases where such individuals incline toward the left politically. We would strenuously defend the position that sociology has a valuable role in checking the spread of biases in science and in the articulation of frameworks within which the culture and practice of science (in terms of the underlying social processes) can be better understood (for examples of what we consider to be outstanding sociological work of this sort, see Collins, 1974, 2013). We even see a potentially valuable role for work in the same vein as Panofsky et al.’s (2021) in examining political bias in the production of science within differential psychology and related fields.

The current effort, in critiquing Panofsky et al. (2021), is *no less sociological* in nature. Just as they wish to understand the underlying social processes and culture that feed into the production and dissemination of what they deem to be bad and harmful research, we too are seeking to understand the role of these processes in the generation of (what we consider to be tendentious) critiques such as that of Panofsky et al. (2021). That being said, the field of sociology *in aggregate*, and entirely aside from its potential in principle to yield valuable insights into the culture of science, is widely considered by many to be one of the most politically tilted and least rigorous fields in all of academia. As evidence of this, we offer the following:

[B]y far, anthropology and sociology had the highest [Democrat to Republican] ratios . . . there is something especially left-wing about the disciplines of anthropology and sociology. (Klein & Stern, 2005, p. 289)

Work by Yancey . . . and by Inbar and Lammers . . . sheds light on the ideological litmus tests now present in many fields, *but especially in sociology and anthropology*. Yancey, for example, found that applicants for academic positions were at a distinct disadvantage if they were religious or if they belonged to groups identified as “conservative” by other faculty, such as the National Rifle Association. (Wright & Morgan, 2015)

The quality of students going into sociology both at the undergraduate and the graduate level has been getting lower and lower. If we look at Graduate Record Examination (GRE) scores, sociology graduate students now have the lowest mean scores except for social work and criminology. One reason why we don’t have any young Mertons, Parsons, Lazarsfelds, or Goffmans is that most very smart people don’t want to become sociologists. And given the low prestige and serious problems of the discipline, who can blame them? (Cole, 2001, p. 27)

Is it possible that because of the weakness of both our undergraduate and graduate programs and our aversion to evaluation that some (not all) relatively well known sociologists are not of the same intellectual caliber as stars of the past? Again, we come back to the social construction of the discipline. It is possible that some sociologists achieve positions of power and visibility not necessarily because of the brilliance of their minds illustrated in their writing; but because of their *ideological position*, then-pleasant personalities, and networks of self-promoting friends. (Cole, 2001, p. 28; emphasis added)

The most frequent theme to be found in these essays is that sociology has become too ideological. As a result, it has lost credibility among university administrators, politicians, and the general public.<sup>27</sup> *Our work is seen as not being objective; but as a justification of predominantly liberal or left-wing political sympathies.* (Cole, 2001, p. 10; emphasis added)

If sociologists live in terror of substance, our attitude toward theory is downright millennial . . . Nothing can be more damning than to say an otherwise commendable study “lacks theoretical relevance.” But where is this theory that sanctifies our regression equations? Presumably it can be found in theory courses and theory textbooks. But scrutiny of them does not reveal anything like theory in any *rigorous* sense. Instead, we find a goopy mess of (deceptive) intellectual history, a healthy dollop of ideology . . . (Davis, 2001, p. 104)

It is significant that many of the authors of the above quotations are sociologists themselves, who were clearly exhausted by careers spent dealing with problematically ideological colleagues. Our concern here is that Panofsky et al.’s (2021) paper appears to be accompanied by the “healthy dollop of ideology” that has led some sociologists (e.g., Davis, 2001) to attempt to put critical distance between themselves and what they perceive to be the field’s direction of travel over many recent decades.<sup>28</sup> Part of the problem is that, while we maintain that sociological analysis

<sup>27</sup> See also Cofnas et al. (2018a, b).

<sup>28</sup> It does not help that Panofsky et al. (2021) make their lack of familiarity with a key field to which they direct critical attention apparent in both large (as we think we have already demonstrated) and small ways. To give an example of the latter, they claim that *Intelligence* and *Evolutionary*

of scientific cultures can yield valuable insights into the nature of the social processes that undergird these, sometimes even serving as a useful check on excesses, the lack of a unifying and, critically, ideologically neutral reference frame for reining in what could be termed the *sociological imagination* tends to encourage the interpretive shoehorning of analysis of scientific culture into “fashionable” ideological frameworks (e.g., Marxism, feminism, critical theory, etc.).

That these frameworks tend to be ones favoring the use of left-wing egalitarian normative systems in critically evaluating the social processes underlying the production of scientific knowledge is simply a function of consensus among predominantly left-leaning sociologists.<sup>29</sup> This is not to say that rightist frameworks for appraising social processes in science would be any less inclined toward this conflation. As it stands, however, such frameworks are strikingly marginal in mainstream sociology and behavioral science and therefore are less relevant.

If sociology is to add value to our understanding of scientific knowledge production, it would be well served to not attempt to interfere with and compete for a role in the production of that knowledge itself, especially when its practitioners are substantially or primarily motivated by a need for that science to turn out in an ideologically agreeable way. While this may be more straightforward when evaluating the scientific culture around matters with no obvious moralistic or political import (e.g., the detection of gravitational waves in the case of Collins, 2013), when evaluating the more controversial findings of differential psychology and behavior genetics, it seems to be quite challenging. The best that can be hoped for really is to “push back” against sociological efforts such as those of Panofsky et al. (2021) with a critical assessment of their own efforts, on their own terms (this we attempt in the subsequent section).

As was noted earlier, in our opinion, most of the sociological criticism of intelligence research appears to be powerfully motivated by egalitarian biases, occasioned by the visceral discomfort experienced by proponents of capacity egalitarianism at the possible existence of certain forms of human variation (especially those involving human population groups). Hence, there is potential value in reflecting the “hermeneutics of suspicion” back at egalitarian critics of differential psychology. The resultant process, once established, might play out in such a way as to allow for a more robust framework to emerge for evaluating the social processes supporting the creation of these controversial forms of knowledge. It may also benefit the efforts of those aiming to critique those who engage in such knowledge production.

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*Behavioral Sciences* are “mainstream American Psychological Association journals” (Panofsky et al., 2021, p. 394). In fact, of the two, only *Evolutionary Behavioral Sciences* is an APA journal.

<sup>29</sup>Hence, the tendency to uncritically conflate facts and values—this is facilitated by many sociologists’ rigid insistence that “value-neutral” inquiry is impossible; while we would agree that one is always biased and influenced by “values” to some extent, in many directions and for various reasons, we do think that value-neutral inquiry is something to which one can be closer or from which one can be further away. Increasingly, it seems sociologists have no interest in even attempting to extricate themselves from their political and moral commitments, even as they hypocritically condemn such commitments as exerting a distorting influence on the work of those they dislike.

### *Is the “Metapolitical” Activist Thesis Well-Supported?*

We now return to the central thesis advanced by Panofsky et al. As noted previously, they emphasize the purported existence of a sort of alliance among (mostly) amateur “science hobbyists” (collectively “metapolitical” activists), who to varying degrees are united in their quest to shift social discourse in a direction favorable to the goals of “White nationalists” and the far right. In beginning to form an effective antithesis to this, we ask how well their model of the research community they criticize accommodates relevant data. To be highly charitable to Panofsky et al.’s (2021) position, we might consider the findings of Rindermann et al. (2020), who identified a statistically significant positive correlation between the degree to which intelligence researchers associated with the political right and the degree to which they thought genetic variation contributed to racial differences in cognitive ability.

This would appear to support at least the *suspicion* of a rightist bias among those who accept as real or likely real the contribution of genetics to these differences. One interpretation of this is that there is something in the rightist psyche that makes such researchers incline toward the assumption that genetic factors have this role—perhaps ideologically rooted indifference to disadvantages that affect certain groups. Be that as it may, one must not lose sight of the fact that, ultimately, ideological belief of one sort or another is *not* the final arbiter of whether or not, or to what degree, these differences are in fact a function of genetic variation. *This obtains even if ideology conditions the degree to which differences are posited or accepted*, as whether these exist or not is purely a function of objective processes in the world that can be measured with appropriate scientific analysis of sufficiently high-quality data. Therefore, in its most extreme form, Panofsky et al.’s (2021) thesis could be right—there could be powerful rightist social, political, and even scientific currents tactically aligning in an effort to provide material support for “White nationalist” metapolitical objectives with the explicit intention of nullifying egalitarianism as an effective political force.

But even if *all* of that were true, it would have *absolutely no bearing* on whether the differences posited by these alleged “metapolitical” activists actually exist or not. This runs contrary to the distinct impression given by Panofsky et al., who almost entirely pass over the germane science and are even (as we have shown) prepared to effectively dismiss *relevant professionals out of hand* because they have expressed positive opinions about those whom Panofsky et al. spurn as mere political actors. It is hard to avoid the sense that Panofsky et al. think that merely “exposing” the right-wing motives of researchers is (more or less) sufficient to demonstrate that the latter’s findings are incorrect.

Ultimately, we feel that there are relevant *sociological* contradictions to the rightist/racist “metapolitical” activist thesis that cast serious doubt on it while simultaneously opening critical space in which an antithesis can be constructed. Relevant contradictions to this thesis include the following:

1. *Leftist eugenicists and hereditarians*: These cases are relevant insofar as they show that hereditarian, and even eugenicist, views, or openness to such views,

have been maintained by those who clearly have or had no interest in justifying rightist beliefs or causes. A number of pioneering hereditarians from the early decades of the twentieth century were progressives, socialists, and/or anti-fascists, including Karl Pearson (1857–1936; who refused a Knighthood on ideological grounds) and Cyril Burt (1883–1971; who was Knighted for services to wartime education and propaganda) (Brand, 1996). Eugenics as a means of bringing about greater equality and social flourishing was openly embraced by Western academic socialists and communists (Science Service, 1939) and also found favor among leading Communist revolutionaries in Russia (Adams, 1989), including Leon Trotsky (1879–1940; see Trotsky, 1934/1951). More recently, several avowedly leftist professional researchers have weighed in (prominently in some cases) on the hereditarian side of the population differences debate. Notable examples from this group include Earl Hunt (1933–2016), who, while highly critical of certain hereditarian researchers, stated that he believed that purely environmental explanations of human population group differences in intelligence were almost certainly false (Hunt, 2011, p. 434). When one considers the historical background reviewed above, it is hardly surprising that certain active and highly controversial hereditarian researchers, such as Gerhard Meisenberg, are explicitly *not* politically right wing (his politics are center-left), the various efforts to cast them as “far right” notwithstanding (see, e.g., Meisenberg’s interview by Canlorbe, 2019).<sup>30</sup> Finally, it is worth considering the writing of egalitarian moral philosopher Peter Singer (2011). In *Practical Ethics*, he asks the question “what would be the [moral] implication of genetically based differences in IQ between different races?” (p. 27). He notes that “the [moral] implications of this supposition are less drastic than they are often supposed to be, and they give no comfort to racists” (p. 27). It is important to note that Singer does *not* commit himself to the hereditarian position. Despite this, he does not see possible scientific support for this position as being at odds with the egalitarian moral political program and clearly sees some hereditarian research (e.g., that of Arthur Jensen) as worthy of very serious consideration, demonstrating again that one does not need to be inflexibly committed to equality of capacity in order to be a *moral* egalitarian.

2. *Hereditarian and hereditarian-sympathetic minority researchers*: There are a number of individuals working in psychometrics who belong to various racial/ethnic minority (in the Western context) groups, yet acknowledge the scientific merits of research on subpopulation group differences. Such individuals would include Craig L. Frisby, an editor of this text and an African American who has

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<sup>30</sup>The case of Meisenberg is instructive, insofar as it provides an example of the sort of behavior those committed to smearing all hereditarian research as mere “right-wing” activism will stoop to for the sake of manufacturing support for their position. Even when an individual simply *is not* right wing, they are labeled as such—or, as in the case of Meisenberg, it is strongly implied that they are “far right” or similar (see, e.g., Fagone, 2021)—merely because they have hereditarian views. Of course, this kind of question-begging approach to investigating the relationship between hereditarianism and political orientation ensures that *no contradictory evidence will ever be found*.

presented evidence supportive of Spearman's hypothesis (Frisby & Beaujean, 2015). Also part of this group are Nathan Cofnas, Hans Eysenck, Richard Herrnstein, Arthur Jensen, and Michael Levin, all of whom are or were Jewish or are or were of Jewish descent (as it happens, one of the authors of this piece, Matthew Sarraf, is of Middle Eastern/likely Sephardic descent). Further, Aurelio José Figueredo and many of his research-involved students and collaborators associated with the University of Arizona are Hispanic/Latino (another one of the authors of this piece, Mateo Peñaherrera-Aguirre, is Hispanic/Latino and is associated with this lab). Finally, an increasing amount of differential psychology and related research that would be, or is, thought controversial is or recently has been conducted in African and Arab countries, such as that done by the Sudanese psychologist Omar Khaleefa (1962–2012), who worked with Richard Lynn and other hereditarian Western researchers over the years on IQ and its correlates in Middle Eastern and North African countries (see Al-Shahomee et al., 2008; Batterjee et al., 2013; Khaleefa et al., 2009). We cannot help but find it more than a little ironic that quite often, many (sometimes most) of the authors involved in our own, and other colleagues', "controversial" publications are not White, yet much of the writing attempting to associate the field of intelligence research with "White racism" and related phenomena comes from overwhelmingly White authorship teams.

3. *Hereditarians whose work supports (certain) egalitarian claims or left-wing views more broadly*: Some of those who have been identified as "metapolitical" activists by Panofsky et al., or whom they would very probably include in that category, have actively researched and found evidence supportive of certain egalitarian-friendly positions. For example, Heiner Rindermann and James Thompson found evidence of *reduction* of the size of the Black-White difference in cognitive test scores in the USA over time (Rindermann & Thompson, 2013). They attributed this effect in part to positive consequences of reduced discrimination (Rindermann & Thompson, 2013, p. 828). Similar evidence of long-term educational attainment gap closure, this time at level of nations, has been found by the lead author in collaboration with Gerhard Meisenberg (Meisenberg & Woodley, 2013). Rindermann, along with his student David Becker, has further reported evidence of the substantiveness of the Flynn effect, specifically that it appears to be a major driver of economic growth (Rindermann & Becker, 2018). Contrariwise, "hard line" hereditarians have tended to be dismissive of the Flynn effect (consider, e.g., Flynn et al.'s 2014 critique of Jensen and Rushton on this matter). Also relevant are the findings of the current authorship team in relation to the Scarr-Rowe effect. This refers to an effect, often promoted by egalitarian intelligence researchers as a major potential environmental contributing factor to Black-White differences in IQ within the USA (e.g., Scarr-Salapatek, 1971), characterized by adverse gene-by-environment interactions associated with impoverished upbringing suppressing the heritability of IQ; the authorship team has found direct indications of this effect using data on the expressivity of polygenic scores in multiple samples (Woodley of Menie et al., 2018b; for replications of this effect, see Woodley of Menie et al., 2021; Peñaherrera-Aguirre

et al., 2022). Then there are the findings of a recently published meta-analysis from a team involving all three current authors on the topic of the *erasing-race effect* (the tendency for individuals to reduce the salience of race to alliance detection when presented with alternative, more accurate, correlates of coalition membership; Kurzban et al., 2001), where the effect was found to be well-supported across a range of experimental contexts (Woodley of Menie et al., 2020). As a final example (our coverage here is by no means exhaustive), there is the work of philosopher Nathan Cofnas. While being open to hereditarianism (Cofnas, 2020), he has also criticized Kevin MacDonald's highly controversial scholarship on the alleged negative effect of Jewish influence on Western societies (Cofnas, 2018). Cofnas' work on this subject has proven particularly unpopular among genuine White nationalists and supremacists (see Cofnas, 2021, for detailed discussion of this fact).

Panofsky et al. should consider carefully the existence of contradictions such as these and what they mean for the integrity of their thesis. Defensive claims could of course take the form of arguments to the effect that those who have published work consistent with both capacity egalitarian and hereditarian positions are merely engaging in a sort of cover, so as to boost their credibility (e.g., in relation to 3). It might even be argued that minorities (in the Western context) working in hereditarian research are merely dupes actively working against their own interests (as inferred by egalitarians, e.g., in relation to 2). Were such claims to be made, however, they would surely serve to indicate the *degenerating* nature of this sort of "research" program, where empirically unsupported posits are simply added to a theory to protect its core assumptions from opposing evidence (Lakatos, 1970, 1974). Of course, there might be progressive outcomes to addressing these anomalies, which lead to novel and unexpected findings concerning the interplay between rightist ideology and hereditarian thinking, although it is unclear how this would ultimately develop. The "metapolitical activism" thesis could also be revised, perhaps so that it clearly asserts that only *some* hereditarian research on population differences in psychology/behavior amounts to "metapolitical activism," not all of it. Indeed, perhaps Panofsky et al. would argue that they never meant their paper to suggest otherwise, although the truth of such a claim, were it made, would be beyond doubtful since not even the possibility that there could be legitimate hereditarian science on group differences is suggested anywhere in their paper—the overwhelming impression is that such science is merely a sophisticated expression of far-right White racist ideology, hence the potency of the above three points against their thesis. On the face of it, the contradictions discussed above seem to suffice to seriously undermine Panofsky et al.'s central argument as it currently stands.

Even though the rightist "metapolitical" activist hypothesis seems at this point to be poorly evidenced (beyond certain observations, such as the already discussed positive association between rightist ideological self-placement and degree of attribution of genetic causes to human population group differences), Panofsky et al.'s own logic, coupled with the aforementioned contradictions, would nevertheless

seem to suggest the potential existence of its polar opposite, specifically leftist “metapolitical” activism.

## **The Potential (and Actual) Consequences of Egalitarian “Metapolitical” Activism for Research and Society**

We propose that there might be a “metapolitical” alliance between egalitarian scientists working in impact fields, such as sociogenomics, and scholar-activists in sociology. The existence of this makes sense of certain observations. For example, we note that Panofsky et al. (2021) do not necessarily seek to oppose sociogenomics as a whole. As was noted earlier, in claiming that there has been a “rebutt[al]” of Dunkel et al. (2019), they even defer to the opinion of “a group of sociogenomics researchers” (p. 394) on the matter. In so doing, they would appear to acknowledge the legitimacy of sociogenomic science, which surely would entail acceptance of findings regarded as utterly uncontroversial in that field, e.g., that genetic variation plays some non-trivial role in the variation of socially significant traits and outcomes within human populations (one such outcome being educational attainment). This tolerance of, or indifference to, certain sociogenomic findings is suggestive of a recent pragmatic shift in the selection of political targets.

More sophisticated scholar-activists, such as Panofsky et al., might therefore be prepared to concede certain things to scientific researchers in order to better focus political resources on the protection of their core capacity-egalitarian beliefs (e.g., equal genetic potential for intelligence across human population groups). It is worth contrasting this approach with the blanket attacks on “adaptationism” and “genetic determinism” (almost always [dishonestly] employed to discredit evidence of *any* genetic contribution to even inter-individual variation in socially significant traits) favored historically by radical leftist activists. Such individuals aimed for the effective destruction of fields such as sociobiology and behavior genetics in the 1970s and 1980s (Segerstråle, 2000; for more general discussion of criticisms of hereditarian research, including the “genetic determinism” charge, see Sesardic, 2005).

It also seems that sociogenomics researchers, perhaps aware that they are themselves never very far from controversy and “cancellation,” have started to intensify their own political alliance-building efforts. One high-impact example of this can be found in an agenda-setting article promoting the use of genetics in social science research, co-authored by prominent behavior geneticists K. Paige Harden and Philipp D. Koellinger (2020). Here, they dedicate an entire text box to “Genetics and scientific racism” (p. 568). Contained therein are statements such as the following: “[s]cientific racism invokes genetic differences to explain racial disparities in health, wealth, power and life opportunities as inevitable and insurmountable”<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>31</sup>We cannot help but sense that this definition suggests that Harden and Koellinger have failed to understand their own (likely) views on this matter, and, whatever their views, the definition is

(p. 568). Reference is made to Herrnstein and Murray (1994) and Jensen (1969). Indeed, the authors' choice of phrasing is strongly suggestive of a desire to subordinate scientific research to moral and political goals.

It seems to be the case that one would be a scientific racist under this definition if one believed all three of the following claims: (1) "there are genetic contributions to 'racial' or (more weakly/broadly) population differences in health, wealth, and life opportunities"; (2) "because there are such genetic contributions, there are limits on what environmental interventions meant to achieve egalitarian outcomes between 'races' or populations in these respects can accomplish"; and (3) "given (1) and (2), and given that eugenics is morally impermissible and dangerous, we need to live with the reality of such group differences, because we cannot eliminate them."

A sincere question for Harden and Koellinger therefore is: what happens *if* (1) and (2) become as scientifically inescapable as any well-established claim in the life sciences, once sufficient data have been collected and analysis has been carried out? The idea that some portion of racial differences in socially significant traits and life outcomes might be resistant to equalization through environmental measures is not in and of itself a moral matter, but, as has been repeatedly stressed at this point, is *an empirical possibility*. Would recognition of what would be a fact under these *hypothetical* future conditions, along with refusal to allow genetic interventions to alter these differences, make everyone a "scientific racist," or would the definition have to be adjusted in some fashion? And if so, how?

These considerations draw out the fundamental problem with facts-values conflation, as they encourage critiques of research that are ostensibly "scientific" but that are intellectually defective and conducted for reasons that have nothing to do with science as such (Cofnas, 2016). The signature of "metapolitical" activism also seems to be present in statements such as the following—here, the intention appears to be to ensure that when genetically informed research is invoked in a moral-political context, it will only be "legitimate" if it is used in support of egalitarian ideology: "[w]e believe that modern social science genetics can and *should* play a central role in combating this misappropriation by showcasing the myriad ways in which genetic and environmental factors are entangled with each other and interact" (Harden & Koellinger, 2020, p. 567; emphasis added). The ultimate hope here seems to be that eventually no genetically informed research will be conducted or published that fails to favor, or at least not offend, egalitarian sensibilities.

More broadly, our concern is that Panofsky et al.'s right-wing "metapolitical" activist thesis may itself be an instance of its own antithesis, serving to "mark out" those researchers (in particular) who are prepared to present scientific results that do not favor dominant egalitarian sensibilities. To elaborate this further, it could be theorized that the primary "gambit" of leftist "metapolitical" activism in this case

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clearly inadequate. If a bona fide racist eugenicist were convinced that racial groups differed in cognitive ability for genetic reasons, but did not think these differences "inevitable" or "insurmountable," having the thoroughly immoral goal of removing them through coercive eugenic interventions, would Harden and Koellinger not classify such a person as a scientific racist? We are sure that they would, which highlights the problem with their definition.

involves linking serious researchers with “science hobbyists,” ideologues, and amateurs united by sinister “right-wing” goals into a sort of shared construct, the coherence of which seems to us to merely reflect guilt by association and suppression of conflicting evidence. Once established, the “existence” of this construct might be used to indicate to other egalitarians the presence of a potential obstacle to their quest to ideologically “deproblematize” scientific discourse on matters that potentially put certain foundational assumptions of their ideology (e.g., total equality of potential to develop and achieve socially desirable traits and outcomes) in jeopardy.

We are left with the impression therefore that those in a position to determine the qualifying criteria for being a rightist “metapolitical” activist might wish to serve as gatekeepers and enforcers of ideological rectitude within the sciences. It may even be that a major benefit for egalitarians of this sociological process is the creation of a sort of “cottage industry” in scientific public relations that can redound to future employment opportunities and long-term job stability within academia. We are not claiming that this is in fact what Panofsky et al. are attempting with their work—but if they can apply such “hermeneutics of suspicion” to hereditarian research, it would seem “fair game” to take the same stance in assessing their work.

One prediction that stems from the egalitarian “metapolitical” activist hypothesis is the existence of what has been termed the *Gould effect* (after Stephen Jay Gould; 1941–2002<sup>32</sup>). The Gould effect is the chilling effect on research into and even popular writing on certain “lesser taboos” in intelligence research stemming

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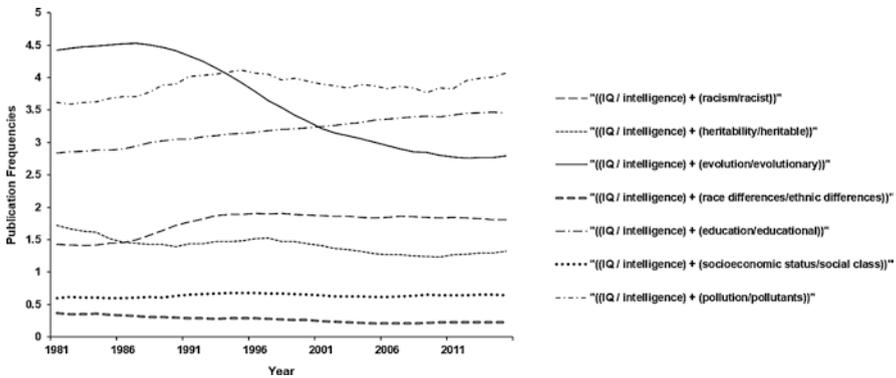
<sup>32</sup>Gould became particularly relevant to intelligence research and behavior genetics after he made various contentious claims in his best-selling book *The Mismeasure of Man* (1981, revised and expanded in 1996). In essence, and among other things, Gould sought to show that various forms of European “supremacy” (see, e.g., p. 144 in Gould, 1996) were behind differential psychology and related research, in some cases suggesting or alleging that, through this research, those ideologies produced various harmful effects. As a first example, he alleged that because of such supremacist ideologies, psychometric testing constituted a major element in the passing of the ethnically restrictive US Immigration Act of 1924, thus indirectly contributing to the tragedy of the Holocaust by inhibiting the immigration of European Jews (see p. 263 of Gould, 1996)—relatedly, he claimed that the Army Beta test (which was developed at the turn of the twentieth century and which Gould treated as a major source of justification for the Immigration Act) was unreliable. Second, he maintained that the nineteenth-century anthropologist Samuel Morton (1799–1851) mismeasured the volumes of skulls sourced from various populations due to racial bias, in such a way as to yield a seeming scientific basis for White supremacy.

With respect to the first example, Snyderman and Herrnstein (1983) offer strong evidence that IQ testing had no significant effect on the Immigration Act of 1924 (also mentioned in Warne et al., 2019); furthermore, Blinkhorn (2019) states that “[t]he Immigration Act of 1924 did not mandate intelligence testing of immigrants” (p. 36; see also Warne, 2020, pp. 98–102). Additionally, Warne et al. (2019) dismantle Gould’s claims about the Army Beta test via both archival and primary research involving a pre-registered contemporary re-administration of this instrument, finding that it “was a well-designed test by the standards of the time, and all evidence indicates that it measured intelligence a century ago and can, to some extent, do so today” (p. 1). With regard to the second example, at least some studies involving the remeasurement of subsets of the Morton collection have provided evidence that Gould was incorrect, one of which (Lewis et al., 2011) found that some of what Gould offered was so egregious that, if anything, it indicated scientific malfeasance on his part. For other critiques of aspects of *Mismeasure*, such as Gould’s apparent failures to accurately describe factor analysis, see Carroll (1995; also relevant is Bouchard, 2014).

from the ideologically motivated *controversialization* of this area of scientific inquiry, especially in relation to claims that this research has racist implications (Woodley of Menie et al., 2018a). Empirical evidence of the potential impact of this process on public discussions of one such “lesser taboo,” specifically heritability in relation to intelligence in general literature, was presented by Woodley of Menie et al. (2018a). The analysis involved simply tracking the utilization frequencies of sentences containing either “racism” or “racist” and “IQ” or “intelligence,” on the one hand, and those containing “heritable” or “heritability” and “IQ” or “intelligence,” on the other, using Google Ngram Viewer. Ngram is a publicly searchable database containing scans of a very large number of English- and foreign-language texts spanning several centuries (Michel et al., 2011). While the analysis was somewhat crude, the results were nevertheless interesting. In the period from 1965 to 1984, there was a positive correlation between discussions of IQ in relation to “racism” and discussions of IQ in relation to “heritability” ( $r = 0.995$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ,  $N = 19$  years); thereafter (in the period from 1984 to 2000), the correlation becomes negative ( $r = -0.601$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ,  $N = 16$  years). The negative trend is suggestive of the Gould effect, as it implies that writers tended to increasingly avoid discussion of IQ and behavior genetics as discussions of IQ in relation to racism escalated. This inflection point coincides with the publication of two extremely influential texts, written by openly Marxist academics with elite university affiliations, which are highly critical of “genetic determinism” and, more broadly, group differences research in differential psychology (the first edition of Gould’s *Mismeasure of Man*, 1981 and Lewontin, Rose, and Kamin’s *Not in Our Genes*, 1984).

Here, we extend the aforementioned analyses to evaluate the textual connection between IQ and its relation to racism and other relevant “lesser taboos.” We extracted data on sentence frequencies from Google Ngram Viewer via the R package *ngramr* (Carmody, 2021). These additional searches took into consideration two types of sentence. The first concerned those in which IQ/intelligence and prospectively genetic-evolutionary constructs such as “evolution/evolutionary” and “race differences/ethnic differences” (in addition to “heritable/heritability”) co-occur. The second concerned the co-occurrence of IQ/intelligence and environmental constructs including “education/educational,” “socioeconomic status/social class,” and “pollution/pollutants.”

In total, the sentences were searched across texts spanning 35 years since the publication of the first edition of Gould’s *Mismeasure of Man* (1981–2015). Figure 25.2 captures the change in publication frequency of these sentences over the past three decades. The analyses revealed large- to very-large-magnitude ( $r \geq 0.50$ ; Rosenthal, 1996) and negative associations between the frequencies of sentences containing IQ in relation to “racism” and IQ in relation to “heritability,” “evolution,” and “race differences,” providing further evidence of the Gould effect. The statistical models also detected consistently very-large-magnitude ( $r \geq 0.70$ ; Rosenthal, 1996) and positive associations between sentences containing IQ in relation to “racism” and IQ in relation to “education,” “socioeconomic status,” and “pollution.” This suggests evidence of a tendency for writers to increasingly discuss the relation of IQ to environmental conditions as publications containing sentences in which IQ



**Fig. 25.2** Utilization frequencies of racism-related, heritability-related, evolution-related, race-differences-related, education-related, socioeconomic-status-related, and pollution-related sentences containing IQ/intelligence, 1981 to 2015

**Table 25.1** Pearson’s correlation coefficients between the publication frequencies of racism-related sentences with IQ and intelligence, with prospectively evolutionary-genetic and environmentally related sentences

Correlations with the Ngram “((IQ/intelligence) + (racism/racist))”		
Ngram	Pearson’s correlation (95% CI)	p-value
“((IQ / intelligence) + (heritability/heritable))”	-0.613 (-0.785, -0.352)	0.00009
“((IQ/intelligence) + (evolution/evolutionary))”	-0.704 (-0.840, -0.485)	<0.00001
“((IQ/intelligence) + (race differences/ethnic differences))”	-0.821 (-0.906, -0.672)	<0.00001
“((IQ/intelligence) + (education/educational))”	0.789 (0.619, 0.888)	<0.00001
“((IQ/intelligence) + (socioeconomic status/social class))”	0.787 (0.616, 0.887)	<0.00001
“((IQ/intelligence) + (pollution/pollutants))”	0.820 (0.670, 0.905)	<0.00001

is mentioned with racism increased over time. This might be because these potentially “non-taboo” topics provide safer and more egalitarian-friendly contexts in which IQ can be discussed, which is also something we might expect from the action of the Gould effect.

The correlations between sentence Ngrams containing both IQ/intelligence and racism/racist and the other terms are presented in Table 25.1.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the largest-magnitude Gould effect was found on the frequencies of sentences examining IQ/intelligence in relation to racial and ethnic differences ( $r = -0.821$ ). It should be stressed that these findings are not sufficient to establish causation, but they are consistent with the hypothesized action of the Gould effect.

Egalitarian “metapolitical” activism has the potential to reduce the opportunity for scientific discovery in impact fields by limiting freedom of research (Lee, 2022). Moreover, especially given the language of “danger” and “safety” in which

egalitarian and anti-racist activism is typically presented, it is our concern also that it has the potential to inflict real harm on both groups and individuals. A major moral hazard is the promotion of a culture that punishes social success, where the role of genetics in predisposing individuals toward this is denied, to be replaced with theories of, e.g., unearned privilege, which might encourage retributive actions on the part of both individual and state actors (see discussion in Pinker, 2002; for further discussion of this specifically in relation to the implications of the hereditarian hypothesis, see Anomaly, 2017).

The fact that when taken to their extremes, certain forms of radical egalitarian melioristic policy (what Steven Pinker (2002) calls “totalitarian social engineering”) have the potential to inflict massive suffering upon a population in the name of “perfecting” humans is sadly just about entirely ignored by egalitarian academic activists. This is despite the fact that such efforts have brought about tens of millions of deaths.<sup>33</sup> Seeking to “root out,” “expose,” and “cleanse” science of one form of (more or less entirely absent from mainstream research) political extremism (e.g., White nationalism), while simultaneously intellectually incubating (no less potentially destructive) extremism on the opposing side,<sup>34</sup> is at best irresponsible. Sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander, and just as Panofsky et al. (2021) express concern over the possibility of harm stemming from the efforts of rightist “metapolitical” activists abusing the findings of, e.g., sociogenomics<sup>35</sup>—which, to be sure, is a serious concern in non-academic contexts—we are alarmed at the potential harm that might (and indeed does) stem from the actions of not just rightist but also leftist political actors. A recent paper by Krispenz and Bertams (2023) is especially illustrative of the risks here. In two pre-registered studies, they investigated the association between left-wing authoritarianism and narcissism. They found that “a strong ideological view, according to which a violent revolution against existing societal structures is legitimate (i.e., anti-hierarchical aggression), was associated with antagonistic narcissism ... and psychopathy ... However, neither dispositional altruism nor social justice commitment was related to left-wing anti-hierarchical aggression.” More concerningly they note that “some leftist political activists do not actually strive for social justice and equality but rather use political activism to

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<sup>33</sup> Courtois et al. (2001) estimate that the death toll due to Communist policies of various kinds was greater than 94 million.

<sup>34</sup> Although right-wing terror has been more deadly than its leftist counterpart (“[f]ar-right terrorism tends to be more lethal than far-left terrorism,” Institute for Economics and Peace, 2020, p. 3) and has become more prevalent in recent years, having overtaken far-left terrorism despite a “surge” in the latter (Institute for Economics and Peace, 2020, p. 64), far-left terrorism has been more common historically in the West (“[h]istorically, the majority of politically-motivated terrorism in the West has been carried out by far-left groups and individuals,” Institute for Economics and Peace, 2020, p. 64). Further, far-left terrorism is currently much more common outside of the West (Institute for Economics and Peace, 2020, p. 64).

<sup>35</sup> See, e.g., the following claim in Panofsky et al. (2021): “Ideas from human biodiversity have served to inform this world view, but in particular it has offered a genetic rationale for White nationalist violence and a specific focus on the preservation of White biodiversity as a goal” (p. 393).

endorse or exercise violence against others to satisfy their own ego-focused needs.” (p. 1, italics added for emphasis; see also Costello et al., 2022).

## Conclusion

The ideal solution to all of this is of course to promote open discourse in which those with opposing views can communicate in the less ideologically charged space of standard empirical science (Cofnas et al., 2018a, b). Given the hold over the social sciences enjoyed by egalitarians currently<sup>36</sup> (Clark & Winegard, 2020; Duarte et al., 2015; Honeycutt & Freberg, 2017; Honeycutt & Jussim, 2020), coupled with striking levels of political polarization among members of the general public (Turchin, 2016; Twenge et al., 2016), such a solution sadly seems unattainable in the foreseeable future.

It has become obvious that political extremism, likely rooted in this growing ideological polarization, is a severe problem in the contemporary world. Owing to the extent to which extremist individuals are divorced from ordinary sensibilities, such persons have a tendency to engage in highly deviant and immoral behavior—most worryingly, violent crime. In some instances, violent extremists might avail themselves of social—and occasionally other kinds of—scientific data to justify their criminal acts. As a result, it has become strongly and increasingly apparent, in a small amount of time, that more must be done to avoid politicized misuse of socially salient research (Carlson et al., 2022). Sadly, we have noticed a tendency for some of our ideas to be misappropriated by highly politically motivated individuals online (for discussion of this, see Woodley of Menie et al., 2022). This has led to unwanted implications being drawn from those same ideas in conversations with colleagues and others. As a result, it has become undeniable that we have failed to make sufficient efforts to clearly disconnect our work from political ideologies. Sometimes in our highlighting of potential social and political *consequences* of certain phenomena that we have studied, we have made political assimilation of our work far too easy, especially by those on the right. In part, this blind spot came about because of our sense of massive left-wing bias in the social sciences (of which there is ample evidence that we discuss elsewhere), rendering any explanations of behavioral and related phenomena not in keeping with egalitarian and environmentalist presuppositions nearly verboten. But we simply cannot continue to treat the existence of this bias as sufficient reason to ignore very real and costly problems associated with the extreme-right end of the political spectrum. We invite others to also consider the risks of playing into political polarization.

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<sup>36</sup>To be sure, it would be no less lamentable if social science were dominated by *right-wing* ideological influence, but it happens that it is the left, not the right, that is overwhelmingly exerting such influence in the modern Western academic world, no doubt because academics so strongly tend to have egalitarian views.

Targeted harassment of researchers working in controversial areas has the potential to (and in actuality does) ruin lives—in some cases, egalitarian extremists have even threatened such researchers and their families with acts of physical violence (e.g., Arthur Jensen, who received both death and bomb threats; Detterman, 2013) (for more on the history of violence directed at “controversial” researchers, especially by student activists, see Scarr, 1987). Rather than flatly deny the existence of this bias (as some academic egalitarians have done), which risks normalizing acts of egalitarian aggression toward “heterodox” researchers, we challenge our critics to think about the potential for misuse of their own work. They should consider both the “micro” level of academia (e.g., their role in promoting a culture of inflexible ideological homogeneity) and the “macro” level of society taken as a whole (e.g., their role in promoting punitive attitudes toward individual success, increasing risk of social engineering policy overreach, enhancing the Gould effect, etc.). We furthermore challenge them to imagine ways in which findings or positions that they take for granted might be wrong, in addition to pursuing corresponding lines of research—which, again, all three authors of the current piece have done.

Perhaps conscious awareness among social scientists of their own *egalitarian* biases, and how they may cloud interpretation of social processes, will help to increase the level of empathy within the academy toward those representing dissenting positions, allowing for their findings to be appraised on their merits rather than on the basis of ideological (in)compatibility. We maintain that sociology has much to offer science and that some of what Panofsky et al. (2021) have done has the potential to advance understanding of social processes related to behavior genetics and differential psychology.<sup>37</sup> However, we are highly skeptical of their view of the alleged rightist “metapolitical” activism phenomenon—indeed, if anything the evidence better supports the idea that leftist “metapolitical” activism is a major problem here.

As we have mentioned already, we have (since 2017) been actively researching topics that many on the hereditarian side of our areas of work have been inclined to completely dismiss. In so doing, we have found surprisingly robust support for some of these “egalitarian-friendly” effects, especially in the last couple of years. Some of our findings (e.g., the existence of robust racial and ethnic discrimination-by-polygenic score gene-by-environment interactions; Peñaherrera-Aguirre et al., 2022) have, as previously noted, brought us to change our views on the cause of human population group differences in intelligence, such that we are uncommitted to any particular full explanation of these differences.<sup>38</sup> This research program has

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<sup>37</sup>Their discussion of how genuine White nationalists and supremacists process the challenges offered by the findings of human genetics to their sense of identity, and the tensions that arise among those who identify with different ancestry groups, is fascinating and is wholly consistent with casual observations of the behavior of these sorts of individuals made by the authorship team.

<sup>38</sup>Hereditarians about human population group differences might reasonably find such a small-magnitude effect as the one reported in Peñaherrera-Aguirre et al. (2022) an unconvincing basis for skepticism about their favored hypothesis. We have ourselves in past work expressed doubt about

therefore been effective in challenging some of our long-standing views. Many possible lines of further research taken up in the spirit of critically reconsidering our established body of findings, hypotheses, and theories are under consideration.

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the likelihood of gene-by-environment interactions substantially altering estimated trait heritabilities (e.g., Sarraf & Woodley of Menie, 2018). We have, however become much more open to this possibility, and by extension become uncertain of the status of the hereditarian hypothesis about human population group differences, due to our own accumulation of evidence that one important gene-by-environment interaction, the Scarr-Rowe effect, is robust to stringent replication attempts (our work on this is discussed earlier in this chapter), and because it has become clearer to us that high-quality efforts to investigate gene-by-environment interactions in humans are currently lacking, making it difficult to firmly take a stand on their overall importance. McGue and Carey (2017) observe that “if for any given phenotype there are hundreds maybe thousands of relevant genetic variants, then there may be a similar large number of individual G × E effects, no one of which has a large effect on phenotype” (p. 43). This suggests the possibility, to which we are open, of gene-by-environment interactions having large effects in *aggregate*—though whether they actually do is, of course, an empirical question that is yet to be answered. We also, as noted in the Introduction, find our discovery of variables that clearly violate the logic of Rushton’s (1999) significant hereditarian argument to be noteworthy and problematic for proponents of hereditarianism.

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# Chapter 26

## Thoughts on the Politics of Intelligence Research



Richard J. Haier

Disagreements about the science of climate change or vaccinations are to be expected, but such disagreements are confounded and distorted by political views when expressed independent of data. More often, the politics are about the right balancing of personal freedom versus social responsibility, economic impacts, and the suspicions of ulterior motives imagined about scientists or particular industries. In these cases, it is high-stakes politics because one outcome irrespective of political views is large-scale death caused by extreme weather events and raging pandemics.

The politics of intelligence research is not deadly, but it is sufficiently negative for many aspiring researchers to avoid the field fearing a career dead-end. This has been true for some time (A.R. Jensen, 1981) and persists to this day. Similarly, researchers in related fields (e.g., learning/memory, education, and aspects of sociology) are inclined to ignore important findings even when relevant to their own work. Because of this reluctance, there is considerable indirect impact on education reform, college admission, income inequality, and other social issues that arise in part from unequal cognitive abilities among individuals. The fact of unequal cognitive abilities is widely observed but often unacknowledged despite the overwhelming evidence of everyday life as well as sophisticated test data (E. Hunt, 2011; Mackintosh, 2011). The situation is made worse when considering the more controversial reports of average differences among groups on tests of mental abilities. But, the causes of inequality of abilities are where the deep divide of politics begins because causes imply solutions in the form of policies.

Much has already been written about political divides – often right vs left or red vs blue or extreme vs centrist or liberal vs conservative or the difference between facts and alternative facts – and there is nothing new to add here. Like faults along tectonic plates, friction at the edges of the divides about issues related to

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intelligence has rumbled for more than a hundred years since Galton proposed that individual differences in mental ability were hereditary (i.e., ran in families), due at least partly in the biological sense as natural selection was understood at the time (Galton, 1869). He coined the term eugenics commonly understood in his era to denote the promotion of social policies designed to increase procreation among the elite and to decrease it among lower classes. More recently, eugenics has come to be synonymous with draconian policies (like forced sterilization) to severely discriminate against or even eliminate “undesirables” as evidenced in the extreme by industrial-scale Nazis murders. Today, the term often is invoked pejoratively to attack the motives of researchers working on the genetics of intelligence, especially in the context of discussions about whether increasing intelligence might be possible by either embryo selection or DNA manipulation.

Following Galton, Spearman proposed a way to assess a general factor of intelligence that was common to the myriad of different mental abilities (Spearman, 1904), and the origin and meaning of this factor are often at the core of political debate in the oversimplistic form of nature versus nurture (Pinker, 2002). This debate is often shorthand for the political/social policy implications of whether intelligence is malleable or not depending on social/cultural influences (Haier, 2017a). From Spearman’s development of the correlation coefficient through most of the twentieth century, intelligence research was focused on assessments of mental abilities using standardized tests of one kind or another. The specialty field of psychometrics arose from sophisticated statistical methods developed specifically for test construction including item selection to avoid bias and measures of reliability and validity (Wijisen & Borsboom, 2021).

Whereas the focus of most intelligence research is on individual differences assessed with psychometric methods, the relatively small number of researchers interested in group differences, in my view, has generated the most controversy both scientific and political. In fact, it could be argued that attention to average group difference studies has hi-jacked many of the most exciting advances from the diversity of individual differences intelligence research including studies of neuroimaging, genetics, cognition, personality, aging, organizational and personnel psychology, and, most recently, neuroscience methods on a molecular level (Genc et al., 2018; Goriounova et al., 2018; Goriounova & Mansvelder, 2019; Haier, 2017a).

At the core, the use of intelligence tests to assign people to categories of more or less smart always was bound to be controversial. There were limited uses of tests in immigration to the United States to exclude some people although widespread misuses were more myth than actual (R. T. Warne, 2020). Controversy also ensued when tests began to be used widely in schools to assign students to more advanced classes (often with better teachers and more resources) and when used for admission to colleges and universities (Sackett et al., 2009; Wai et al., 2019). The seemingly perpetual fundamental controversy is framed as nature vs nurture where assumptions about the Blank Slate have, until recently, predominated thinking about the development of individual differences in intelligence despite a paucity of empirical evidence (Pinker, 2002). Moreover, most researchers understand that genes and environment are intrinsically intertwined and that genes alone are probabilistic

rather than deterministic (Plomin, 2018). Nonetheless, such controversies as these simmered for many decades.

In my view, the watershed when political lines about intelligence research were drawn sharply came in 1969. It arrived in the form of a technical review article, *How Much Can We Boost IQ and Scholastic Achievement?* written by Arthur Jensen, an educational psychologist at the University of California, Berkeley (A. R. Jensen, 1969). At the time, mental tests, including IQ tests, showed average group differences with some minority groups scoring lower than white Americans; the largest difference was for African Americans. Such differences had been observed for decades, and it was not uncommon for racists of all manner to use such data to support their notions of who was superior and who was inferior. Among intelligence researchers, psychologists in general, educators, and many others, there was almost universal agreement that any average group differences were the result of vastly unequal educational opportunities that were driven by poverty in general and racist policies in particular (Zigler & Valentine, 1979). Based on this latter view, the obvious solution to eliminating average group differences was through providing “compensatory” education to poor and minority children (Zigler & Styfco, 2004).

In the 1960s, a few demonstration projects indicated that this approach would be successful, especially with some reports of large increases of IQ scores (Page, 1972). This apparent success reasonably fueled enthusiasm for the nascent national Head Start program. Jensen’s paper systematically reviewed these reports from the demonstration projects (Head Start was too new to review). He concluded that the large increases in IQ scores were artifacts of various problems in research designs and that there was no strong evidence that compensatory education increased IQ at all. This was bad enough given the high hopes for such programs, but he went a fateful step further. Jensen suggested that the apparent immutability of IQ to educational interventions should encourage research on whether genetics played a role in average group differences, as it apparently did for individual differences. And, this suggestion was the match that brought simmering controversies to an incendiary level, where they largely remain to this day (Carl, 2018; Cofnas, 2020).

The political demarcations became apparent immediately. On one side, critics of large federal spending on programs like Head Start seized on the idea that any genetic role for group differences meant no remedial efforts could work because genetics set immutable limits on mental ability. The most extreme version of this view was outright justification of racism in the belief that some groups were genetically inferior. On the other side, a tidal wave of academic and social critics responded to Jensen’s paper with scholarly skepticism of the validity and meaning of IQ test scores and technical critiques of statistical analyses (Bereiter, 1969; J. M. Hunt, 1969; Kagan, 1969). But other critics went further. Before social media was invented in its current forms, Jensen received hate mail and death threats for his inferred racist belief that some groups must be genetically inferior. There were demands for his termination from the university. At least one of his appearances at a professional meeting was the target of a bomb threat. He was physically assaulted at one meeting. Today, we would call this cancelation.

It is worth noting that in the 1969 paper, Jensen proposed a hypothesis that genetics may be one important influence on average group differences. He did not conclude that this was the case. But just asking the question branded him a racist in the eyes of many critics. A journalist once asked him directly if he was a racist. His response, "I've thought about this a lot and I have come to the conclusion that it's irrelevant" (Arden, 2003) (p. 549). I knew Jensen for many years, and I know what he meant by this statement. Simply, he had absolute conviction that empirical data collected in scientific studies could and would test the hypothesis. Replicated facts would emerge independent of any biases he might harbor consciously or unconsciously. Today, we would call this attitude, "trust the science."

The reprehensible label of racist for someone with whom you disagree about empirical data, however, became easy to charge and acceptable as an argument even when asserted by people who never read the source material, including many in the mainstream media who reported incorrect information in a pejorative manner (Snyderman & Rothman, 1988). This too was a watershed of diminished civility in discussions about science that is so recognizable today. It ramped up with publication of another high-profile work about intelligence, *The Bell Curve* (Herrnstein & Murray, 1994). Authors Herrnstein and Murray wrote about the impact of individual differences in intelligence for social issues. One chapter summarized average group differences between African Americans and whites. Here is part of what Herrnstein and Murray actually said in *The Bell Curve* about genetics and group differences in IQ (pages 311–12): "If the reader is now convinced that either the genetic or environmental explanation has won out to the exclusion of the other, we have not done a sufficiently good job of presenting one side or the other. It seems highly likely to us that both genes and environment have something to do with racial differences. What might the mix be? We are resolutely agnostic on that issue; as far as we can determine, the evidence does not yet justify an estimate."

Despite this neutrality on the respective roles of genetics and environment, critics charged Murray (Herrnstein had died just before publication) was a racist who believed blacks were genetically inferior. This label has followed Murray to this day, and *The Bell Curve* is often vilified as a deliberate justification for racism (Haier, 2017b; Redding, 1998). Unfortunately for intelligence researchers, appropriate scientific skepticism of published research has been augmented or replaced in some cases with personal attacks on individuals that often begin with an assumption of racism and generalize to guilt by association for others in the field (Haier, 2020).

There are current examples of social mobs attacking the idea that average group differences might exist. One concerns an invitation-only meeting of intelligence researchers held at University College London that included discussions about group difference research findings among other topics. A student newspaper at the host's institution published a pejorative article about this "eugenics" meeting "dominated by a secretive group of white supremacists with neo-Nazi links" (written by a student who did not attend the meeting; <http://londonstudent.coop/exposed-london-eugenics-conferences-neo-nazi-links/>), and this story was circulated widely in other mainstream press. The host lost his position. An account by some of the conference attendees tells quite a different story than the student paper (Woodley

et al., 2018). Another example came in the form of an academic mob that demanded a young researcher lose his position at Cambridge University for some published research about intelligence (Quillette, 2018). Hundreds of academics ( $n = 586$ ) and students ( $n = 874$ ) from around the world, including Cambridge faculty, signed an Open Letter that questioned whether intelligence research was a valid scientific or academic enterprise, especially with respect to group differences (<https://medium.com/@racescienceopenletter/open-letter-no-to-racist-pseudoscience-at-cambridge-472e1a7c6dca>). They asserted that intelligence research was fundamentally an inherently racist pseudo-science and noted as evidence of malintent that the young researcher had attended the London Conference referenced above.

The young researcher asked me to respond to four questions posed by the Cambridge committee that reviewed the mob demands that he be fired. Apparently, my defense had no impact since the young man was terminated (Quillette, 2019). Here are the four questions and my responses (written in September 2019):

(a) *Whether intelligence is a valid scientific construct*

Decades of empirical research done worldwide, analyzed with sophisticated statistical methods and published in respected, peer-reviewed scientific journals, leave no reasonable doubt that intelligence and its assessment are scientific constructs. I refer you to summaries of the weight of evidence on this issue in two textbooks, *Human Intelligence* (E. Hunt, 2011) and *IQ and Human Intelligence* (Mackintosh, 2011). My own more recent text, *The Neuroscience of Intelligence* (Haier, 2017a), also summarizes this evidence. All three books likewise address your other three issues listed below. Note that I am currently revising and updating the Hunt textbook for Cambridge University Press.

(b) *Whether there is evidence that individual differences in intelligence are explained by genetics*

Based on overwhelming empirical data, there is no longer any reasonable doubt that genetics has a major influence on differences in intelligence among individuals. The most recent published findings from multinational studies of large DNA databases, like the UK Biobank, support earlier conclusions from large-scale twin and adoption studies. One of the world experts in this aspect of intelligence research is Professor Ian Deary OBE, FBA, FRSE, University of Edinburgh. Notably, the role of genetics in intelligence was acknowledged in a 2017 editorial in *Nature*, a preeminent scientific journal (Editorial, 2017); [copy] attached).

(c) *Whether there are group differences in intelligence*

Based on psychometric tests that estimate general intelligence, average scores differ among many groups. This has been shown in a large number of studies that control for extraneous variables like social economic status (see reviews in the Hunt and Mackintosh textbooks). Some of these differences may impact well-documented educational achievement differences. The origin of average intelligence test score group differences is a controversial subject, but an important area for researchers and others seeking to address social inequities.

- (d) *Whether it is possible that that group differences in intelligence are partly explained by genetics*

This is an incendiary issue beyond the controversial nature of issue (c). The so-called default hypothesis is that whatever factors influence individual differences in intelligence will be the same factors that influence group differences. Although genetic influences on individual differences are well established (although these influences are complex and not well understood in detail), most behavioral geneticists doubt that current genetic methods can be applied to group differences for technical reasons. Some researchers are exploring new methods to assess this question, but the question is unsettled. It should be noted that most researchers understand that genes are best thought about as probabilistic rather than deterministic. We know that some genetic influences can be modified by diet and lifestyle changes (e.g., risk for heart disease or high blood pressure). For this reason, it is important to research this issue if technically possible, but always be aware of how such data can be misused for malevolent purposes.

Overall, there are many unknowns surrounding these scientific issues that can only be addressed by additional research. Respectful public discussions about research on these issues are appropriate and welcome. Vague assertions by uninformed people that intelligence research and IQ testing are meaningless or inherently racist, in my experience, typically are based on ideologies and opinions rather than the extensive existing data to the contrary. Science is all about competing ideas and how interpretations of empirical data support them or not. In my opinion, your research is well within this tradition.

I am familiar with similar charges of racism as the current editor-in-chief of *Intelligence*, a peer-reviewed scientific journal that publishes a diverse range of empirical research. Over the years, a small number of papers reported group differences that some readers felt supported racist ideas. The fact that some authors took unpopular positions in public prompted some critics to extend their indignation (outrage) to *Intelligence* for publishing their work, and a few deemed *Intelligence* to be a racist publication. This unfair and untrue accusation was addressed editorially as a position that was anti-academic freedom and anti-freedom of inquiry (Haier, 2020). The entire editorial is appended to this chapter.

Some critics go even further and assert that group difference research is based on pseudo-science and eugenics to promote a racist agenda. Psychometrics is hardly pseudo-science, and the definition of race is open to discussion based on empirical studies (Murray, 2020). Extremists of all kinds often hold beliefs apparently impervious to empirical facts. Cherry-picking a few studies and misinterpreting them hardly is evidence that the entire field or individual researchers are motivated to support vile nonsense.

There is a widespread and entrenched notion that intelligence research has been debunked in its entirety since it relies almost exclusively on tests alleged to have no validity. Nothing is further from the truth as most recently detailed in a comprehensive book, *In the Know: 35 Myths About Intelligence* (R. T. Warne, 2020). Whenever such definitive criticism is asserted, it is also useful to keep in mind a list of 13

fallacies enumerated by Gottfredson (Gottfredson, 2009) and summarized by Haier and Colom, *The Science of Human Intelligence* (Haier & Colom, 2023):

1. *Yardstick mirrors construct.* This fallacy involves portraying the superficial appearance of a test as if these visible features mimic the essence of the phenomenon it measures. This is obviously absurd. A thermometer's appearance does not provide any clue about the nature of heat. Everybody understands the second fact, but some people reject, with vehemence, the fact that exactly the same applies to the tests designed for measuring the construct of intelligence.
2. *Intelligence is a marble collection.* This fallacy argues that general intelligence (g) is just an aggregation of separate specific abilities, not a singular phenomenon in itself. Like marbles in a bag, intelligence is thought to be an aggregate of many separate abilities psychometricians choose to add. This mistake is because IQ scores typically are calculated by computing a person's score based on the various subtests included in a standardized battery. This fallacy takes for granted that the way scores are computed mirrors how general intelligence is constituted. However, intelligence is not the sum of several independent skills, but its common core.
3. *Non-fixedness proves malleability.* People grow and learn. There is no doubt about that, although some people learn more stuff and faster than others. Developmental change within individuals, however, tells a different story to the fact that IQ level is hard to change. IQ scores compare individuals within the same reference group, and the ordering of individuals across the life span is quite stable, especially after the childhood period.
4. *Improvability proves equalizability.* This fallacy states that because social interventions can raise mean cognitive levels, individual differences in cognitive ability can be eradicated. However, mean levels and variability point to independent facts.
5. *Gene-environment interaction nullifies heritability.* Genes and environment can work together to produce phenotypes (True). Therefore, it is argued calling to this fallacy, we cannot separate the contribution of either one to individual differences in intelligence (False): "this is analogous to saying that it would be impossible to estimate whether differences in quality of Tango performances among Chinese couples is owing more to skill variation among the male partners than to skill variation among the female partners (genetic versus non-genetic variation) or to what extent differences among couples in their quality of performance depend on the chemistry between two partners (gene-environment interaction)." It is crucial to understand that the typical course of human development and variations in development tell different stories.
6. *Genetic similarity of 99.9% among humans negates differences.* Humans have 99% + of their genes in common based on DNA comparisons. Therefore, that remaining <1% must be trivial. However, differences in three million base pairs (contained in the <1% figure) are hardly trivial, as demonstrated by scientists working in large-scale research projects such as ENIGMA or the 1000 Genomes Project.

7. *Contending definitions of intelligence negate evidence.* Because there are disparate definitions of intelligence held by experts in the field, no one really knows what (if anything) IQ tests really measure. However, using this argument, one can say the same of gravity or health. Furthermore, as Gottfredson noted, “competing verbal definitions do not negate either the existence of a suspected phenomenon or the possibility of measuring it.”
8. *Phenotype (the physical manifestation of traits) equals genotype (the genetic basis for traits).* It is argued that differences among humans, including their intelligence, are innate, genetically determined. This fallacy portrays phenotypic differences in intelligence as if they were exclusively genotypic, which is false by any means. IQ standardized tests measure phenotypes, and only genetically informative designs can help to separate the contribution of genetic and non-genetic factors to the measured differences.
9. *Biological equals genetic.* This fallacy assumes that a biological difference (in, say, cortical thickness or brain nerve conduction velocity) must be genetically caused exclusively. However, this is openly false. Genes contribute to our biology, but variables such as nutrition and disease can also make substantial contributions to individual differences in variables like those measured in the brain.
10. *Environmental equals non-genetic.* The fallacy is based on the presumption that environmental influences on development are unaffected by individuals’ genes. However, although environments are physically external to individuals, they are not independent of genes: as Gottfredson noted, “individuals select, create and reshape their personal environments according to their interests and abilities (...) differences in personal circumstances are somewhat genetically shaped.”
11. *The imperfect measurement pretext.* This fallacy claims that IQ tests must perfectly measure intelligence and/or make predictions perfectly before they can be used or trusted. However, according to Gottfredson, “testing is hardly the only useful source of information about students and employees, but few are as reliable, construct valid, and predictive in education and employment settings as IQ tests.”
12. *The dangerous thought trigger.* Socially acceptable ideas (whatever this means in different cultural settings) are the default belief or should be given less scrutiny: as noted by Gottfredson, “the implicit premise seems to be that unsettling truths do no good and comforting lies no harm.”
13. *Happy thoughts leniency.* Gottfredson writes: “mere theoretical possibility elevates the scientific credibility of a politically popular idea above that of an empirically plausible but unpopular conclusion.” There are false assumptions that are almost never questioned: genetic, but not environmental, influences limit human freedom and equality. However, historical record shows how environmental engineering can easily eliminate freedom in the blink of an eye. Janet R. Richards offered a perfect example: “there is no reason at all to think, in general, that differences between people that result from differences of environment are easier to change than differences resulting from genes ... Nobody can unbake a baked potato” (Richards, 2000) (p. 121).

As underscored by Gottfredson, “the 13 fallacies seem to hold special power in the public media, academic journals, college textbooks, and the professions ... fallacies are tricks of illogic to protect the false from refutation ... sophistry is best dealt with by recognizing it for what it is: arguments whose power to persuade resides in their logical flaws” (p.58). It should be noted that Gottfredson herself was targeted (unsuccessfully) for dismissal from her university.

Supporting Gottfredson’s concern, there is evidence that undergraduate psychology textbooks are rife with these fallacies (R. Warne et al., 2018). Moreover, only relatively recently have the most influential scientific journals like *Science* and *Nature* published papers about intelligence in greater numbers, especially with respect to neuroimaging and genetics, and *Nature* even suggested more attention should be paid to intelligence research (Editorial, 2017). The late Constance Holden, an esteemed science writer, lobbied for this view after witnessing first-hand the bias against publishing intelligence research (personal communication). She is honored with an annual lecture in her name for scientific journalism about intelligence by the International Society for Intelligence Research.

In addition to the political controversies about the data on average group differences, there is a related area almost as controversial. Decades of replicated data show that school performance (i.e., academic achievement) is influenced more by the student’s mental abilities than by teacher or school variables. In fact, teacher and school variables combined account for less than 10% of the variance in student achievement, whereas mental test scores account for about 50% (Coleman, 1966; Detterman, 2016). It may be the case that these data are the underlying reason that education reform discussions almost never include the topic of intelligence. Also, the successful push to minimize or eliminate standardized tests like the SAT virtually ignores their value (Wai et al., 2019). In my view, part of the push against standardized tests is based on average group score differences that have persisted for decades; getting rid of the tests eliminates the basis of this gap although the school achievement gap persists. Assuming the two are unrelated may delay effective school reforms.

In my view, the story of political bias in intelligence research is less about the motivations of researchers and more about public debate of their findings and about what research or educational reforms get funded. The bias is decidedly against intelligence research funding, publication, and even researchers themselves for working in this field. The story is far from over. Fortunately, many young researchers have recognized the importance of understanding intelligence and individual differences, especially using neuroscience tools to explicate the neural and molecular underpinnings that may be subject to enhancement (Haier, 2017a) and the elimination or minimization of average group differences and limits imposed by lower intelligence for individuals. Ironically, the future is bright for such research discoveries given progress in neuroscience methods despite political headwinds.

Future possibilities, however, do not obviate present pitfalls. For example, should discussions about intelligence findings be part of ethnic studies programs? Course material recently was adopted for a California high school program after years of controversial development. A *Los Angeles Times* editorial noted, “Racial and ethnic

issues are bound to ignite passionate disagreement, which is fine. In fact, that's one of the most important reasons why students should be taught this subject in the first place" (Editorial, 2021). Nonetheless, it is impossible to imagine intelligence research becoming part of a high school curriculum since most universities do not offer upper-division courses focused on intelligence.

The politics surrounding intelligence research may turn more positive with new scientific advances that offer some alleviation of persistent social problems; see section 6.6 (Haier, 2017a). This cannot happen without respectful discussion of what the data show and what they do not show. Constructive skepticism is required for science to advance; attacking motivations of researchers is not. As we continue to make progress understanding what intelligence is and how it develops, perhaps the most constructive political question for developing social policies and goals will become, do we incorporate any of the science or not?

## **Appendix Editorial (Haier, 2020)**

### ***Academic Freedom and Social Responsibility: Finding a Balance***

Controversies abound in all areas of science research as a natural outcome of the scientific method. Skepticism is integral. Although there are some legendary feuds among a few scientists within a discipline, most controversies are collegial and confined to interpretations of data. Personal attacks are rare, and few researchers outside a scientific discipline feel compelled to weigh in on a controversy on which they have little expertise. If they do, it typically is with at least a modicum of trepidation. Public discussion of scientific controversies is another matter, especially on social media.

Controversies abound for many aspects of human intelligence research. Most are collegial among experts in the field and even from related fields. Intelligence research, however, has a history of intense criticism from non-experts who assert with a certainty not typically found in any branch of science that research on intelligence is bogus and even racist. Many reasons for these views have been asserted over decades, but, in our view, most stem from a desire to disavow the intensely uncomfortable, if not incendiary, data from studies reporting average group differences on mental ability test scores.

The renowned experimental psychologist and editor of *Psychological Science*, William Estes, framed the problem this way: "To allow research on intelligence to advance and to generate its long-term contributions to the public good, the use of tests in research must be unhindered. In return for freedom to conduct the research, however, scientists need to shoulder a heavy responsibility, not only for protecting the rights of the individuals tested, as is now routine in research though not yet routine in applications, but for developing an ethical code regarding the publication of

research findings that bear on group differences in intelligence and other psychological characteristics – findings that often prove inflammatory when accounts spread outside scientific circles. **Somehow** [emphasis added] a balance must be found between the need for free exchange of research results among scientists concerned with intelligence and the need to be sure that no segment of our society has reason to feel threatened by the research or its publication” (Estes, 1992). Nearly three decades later, we are still searching for workable solutions to the challenge of “Somehow a balance must be found.”

Since its inception in 1977 as a scientific journal, *Intelligence* has provided researchers an opportunity to publish peer-reviewed empirical studies investigating different topics, theories, methods, and hypotheses. *Intelligence* began at a time when other journals were reluctant to review any papers on intelligence. This likely was due in large part to the vicious controversy surrounding Jensen’s 1969 paper on compensatory education as it related to boosting IQ and his hypothesis about a possible genetic component to average group differences (A. R. Jensen, 1969). The reluctance continues to this day for some journals, and even at universities and colleges, tenured academic faculty are reluctant or not permitted to teach courses on intelligence. A welcomed positive change was an editorial in *Nature* that acknowledged the importance of intelligence research and teaching about it, especially in the context of progress in genetic research with respect to individual (not group) differences (Editorial, 2017).

Over the years, *Intelligence* has been criticized for publishing papers that report controversial findings about average group differences (defined by race or nationality) by a few authors thought to be sympathetic to racist ideas. Such papers, it is argued, give aid, comfort, and justification to extremist groups defined by vitriolic hatred of minorities. Some of these authors were on the editorial board, and this has caused some critics to paint *Intelligence* as a racist journal or at least one that is sympathetic to racism. These are stinging accusations about *Intelligence* that go beyond the general problem of racism in science (Editorial, 2020). We take them seriously, not because they are true, but because they speak directly to Estes’s challenge to “somehow” find a balance between valid social sensitivities and the free exchange of research findings that may offend those sensitivities. Not everyone may agree with how that balance has always been achieved at *Intelligence*, but assuming malintent or racist sympathies is not justified on the basis of publishing empirical studies that test controversial hypotheses based on peer review made without knowledge of the authors’ identities.

Empirical data about average group differences are not inherently racist, but they are used and misrepresented by racists. To date, *Intelligence* has published more than 1650 empirical research papers that span the full range of intelligence topics. Combined, they have over 45,000 citations excluding self-citations (as per Web of Science Core Collection, 7/15/20). For perspective, the number of controversial group difference papers is quite small, and citations to them often are from papers that report contrary data and alternative interpretations. This is exactly the way science is supposed to work. Some of the strongest critics of some group difference findings are members of our editorial board.

We endorse and stand for academic freedom. This is our core policy for *Intelligence*, and it mirrors principles articulated by two reports from the University of Chicago ([https://provost.uchicago.edu/sites/default/files/documents/reports/KalvenRprt\\_0.pdf](https://provost.uchicago.edu/sites/default/files/documents/reports/KalvenRprt_0.pdf) and <https://provost.uchicago.edu/sites/default/files/documents/reports/FOECommitteeReport.pdf>). We do not hide behind the principle of academic freedom to alleviate our responsibility with respect to those who feel this research is unnecessarily provocative or detrimental. We use it as the shield it was intended to be to protect the ability of researchers to have their empirical work entered into the scientific marketplace for skeptical scrutiny, after the journal review process. If the review process is flawed, we have a range of options to correct it. We believe that no one study is definitive, especially for understanding anything as complex as intelligence, and that it takes many studies over time to sort out inconsistent and contrary results to establish a compelling weight of evidence for any research question. This is especially true for questions about intelligence and group differences like those enumerated by the American Psychological Association (Neisser et al., 1996), most of which remain unanswered. For these reasons, we maintain no blacklist of authors or topics within the journal's stated scope of intelligence research. We depend on the editors to manage good faith peer review from domain experts to determine what is published (usually after revisions) and what is rejected, with all final decisions made by the editor-in-chief. All papers are considered for peer review although the editor routinely rejects papers without review if the research subject is deemed inappropriate for this journal (e.g., submissions on artificial intelligence algorithms or on emotional intelligence without any connection to cognitive intelligence) or has obvious design or analysis deficits (e.g., samples too small or arcane for robust results or generalization, inappropriate or deficient statistical analysis, lack of unique findings). We do not prejudice or reject papers because their findings may be controversial or upsetting outside the context of scientific exchange as long as they are not purposely offensive. We have published critical reviews of research topics and commentaries about broader issues. We will continue to do so along with studies that fail to replicate previous findings we or others have published.

We condemn and stand against racism and any misguided or malignant use of the research we publish. We firmly believe that sunlight, not censorship, is the best disinfectant for malevolent interpretations of research data that are cherry-picked to support a political ideology. Not publishing on a particular topic only gives validity to conspiratorial explanations of "what they don't want us to know." Hate groups should not have a de facto veto on what research is published nor should fair criticism be exaggerated to justify banning topics or authors from publication. We also stand against protestors from political extremes who threaten researchers or shut down speakers with intimidation or violent tactics. We deplore personal attacks and arguments based on guilt by association and their use to incite outrage mobs on social media.

The intelligence field is growing and the total number of submissions is now about 250 yearly. In the last 5 years, the acceptance rate averaged about 25%. The field is evolving from a focus on psychometric methods to a melding of

psychometrics with neuroimaging, genetics, and other neuroscience methods. There is also growing interest in applied aspects of intelligence research in educational contexts, in the workplace, for lifelong learning, and in clinical settings. Our newest additions to the editorial board reflect this evolution and the diversity of the field. When relevant, we and our reviewers are not shy about requiring authors to remove unwarranted speculation or discussion about possible political implications of findings or over-generalizations.

*Intelligence* will continue its focus on the nature of mental abilities, how they develop, and why they matter. We are not naïve or indifferent about our social responsibilities. We expect some findings will be controversial with the potential for being politicized or used by extremists. Our responsibility is to publish the best-quality studies we can to elucidate human intelligence research. In our view, publishing empirical data, along with clear explanations of what the data mean and what they do not mean, is the only basis for reasoned discussions about what intelligence is and why it is important. Our editors, authors, board members, reviewers, readers, and critics also have a social responsibility for explaining and discussing intelligence research findings with clarity, appropriate skepticism, and professionalism without injecting personal opinions, political bias, or rancor.

Estes's "somehow a balance must be found" challenge is a work in progress for this journal and for the field. We are committed to bend the arc of our scientific and social responsibilities to the benefit of scientific inquiry and its impact on societal progress.

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# Chapter 27

## The Advantages of Having a Minority Viewpoint in Politicized Psychology: A Case Study of Intelligence Research



Heiner Rindermann

Research on the construct of intelligence is one of the most productive and important areas of scholarly inquiry in modern psychology. Its relevance for understanding behavior, thinking, and life outcomes cannot be overestimated. Different paradigms within cognitive competence research include psychometric IQ and Piagetian cognitive development, student assessment and (cognitive) human capital studies, research on high ability, cognitive anthropology, and epistemic philosophy. Intelligence research not only has scientific relevance, but it also has practical relevance for predicting success in school, jobs, and life and for increasing the fit between peoples' characteristics and environmental demands (Frisby, 2013; Hunt, 2011; Lynn & Vanhanen, 2012; Mackintosh, 2011; Schmidt, 2009; Sternberg, 2018).

Intelligence research is perceived by many observers as being controversial (e.g., descriptions by Carl & Woodley of Menie, 2019; Nyborg, 2003b). Intelligence research is often viewed as something that has to be handled with care, not so much due to scientific reasons, but mostly due to fear and anxiety over the perceived disquieting consequences of this research for society. Of course, scientifically important topics within the humanities and social sciences cannot be politically irrelevant (sexuality or education being parallel examples). Intelligence has an impact on individuals' and groups' success, it identifies individuals in need of special education, and it partially explains wealth differences between the poor and the rich,

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(e.g., Gottfredson, 1997; Jones, 2016).<sup>1</sup> Insofar as wealth, race (whether defined in terms of biogeographic ancestry or cultural ethnicity; Rindermann, 2022), or countries are politically important, intelligence also becomes important.

However, the subject is also highly politicized, particularly when these topics are viewed from a left-liberal-progressive perspective. Intelligence research is perceived not only as dangerous to society but also as a threat to the worldview or ideology of the “intelligentsia” (Sowell, 2009). “Politicized” means that research questions, research methods, results, and researchers are framed in a political context in such a way that frequently usurps the intended scientific content.<sup>2</sup> Research topics differ considerably in the possibility that they can be politicized. The continuum of neutral to more politically controversial research subfields within intelligence research is described next.

## Intelligence Research and Its Reception: Ordinary and Extraordinary Research

It is helpful to distinguish between the more neutral and “ordinary” versus the more controversial and “extraordinary” intelligence research. Responses to these two areas of research are very different. *Ordinary research* encompasses the investigation of “dry,” “particularized,” and “technical” research questions. Examples of neutral intelligence research topics are:

- Tests’ psychometric factor structure and measurement invariance (e.g., Süß et al., 2002)
- The nature of mental speed and working memory (e.g., Grudnik & Kranzler, 2001)
- The nature of cognitive development as viewed from a Piagetian perspective (e.g., Piaget, 2001/1947)
- The nature and manifestation of literacy skills (e.g., PISA/Programme for International Student Assessment studies)
- Thinking and knowledge and their mutual relationship (e.g., Cattell, 1987/1971)
- The nature of deliberate practice, expertise, and mindsets (e.g., Ericsson et al., 1993)
- Neuroimaging and localization of cognitive processes (e.g., Haier, 2017)

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<sup>1</sup>“Having an impact” does not mean that variable A explains theoretically and statistically all development and variance in variable B, but rather that variable A theoretically supported explains, possibly among other variables, an important, nontrivial amount of variance in variable B.

<sup>2</sup>Roger Kimball (1998/1990, p. 19) dubbed it the “Sovietization of intellectual life, where the value or truth of a work is determined not by its intrinsic qualities but by the degree to which it supports a given political line.” Examples might include the “scientific” biographies of Ward Churchill, Paul de Man, or Cornel West.

- The nature of the FLynn effect (secular rise in measured intelligence and student achievement; e.g., Flynn, 2012)<sup>3</sup>

All of these can be characterized as politically neutral research questions. However, being “ordinary” or “neutral” is not confined to topics that are highly mathematical (measurement invariance), abstract, or lacking in “disquieting” social relevance (e.g., deliberate practice; Ericsson et al., 1993). For instance, the FLynn effect has huge social implications (e.g., societies become richer and more democratic due to higher intelligence; e.g., Rindermann & Becker, 2018). Nevertheless, in general, it is a positive phenomenon (“it’s getting better all the time”) – thus avoiding some controversialization. And of course, previously seen neutral topics can be made politically “hot” – as when “literacy” is seen as an explanation for wealth differences between politically relevant groups (e.g., between north and south Italy; Lynn, 2010).

In contrast to neutral research, *extraordinary research* describes studies that are generally considered to involve “hot,” “broad,” “societal,” and “contested” research questions.<sup>4</sup> Examples include:

- Group differences (e.g., race, sex, class, nationality, and cultural ethnicity) in intelligence (e.g., Lynn & Vanhanen, 2012)
- Genetic causes of intelligence (including heritability; e.g., Bouchard, 2009)
- Causes of group differences in intelligence and knowledge (e.g., Jensen, 1969)
- Evolutionary theories (e.g., *r/K* selection theory or the cold winters theory; e.g., Rushton, 1997/1995)
- Effects of intelligence for individuals and society, for instance, in jobs, income, crime, and marriage (e.g., Herrnstein & Murray, 1994)
- Dysgenics and eugenics (e.g., Lynn, 2011)

All these research questions carry with them important implications for society, especially for groups that are perceived as oppressed. For example, political controversies often accompany discussions surrounding research showing racial, ethnic, or gender differences in IQ (Frisby, 2013; Gottfredson, 1994; Jensen, 1969; Levels et al., 2008; Lynn, 2017; Nyborg, 2003a; Rindermann & Thompson, 2016; Rushton, 1997). The intensity of the controversy increases when genetic explanations are offered to account for such differences.

More generally, the intelligence paradigm as a *within-person explanatory approach* (regardless of the causes of intelligence) is seen as being in contradiction to a *societal approach*. The societal approach holds that the fate of individuals and societies is exclusively a product of external environmental conditions (e.g., Marks,

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<sup>3</sup>“FLynn” is a combination of James Flynn and Richard Lynn, the two (re-)discoverers of the rise in measured intelligence in the twentieth century.

<sup>4</sup>“Extraordinary” research in this context is not being used as synonym for research of exceptional quality.

2014; Pinker, 2002). In the most extreme political variant of this thinking, it is assumed that this environment was created by the powerful in order to disadvantage others. Various controversies occurred in the last decades involving these research questions (e.g., Snyderman & Rothman, 1988).

## Controversies in Intelligence Research

Defoe says, that there were a hundred thousand stout country-fellows in his time ready to fight to the death against popery, without knowing whether popery was a man or a horse. (William Hazlitt, about 1698)<sup>5</sup>

The first national-scale firestorm in intelligence research was the public's reaction to *Arthur Jensen's Harvard Educational Review* article entitled "How much can we boost IQ and scholastic achievement?," published in 1969 (Jensen, 1969). The article suggested – contrary to the prevailing opinion of the time which supported environmentalist explanations for group differences – that the intelligence gap between Americans of European and African descent (whites and blacks) might be to some extent caused by genetic factors and that common environmental explanations for explaining this gap are not as strong as commonly believed. Therefore, the gap cannot be (easily) closed by environmental improvement. There was a public outcry including death threats from (leftist) activist groups against Arthur Jensen who worked at the University of California at Berkley (Sesardic, 2005). Police and bodyguards became necessary to protect him (Nyborg, 2003b), and his name became associated with "academic racism" ("Jensenism").

A similar outcry was caused by *The Bell Curve* (Herrnstein & Murray, 1994). Unfortunately, this was based on a misunderstanding, because the book hasn't endorsed any statement on the causes of black-white intelligence differences. The book was considered "controversial" because it linked racial group differences in intelligence with socially important outcomes (i.e., educational and economic attainment; social problems such as delinquency, welfare, and out-of-wedlock births).

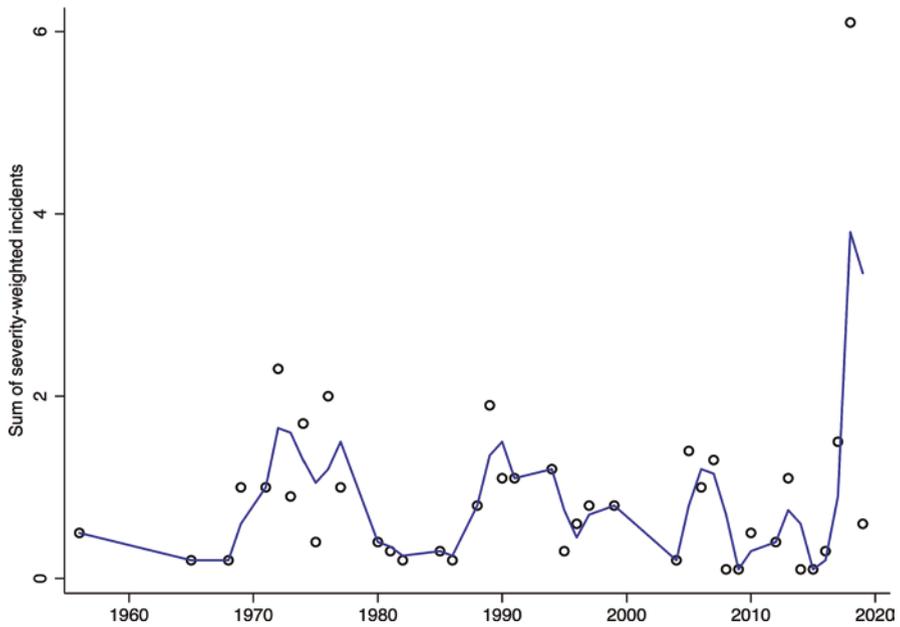
Another prominent and controversial figure in intelligence research was *John Philippe Rushton* (1997/1995), who adapted in the 1990s the *r/K*-evolutionary theory to account for differences between human races. Originally, *r/K*-theory described a quantity vs. a quality tradeoff among offspring as a means of explaining differences in survivorship between species; however, Rushton used it to explain differences between human evolutionary groups in a wide variety of biological and social indicators. There were protests, and the then Ontario Premier publicly demanded Rushton be dismissed from his academic position (Duffy, 2005). Rushton consequently received a release from teaching.

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<sup>5</sup>For example, [www.brainyquote.com/quotes/william\\_hazlitt\\_400365](http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/william_hazlitt_400365)

Carl and Woodley of Menie (2019) quantified the history of these (and other) controversies (see Fig. 27.1). They counted incidents (e.g., “protests against *The Bell Curve*”) in addition to rating their severity (e.g., “publicly denounced” or “major sanctions” – which includes “cancellation of teaching, dismissal, revocation of titles”). The four “peaks” corresponding to four major “eras” of controversies are described in Table 27.1.

Rather astonishingly, it was never explicitly and conclusively substantiated in these controversies why assuming a genetic difference in intelligence between evolutionarily originated human groups should be “racist,” as even the ascription “racist” was not clarified. For example, much less controversial is the observation that there are innate differences between men and women influencing their performance in certain sports or that there exists genetic difference in skin color between East Asians and Africans. Moreover, the fact that something is genetically influenced does not mean that it cannot also be changed by the environment or by one’s own actions. Body weight, for example, is influenced by genes, but people can lead productive lives if they exercise and eat right. The claim that racial differences can be genetic does not change the fact that there is a full range of IQ in all groups.



**Fig. 27.1** Historical development of controversies in intelligence research (the “Nessie curve” from Carl and Woodley of Menie, 2019, their Fig. 3, p. 4)

**Table 27.1** Major conflicts in intelligence research

When	Era	Scientists at the center of the controversy	Subject
1970s	Jensen era	Arthur Jensen, William Shockley, Hans Eysenck	Causes of underlying racial differences in average IQ; role of genetics in individual and group differences
Late 1980s–1990s	Rushton era	J. Philippe Rushton, Linda Gottfredson, Michael Levin; Charles Murray, Richard Herrnstein	Evolutionary origins of race differences in IQ; societal implications of race and ethnic differences in IQ; sources of funding for IQ research
2000s	Watson era	James Watson, Frank Ellis, Larry Summers	Black IQ and genetic causes; sex differences in high-end math and science
2017–2018	LCI era	London Conference on Intelligence (themes, organizers, and attendees)	Eugenics, dysgenics, “secret” conference, decolonization, Lynn, racism, cancel culture

Notes: Information derived from Carl and Woodley of Menie (2019), subject added by Heiner Rindermann

## Effects of Political Controversialization

Beyond a doubt, intelligence research is frequently controversialized. The politicization and controversialization of thinking, attitudes, behavior, and institutions entail several consequences that are typically negative in their effects for epistemic endeavors. However, we predict that in some instances the politicization and controversialization of intelligence research might also have had positive effects.

### *Psychological Effects of Controversialization*

If a subject is made controversial – *nothing is controversial by itself, but is labeled as controversial by certain groups* – people feel uneasy when it is brought into public discussions other than to be explicitly rejected. To deal with it in any non-negative way, i.e., not via disagreement or condemnation, is psychologically unpleasant. If the subject is mentioned, people feel stressed, they get nervous, some smile shamefacedly or look downward, and others even try to leave the situation. Those who speak about it may get muddled and become anxious and confused. Nevertheless, some may enjoy the associated psychological arousal and social excitement. Others, as either proponents or opponents, might even become heroic and bellicose. Personality attributes such as sensation seeking play a role, as do basic attitudes toward thinking and political or ethical norms.

These factors make it difficult to find a rational approach to dealing with a controversial subject. Some may be attracted by such an epistemic challenge, as it is more inspiring to successfully climb the Half Dome than to promenade in the Catskills. For smart people or for scientists in otherwise rather boring fields, it could be stimulating to work in fields that generate such excitement.

### ***Effects of Controversialization: Reduced Scientific Reception But an Increased Negative Political Media Reception***

Results of controversialized research are less frequently adopted in other research fields. For instance, the OECD PISA student achievement studies never adopt intelligence research at the individual or international level.<sup>6</sup> Likewise, the IEA TIMSS and PIRLS student achievement studies have never picked up intelligence research.<sup>7</sup> Even establishing contact with intelligence researchers is avoided. In the past, when this author emailed Ina Mullis, the head of the IEA TIMSS and PIRLS studies, a response was never received. Similarly, economic research studies only rarely adopt the results of intelligence research. For example, Lynn and Vanhanen's works have only once been cited in Eric Hanushek's many publications (Hanushek & Woessmann, 2011), and never have they cited this author's work (e.g., on educational policies, Rindermann & Ceci, 2009).<sup>8</sup>

A typical response (designed to avoid controversy) is to substitute terms for "intelligence" with analogous ones, such as "skills," "literacy," and "human capital." A good example is Lim's et al.'s (2018) study *Measuring human capital: A systematic analysis of 195 countries and territories, 1990–2016*. They collected "learning estimates," which consisted of student achievement test results from PISA, PIRLS, and TIMSS. Specifically, they incorporated "representative studies measuring intelligence quotient (IQ) in school-aged children that largely included the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children, the Raven's Standard Progressive Matrices, and the Peabody Picture Vocabulary test" (Lim et al., 2018, p. 1220). This is essentially the same as what Richard Lynn (published since 2002) or this author (published since 2006) have been doing across many decades (openly using the word "intelligence"). Nevertheless, Lim's work includes no citations from either sources and remarkably nothing at all from the trailblazer Richard Lynn. Conventionally, such behavior might be described as idea plagiarism or at least as scholarly misconduct.

### ***Negative Effects on Science (Critical View)***

Several authors have assumed that controversialization has a mostly negative effect on science (when science is understood as an epistemic endeavor of trying to find new truth and to describe given truth). According to Nathan Cofnas (2016), a

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<sup>6</sup>The only known exception about which I am aware is a German PISA survey also applying the German version of the CogAT (Cognitive Abilities Test; KFT, Kognitiver Fähigkeitstest). However, the results were not published, at least not in the usual way.

<sup>7</sup>OECD, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development; PISA, Programme for International Student Assessment; TIMSS, Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study; PIRLS, Progress in International Reading Literacy Study

<sup>8</sup>Exception: The two economists Garrett Jones (e.g., 2016) and Niklas Potrafke (e.g., 2019) have adopted the results of intelligence research.

political-moral influence on research creates bias, especially in the case of group differences research. He wrote: “Theories related to group differences in intelligence are often rejected a priori on explicitly moral grounds” (p. 477). Political-moral thinking replaces faithfulness to the principles of empirical proof in determining the validity of theories and is implicitly considered to be equivalent to empirical evidence. Ideas seen as immoral are rejected a priori. Due to political-moral pressures arising from inside science (both within scientists’ thinking and within science as a social and institutional field and its dominant normative orientations), in addition to pressures from outside of science (e.g., foundations, politics, government, media), research tends to gradually avoid self-correcting and, thus, is systematically distorted.

Similarly, Noah Carl (2018, 2019) reasoned: to stifle debates may do harm to science and society. John Stuart Mill (2015/1859) and James Flynn (2018) argued that decreased liberty in thinking produces errant thinking. “Holding our morals hostage to the facts” (Carl, 2018, p. 401) leads to incorrect models of reality. Additionally, there is frequently a normative-descriptive fallacy in thinking – which often takes the form of answering empirical questions with moral statements or using normative statements to derive descriptive ones or inferring normative statements from descriptive ones.

Furthermore, there is a related political-epistemic fallacy in thinking. This fallacy involves answering epistemic questions (to find true statements) with political statements (normative, attitudinal, volitional statements). For instance, many think (or at least suggest) that to label somebody as “racist” implies that his or her statements are epistemically wrong, which is incorrect. A person, to whom negative attributes are ascribed can state true facts, such as saying on Sunday “Today is a weekend day.” And, of course, when “bad” people say true statements, these statements do not become wrong. Just because a terrible person believes that  $2 + 2 = 4$  does not mean that this mathematical equation is inherently “wrong.” Of course, these arguments are all so basic that they should be obvious to everyone.

Finally, Linda Gottfredson (2005) stressed that suppressing intelligence research may practically hurt those persons that such research intends to help. For instance, not using the results of intelligence research can lead to catastrophic consequences:

- Health prescriptions that are too cognitively complex can lead to those with lower IQs suffering due to lack of comprehension (Gottfredson, 2005).
- Among the Washington police, where intelligence tests were banned in selection of personnel, firearms accidents soared, and fewer murderers were convicted (Schmidt, 2009).
- Higher death rates among soldiers (“McNamara’s folly: The use of low-IQ troops in the Vietnam war”; Gregory, 2015).

The literature is full of drastic examples of the negative consequences of failing to consider the impacts of employing lower thresholds for intelligence. For example, low-ability soldiers accidentally killed their comrades at a higher rate and were more frequently killed in operations by enemies (Gregory, 2015).

### ***Positive Effects on Science (Favorable View)***

However, there can also be positive effects of political controversialization as described by Neven Sesardic (2005). Defaming theories may make theories epistemically stronger:

A nasty campaign against H could have the unintended effect of strengthening H epistemically. (p. 205)

If I am right, the pressure of political correctness would thus tend to result, ironically, in politically incorrect theories becoming better developed, more carefully articulated, and more successful in coping with objections. (p. 206)

Due to political controversialization, higher standards would necessarily be applied, leading to better research (Sesardic, 1992, 2005). We will now expand and exemplify his thesis including a discussion of personality effects. This chapter will also attempt to find empirical support for personality effects using statistics and case studies.

### **Theses**

It is assumed that the *aforementioned pressures*:

1. Will lead to stronger theories.<sup>9</sup>
2. They will lead to a strengthening of the research field on the side of exceptional, minoritarian, heterodox research.
3. They will engender positive selection and development effects regarding the intellectual interests and abilities of researchers in the extraordinary research fields with a minority viewpoint.
4. They will make such research attractive to researchers in rather “ordinary” research fields.
5. They will lead to personality selection and modification effects, e.g., more ego strength, more originality, mild or more extreme forms of bizarreness including eccentricity, behavioral originality, field independence up to mild Asperger syndrome, sensation seeking, and unconventionality.
6. They will lead to more cooperativeness, solidarity, candor, and benevolence among researchers in the field.

Reasons:

1. Due to pressures from hostile audiences, unpopular and/or controversial theories have to become scientifically stronger to survive intense criticism. Similar to evolution, increased hardship is a major selection pressure acting on ideas. Within the scientific realm, this means that due to increased pressures, both

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<sup>9</sup>For example, Erich Fromm (1969/1941, p. 316): “We find then that for everybody who is powerless, justice and truth are the most important weapons in the fight for his freedom and growth.”

theoretical (i.e., better explanations of phenomena, identification of greater interconnectedness among theories, etc.) and empirical improvements (more surveys and larger samples, better statistics, etc.) can be expected to occur rapidly.

2. This is not only true for single theories but for the entire research field (e.g., for the quality of the publication process or the review of submitted manuscripts). The consequences of these pressures include more extensive attention to and stronger emphasis on the rigor of epistemological and methodological issues.<sup>10</sup> In the context of a hostile social and political environment, the scientific perspective is enhanced as the only remaining strategy.
3. Social pressures lead not only to stronger theories and a stronger research field but also to intellectually stronger researchers. Smarter researchers better withstand social challenges by transforming such challenges into intellectual ones. This pressure leads to self-training in scientific skills as an unintended consequence. The precondition is that such persons have the option to develop such abilities.
4. As intelligence research attracts a lot of (public) interest, it is interesting for researchers in fields that are usually perceived as being boring, e.g., statisticians or chemists. Due to the controversial status of the field (especially true for group differences research), conventional researchers are disincentivized from studying it; however, the field itself is more open to scientists coming from outside the field of intelligence.
5. Pressures may, via selection and modification, influence personality. That is, only psychologically stronger persons can withstand the social pressures, and the demanding experience itself may have some training effects. Beyond that, a controversial field may be attractive to people who score higher in sensation and attention seeking and lower in rule orientation and conventionality. Dealing with controversial subjects attracts social attention. Persons differ in their preferences for or in their avoidance of arousal. The accompanying social exclusion processes may further originality and bizarreness. Bizarreness is sometimes also seen as an indicator of an outstanding scientist (e.g., Jerry Lewis in the 1963 movie “The Nutty Professor”). Field-independent persons (up to mild Asperger’s) may more easily develop “outside-the-box” ideas and be able to better withstand possible pushback. Selection and modification effects are difficult to distinguish.
6. Finally, the exclusion processes bind together contrarians within a group and increase cooperativeness, solidarity, candor, and benevolence (e.g., helpfulness). Persons bringing along such attributes are better equipped to enter a controversial field and remain in it. Groups consisting of such persons are better prepared to survive intellectually.

As always, these assumptions deal with averages. There will still be individual differences and outliers. These assumptions apply only to controversial areas of intelligence research and to persons with heterodox viewpoints.

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<sup>10</sup>Additionally, the construct of intelligence itself – especially in the Piagetian approach – has a theoretical affinity for thinking and epistemological questions.

## Observations and Statistical Data

First, we start for comparison with a description of three experiences within the majority field of intelligence research and related social sciences (e.g., mainstream, well accepted, noncontroversial, orthodox research). Then attention is turned to systematically comparing (ordinary and extraordinary) intelligence research with psychology and social sciences via the use of statistical data. Finally, we present biographical descriptions of intelligence researchers who conduct investigations in more extraordinary and controversial subject areas within the field of intelligence research.

### *Having Power Encourages Less Urgency for Quality*

As the aforementioned pressures do not affect the majority (mainstream research), there is less urgency for quality. Due to weaker selection plus reduced pressures to improve noncontroversial research, the quality of such research can be weaker and still be successful. Those in power can rest and can avoid learning from others. “Power in this narrow sense is the priority of output over intake, the ability to talk instead of listen. In a sense, it is the ability to afford not to learn” (Deutsch, 1966, p. 111).

### **Response to Lawrence Summers in *Science***

In 2005, Lawrence Summers (former chief economist at the World Bank, then Harvard president, and past director of the White House National Economic Council) publicly discussed possible causes for the lower representation of women in science and engineering. After weighing the evidence, he concluded that the lower high-end cognitive ability level of women – in addition to discrimination and socialization – might be relevant (“different availability of aptitude at the high end”; Summers, 2005).<sup>11</sup> As a “scientific answer,” the *Science* journal (Muller et al., 2005) published a letter signed by 73 academics protesting against Summers’ statements (e.g., p. 1043: “expectations heavily influence performance, particularly on tests”); however, no scientist from the field of sex and gender differences in cognitive ability participated:

Although the list of seventy-three signers of the letter included prominent academic scientists and science administrators, it did not include any of the major figures who do research on individual differences in cognition. (Hunt, 2011, pp. 399)

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<sup>11</sup> Description follows my text in Rindermann (2018).

Earl Hunt, an expert in intelligence research, noted that the letter published by *Science* contained demonstrably false statements (e.g., claiming that cognitive ability test results cannot predict success in science careers or stating that if somebody says factor A contributes to outcome 1, this includes saying there are no further factors). *Science* accepted the letter, but did not publish any scientific studies regarding this subject. Additionally, *Science* has never published any paper on international intelligence differences and their impacts on society. Submissions dealing with these issues are desk-rejected. However, the politically correct letter against Summers was published.<sup>12</sup> Scientific quality is at least partly replaced by ideology or by “false consciousness.”

### Robert Sternberg Case

Robert Sternberg (born 1949) is one of the most productive and cited researchers in psychology. His Google-Harzing *h*-index is around  $h = 190$ , and his Scopus  $h = 81$  (December 2019). These are the highest values I have seen (see also his book chapter “Twelve hundred publications later” Sternberg, 2012). In his numerous edited books, many of which were released by prestigious publishers, he collected (and supported) the works of many researchers. He was president of APA (American Psychological Association) and was also a professor at the Ivy League university Yale, at Tufts, and now at Cornell (also in the Ivy League). He was dean and provost at Oklahoma State University and was the president of the University of Wyoming. He is or was a “member of the editorial boards of numerous journals” (Wikipedia, 04.01.20). He has more than ten honorary doctorates from universities on different continents and one honorary professorship at the University of Heidelberg. He has received about \$20 million in grants (according to Wikipedia). He has received several prestigious awards, including the Grawemeyer Award “recognizing outstanding ideas in psychology” in 2018. There is no person who is more successful and more positively accepted in intelligence research, specifically, and in psychology, generally.

Sternberg does not belong to the “extraordinary” and controversial field of intelligence research, as he is an opponent of this research (e.g., Hunt & Sternberg, 2006; Sternberg, 2005, 2013). However, he is also not in the “ordinary” dry technical wing of the field. I would say (with maybe some subjective assessment) that his research is a kind of zeitgeist science-style writing, a politically correct view on intelligence but not science in the traditional way of empirical-statistical research. For instance, he opposes the construct of general intelligence and suggests alternative intelligence concepts (e.g., practical intelligence, successful intelligence). He opposes the use of intelligence tests in selection for university entrance or jobs and suggests alternative selection concepts (e.g., an ethics-based

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<sup>12</sup>All my papers submitted to *Science* since 2006 were desk rejected and never were any of my questions on the reasons of rejection answered. Apparently in the world’s leading journal *Science*, research is no longer perceived as an argumentative process leading to truth.

admission process; Wikipedia). This is all very well, but there is no (or nearly no) data-based research backing up these beliefs. His research is more of a critical outlook on the field of intelligence research from the left. It lacks empirical foundation and frequently any empirical evidence. It represents a kind of virtue signaling allowing him to “sail with the wind,” generating ideas that will be readily adopted by both media and (more intellectually inclined) members of the public.<sup>13</sup> Probably the best summary of this approach is given by Linda Gottfredson (2003b, p. 415, Abstract):

Sternberg disputes not a single point in my critique of his work on practical intelligence. Instead, he discusses his broader theory of successful intelligence and answers self-posed objections from unspecified critics. His discussion exhibits the same problematic mode of argument and use of evidence that my critique had documented: it repeats the unsubstantiated claims that critics question as if merely repeating them somehow rebutted the critics; it ridicules rather than answers critics while claiming to do the reverse.

In 2013, Sternberg wrote a highly critical comment in *Perspectives on Psychological Science* about a longer article by Earl Hunt (2012) in the same journal. Earl Hunt, as a senior scholar, was invited to write his article as a tribute to his lifetime achievement, having received the APS James McKeen Cattell Award. Some of Sternberg’s (2013) quotes commenting on Hunt, followed by the replies of Coyle et al. (2013), are:

Some of the countries today that are congratulated by Hunt as high in IQ are repressive dictatorships (disguised as self-labeled ‘democracies’). (Sternberg, 2013, p. 188)

Reply: Hunt never “congratulated” countries with populations having relatively high IQs. This disparages Hunt’s motives. Another quote:

The narrow intelligence of which Hunt is so proud has provided us with the means to obliterate our own species, hardly a compliment to the wisdom of the species and perhaps not to its intelligence either. (p. 188)

Reply: Hunt never said he is “proud” of narrow intelligence. Again, this disparages Hunt’s motives. Another quote:

Hunt admires the Spaniards, who conquered the Incas and Aztecs with their superior ‘cognitive artifacts’. (p. 188)

Reply: Hunt never said he “admires” any people or culture who conquered other people, another disparaging remark.

It is quite “normal” in intelligence research that proponents of the “extraordinary” wing are attacked in disparaging and unethical ways. What is exceptional in this case is that Earl Hunt was a member of the “ordinary,” rather left-wing faction of intelligence research and that the critic and Hunt were friends who formerly collaborated on a critique of a paper from the “extraordinary” controversial wing of the field (Hunt & Sternberg, 2006, against Templer & Arikawa, 2006).

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<sup>13</sup>There is no place, and it is not the topic of this chapter to engage in a thorough analysis of Sternberg’s work. For a first look on one part, see Gottfredson (2003a, b).

In 2018, Sternberg had to resign his position as editor of *Perspectives on Psychological Science*. He was accused of misusing his position as editor (Crandall, 2018), for publishing his own papers as commentaries (“Am I famous yet?” Sternberg, 2016), for high self-citation rates (about 65% of all his references were categorized as self-references), and for a lack of diversity among paper authors (Crandall, 2018). He also was accused of plagiarism in other papers (Brown, 2018). Why is this relevant to our discussion comparing the extraordinary vs. conventional intelligence researchers? When conventional research sails with the zeitgeist and political correctness, then there are lower selection pressures for epistemic quality which inevitably results in lower scientific quality. Moreover, proponents of the zeitgeist may perceive that their situation is so strong and safe that they believe they can transgress written and unwritten rules. By comparison, Arthur Jensen or Phil Rushton could never have gotten away with such behavior.

### ***Journal of Intelligence Review Process***

Another example deals with the quality of the review process at the *Journal of Intelligence*. This author and a colleague submitted a manuscript in 2019 on an “ordinary,” “dry,” and politically neutral subject comparing the results and cognitive processes measured by psychometric IQ and Piagetian cognitive development research entitled “Piagetian tasks and psychometric intelligence: Different or similar constructs?” (Rindermann & Ackermann, 2021). We used three samples from kindergarten to primary school age, including mental speed; presented explanatory and hierarchical confirmatory factor analyses and a path analysis, along with many scatter plots; and showed correlations with parental education indicators. The main message of the study was that psychometric IQ and Piagetian cognitive development are theoretically and empirically similar constructs. There was nothing sensational about these findings.

After submission, we revised the paper in response to scholarly reviews, as required by standard academic procedures. We then received the following email:

In your previous Submission I asked you to consider that ‘The journal will not publish articles that may lead to or enhance political controversies and the editors will judge whether that is the case’ (<https://www.mdpi.com/journal/jintelligence/about>). Thus, please consider that I will not further consider articles with references to Mankind Quarterly. Please resubmit a version without such references.

The *Mankind Quarterly* paper was one by Oesterdiekhoff (2009) on “Trials against animals.” This paper is certainly one of the most informative ones on the structure-genetic sociology of how people in the past (specifically in the Middle Ages) thought in a preformal way. The paper did not address any controversial content (of course, a new “ism” could be invented, e.g., “Middle Ageism”). However, the editor applied political criteria in the selection of publications that we refer to in our literature review. She forced us to delete a reference, which we had to do in order for the manuscript to be considered for publication in the *Journal of Intelligence*. The use of political criteria and the strong-arming of authors regarding referred literature are violations of scientific standards.

### A Short Side Trip on the *Mankind Quarterly*

Papers published in *Mankind Quarterly* were determined by the editors of the *Journal of Intelligence* to be non-citable for purely political reasons. According to Wikipedia (January 7, 2021) and based on critical authors, the journal *Mankind Quarterly* is a “cornerstone of the scientific racism establishment,” a “white supremacist journal,” an “infamous racist journal,” and “scientific racism’s keepers of the flame.” Let’s have a look at the authors of the last issue (January 2021) of the *Mankind Quarterly*, 2020, 61(2). There are 12 articles and 2 book reviews. Of the 12 articles, 6 were written by sub-Saharan African researchers (50%, e.g., from the Research Council of Zimbabwe, Harare, Zimbabwe); another one was written by Arab researchers on the disappearance, and probable homicide, of a sub-Saharan African-Arabian intelligence researcher from Sudan, who contributed in his life about 9 articles to *Mankind Quarterly*. One article was contributed by a Romanian scientist, and four were contributed by scientists from Denmark, Belgium, Russia, Britain, and the USA. The book reviews come from a person who seems to be working in Japan. When the ethnic backgrounds of the 18 article authors are considered, 11 had a sub-Saharan African background (61%).

We examined the last two issues of the *Journal of Intelligence* (Volume 8, Issue 4, Volume 9, Issue 1, 2021; checked January 7, 2021). Of the 11 articles (involving 30 authors), none were authored by sub-Saharan African researchers (0%), and also none were authored by researchers from Arabian countries (0%). If we look at the APA flagship journal and its (as of this writing) most recent issue (*Psychological Bulletin*, Volume 146, Issue 12), there are also zero contributions from sub-Saharan African researchers, the same for the APS flagship journal *Psychological Science* (Volume 31, Issue 12). It should also be noted that no journal other than the *Mankind Quarterly* mentioned the disappearance of Omar (Al-) Khaleefa, an intelligence researcher from Khartoum.<sup>14</sup>

Of course, in former issues of these other three journals, there may have been studies published by African and Arabic researchers, but the *Mankind Quarterly*’s impressive degree of inclusiveness of African researchers would be difficult to beat. The allegations of racism against *Mankind Quarterly* set up a peculiar situation in which it is apparently “bad” when “whites” publish there, but not when “blacks” and other people of “diverse” backgrounds choose to do so. This has the paradoxical consequence that researchers with sub-Saharan African, Arabian, and other non-European backgrounds publish there relatively frequently. Apparently, allegations of racism (“racist white”) can make a journal more ethnically diverse!

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<sup>14</sup>“In memoriam: Omar Haroon Al-Khaleefa and the origin of educational psychology in Sudan” (Bakhiet & Bakhit, 2020). Omar Al-Khaleefa left his house on the afternoon of 14 September 2012 to walk for exercise, a regular hobby of his, and was never seen again.

## ***Having No Power Sharpens Minority-View Research and Thinking***

Having no power makes the minority sharp-witted. Seven lines of evidence support this thesis. First, there is *no replication crisis* in intelligence research (in general); according to a tweet from Steven Pinker (2015):

Irony: Replicability crisis in psych DOESN'T apply to IQ: huge n's, replicable results. But people hate the message.

Second, there is a *higher than average statistical power* associated with the tests in intelligence research.<sup>15</sup> Statistical power is the sensitivity of a test to detect an effect. The average statistical power in intelligence research is 52.7% (Nuijten et al., 2019, p. 3, 2020, Appendix, p. 7). It is much higher compared to neuroscience (21%; Button et al., 2013, p. 369) and compared to economics (18%; Ioannidis et al., 2017, p. F236) (overview: Kirkegaard, 2019). Within intelligence research, the most controversial subject, group differences research, shows the highest power of 61.9%, the highest of any field in social science (Anonymous, 2019; Kirkegaard, 2019, p. 4; Nuijten et al., 2019, p. 19).

Third, intelligence research is associated with *larger sample sizes and resultantly greater stability of results*: while the median sample size of studies in psychology is about 40 to 120 observations, the median sample size in (controversialized) national IQ data is  $k = 353$  (Kirkegaard, 2019, p. 4). The relative stability of the national IQ estimates across decades of data compilation is  $r = .84$  (based on Kirkegaard, 2019, p. 3 f.).

Fourth is the issue of *fraud*. There are two allegations of fraud within intelligence research, one against heritability research, which is seen as “non-PC,” and one against “cognitive change” research, which is seen as “pro-PC”:

(A) *The Cyril Burt affair*. Burt was accused of having fabricated high heritability estimates by having invented nonexistent twin pairs and research assistants (e.g., Hearnshaw, 1979). However, it was not possible to prove the claims of fraud. Even if the allegations were correct, the results themselves (high IQ heritability) were later successfully replicated by independent research (e.g., Bouchard, 2009; Plomin, 2018). Admittedly, Joynson (1989) conceded sloppiness in the work of Burt, an 80-year-old scientist. Additionally, Joynson saw more serious scientific problems in the work of the critiques than in Burt's own work:

Hearnshaw's [1979] prime evidence for Burt's guilt in this final accusation was a newspaper article which he had not bothered to check. It was not merely second-hand evidence of an obviously unreliable kind. It was third-hand evidence, and he could not even remember

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<sup>15</sup> Statistical power of a test is the probability that a test detects a true effect, e.g., a mean difference or a correlation. In technical terms: it is the probability that the test rejects the null hypothesis when the alternative hypothesis is true.

where it came from. Yet he had quoted it as if he had seen it himself. If Burt had done this, instead of Hearnshaw, what would the critics have made of it? (Joynton, 1989, p. 210f.)

- (B) *Milwaukee Project*. This research group was accused of having fabricated large positive early childcare effects on IQ (e.g., Reynolds & Fletcher-Janzen, 2002, pp. 635–636; Sommer & Sommer, 1983). Three project researchers were convicted for abuse of funding. It is not clear whether the research was even conducted at all. Despite these problems, other early intervention studies (e.g., Abecedarian and Perry Preschool Program) have shown at least short-term boosts in intelligence for low-IQ children who received early childcare interventions (Barnett, 1995; Ramey et al., 2012).

There are three further additional examples of politically correct, left-progressive, well-received, and prominently published fraud:<sup>16</sup> Ruggiero (Ruggiero & Marx, 1999), Stapel and Lindenberg (2011), and LaCour and Green (2014) published studies concerning discrimination, and the last two were published in *Science*. In all these studies, some data were fabricated. Karen Ruggiero came from Harvard. Princeton University, a member of the prestigious Ivy League, had even offered one of these authors a professorship (Oh, 2015). At universities and in society more broadly, well-received PC studies in social psychology seem to be especially vulnerable to fraud.<sup>17</sup> There is also evidence of more widespread misconduct in certain research areas unrelated to intelligence research in psychology (“discrimination”).<sup>18</sup>

The fifth line of (quantitative) evidence concerns *scientific productivity and reception*. According to Rindermann et al. (2020; see Table 27.2), intelligence

<sup>16</sup>An overview gives the “List of scientific misconduct incidents” ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_scientific\\_misconduct\\_incidents](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_scientific_misconduct_incidents)).

<sup>17</sup>See also the intentional hoax studies published in journals in the social sciences and humanities by Sokal (2008) and Lindsay et al. (2018).

<sup>18</sup>In June 2020, *Personality and Individual Differences* (PAID) retracted a paper published by Rushton and Templer (2012), two (deceased) members of the “minority” and “controversialized” wing of intelligence research. As PAID stated, papers are retracted when there is “clear evidence of purposeful malpractice or data fabrication” (Saklofske et al., 2020). In the justification for the retraction, PAID referred to the “Universal Declaration of Human Rights” and claimed that the retracted paper is “deeply offensive to particular minorities” and that it contains no “fair representation of the literature” and no “valid inferences.” Additionally, Saklofske et al. (2020) stated that criticized literature was cited, alternative explanations were ignored, and “relatively minor” errors were made. However, Saklofske et al. did not show any evidence for “purposeful malpractice or data fabrication,” which according to their standards is a necessary criterion for retraction. If the “liberal” criteria applied in this case were generally used to make decisions about withdrawal, about two-thirds of all published papers would have to be retracted. In concluding, the retraction in the Rushton and Templer case seems to have been politically motivated. I twice emailed (12.09.2020, 23.09.2020) the editor of PAID and the author of the retraction notice, Dr. Don Saklofske, and asked: “Papers have to be retracted when there is ‘clear evidence of purposeful malpractice or data fabrication’. Where in the retracted paper is evidence for ‘clear evidence of purposeful malpractice or data fabrication’?”. The editor simply parroted the (already mentioned) political criterion “deeply offensive to particular minorities” as the only fault and also stated that the work “did not provide a fair representation of the literature . . . and further did not draw valid inferences from it.” Again, this can be said about many scientific papers.

**Table 27.2** Scientific productivity (number of publications) and relevance (*h*-index) according to two sources

	Number of publications		<i>h</i> -index	
	Harzing (Google)	Scopus	Harzing (Google)	Scopus
Intelligence research (experts)	106.84 [75]	–	22.44 [17]	16.56 [11]
German psychology professors	80.70	41.86	16.52	11.41 [9]
Social sciences	115 {?}	34	21.5	12.0

Notes: [in brackets median]; s. Rindermann et al. (2020). Harzing based on Google includes books, book chapters, and certain gray literature, Scopus covers only articles in peer-reviewed journals. Harzing (Google) is a less reliable source. Intelligence experts about  $N = 102$  (numbers based on self-reports); German psychology professors about  $N = 850$  (measured numbers)

researchers have published more than most German psychology professors (but less or slightly more than is usual in social sciences, depending on the source, Harzing/Google or Scopus, all per capita). Regarding reception and relevance as measured by the *h*-index, intelligence researchers showed a higher impact compared to most German psychology professors and researchers in the social sciences.<sup>19</sup>

Sixth, the majority among scientists classify themselves as left wing and only a vanishingly small minority as right wing (Duarte et al., 2015). The “extraordinary” intelligence research field is often considered to be on the right. However, relatively right-wing professors valued academic rigor ( $r = .30$ ) and knowledge advancement ( $r = .22$ ) more than did relatively left-wing professors (Geher et al., 2020). This could be related to the observation that the majority also tends to be oriented toward political criteria (e.g., social justice) with all their distorting effects and less toward the truth.

Finally, editors explicitly stated that papers on controversial topics (e.g., group differences in intelligence) warrant a more careful review process before being published. For example, the editor of *Psychological Science*, Patricia Bauer (2020, p. 768 f.), wants to “bring greater sensitivity to our editorial process” including accompanying such papers with “further reflections” articles, “devoting greater effort to evaluating the validity as well as the reliability and robustness of the measures used in the research,” and “that conclusions and their possible implications are conveyed in a socially sensitive and scientifically responsible manner. These actions will make both our journal and our science more socially responsible.” Likewise, the editor of *Philosophical Psychology*, Mitchell Herschbach (2020, p. 900), stated: “When sent out for peer review, papers on controversial topics merit going beyond our standard procedure.” All of this will result in, if published, better non-PC research.

To summarize: (1) there is no replication crisis in intelligence research; (2) intelligence studies have a higher than average statistical power; (3) they have a larger average sample size and stability of results; (4) there is no fraud in controversial fields of intelligence research; (5) there is comparable or higher scientific

<sup>19</sup>The *h*-index is based on citation rates and the number of publications (i.e., *h* publications cited a maximum of *h*-times).

productivity among scientists in intelligence research relative to other areas of psychology; (6) among researchers viewed as conservative, there is a stronger orientation toward scientific standards; and (7) there is explicitly more scrutiny in the review process of controversial intelligence studies. Neven Sesardic's (2005) and our thesis, that political pressures may make research epistemically stronger, is corroborated.

## Case Studies of Intelligence Researchers

Case studies are less convincing than studies based on systematically collected large quantitative data sets. However, they can inspire further quantitative research, and they are no less based on empirical data. Additionally, the reality of practiced science is the world in which we scientists live and perceive daily. Of course, any descriptions (like the following) can be criticized (particularly for representativity, objectivity, reliability, validity), as is true for conventional quantitative research.

### *Michael A. Woodley of Menie*

Michael Anthony Woodley of Menie is a British researcher (born in 1984), who studied evolution, ecology, and environmental biology at Columbia University and molecular ecology at Royal Holloway, University of London, obtaining his PhD on this topic in 2012 (“On the Community Ecology of *Arabidopsis thaliana*”). He held a permanent research fellowship with the Center Leo Apostel for Interdisciplinary Studies, at Vrije Universiteit Brussel. He is an extremely productive scientist. As of 2019, according to Google Scholar, he has produced about 132 publications (obviously incorrect hits were not counted by me; retrieved 28.12.2019). Compared to a mean of 107 (Median *Mdn* = 75) for other intelligence experts, a mean of 81 for German psychology professors, and a mean of 115 for social scientists, this is – especially given his young age – an extremely large amount. I do not know anybody of his age who has published as much. His Google *h*-index is 29 (intelligence experts *M* = 22, *Mdn* = 17; German psychology professors *M* = 17; social scientists *M* = 22). According to Scopus, he has published 103 papers (double entries for his name were checked and combined manually; compared to German psychology professors *M* = 42, social scientists *M* = 34). Woodley of Menie's Scopus *h*-index is 21 (intelligence experts *M* = 17, *Mdn* = 11; German psychology professors *M* = 11, *Mdn* = 9; social scientists *M* = 12). This is nothing less than exceptional for a person who, at the time of this writing, is only 35 years old (and was not even trained in psychology).

His first two publications were published when he was about 21 years of age and dealt with ecology and evolution and speculations about its future (e.g., “Synthetic vegetation”). He used his evolutionary research background as a point of entry into intelligence research. Woodley of Menie is highly cooperative and publishes

together with many colleagues (Scopus lists 54 coauthors from Brazil, Ecuador, Estonia, the USA, Sweden, the Netherlands, Germany, Russia, China, etc.).

Woodley of Menie seems to be extremely intelligent and bookish. He is an upright, smart, and verbally elegant discussant. Attending a conference or meeting with him changes the session into an unusually cognitively stimulating, intellectually inspiring event where participants are exposed to highly novel information. One could even say that 10 minutes listening to him is worth the equivalent of 10 days listening to average psychology researchers.

For 2 years (2015–2017), Woodley of Menie was the “scientist in residence” at the Chemnitz University of Technology. The talk given in celebration of his “scientist in residence” invitation in Chemnitz was surely one of the most broad-based (bringing together different research streams) and intellectually inspiring ones ever given at the university. Some of my colleagues, who usually attend standard conferences and read average work, considered it the most “revolutionary” talk that they had ever heard (the subject was similar to Dutton and Woodley of Menie, 2018). It was simply not what was expected from a young guy. These colleagues remained silent; one even said to me it would be easy to refute Woodley of Menie’s theses but no attempt was actually made to do so.

### ***Georg W. Oesterdiekhoff, Edward Dutton, and Others***

*Georg W. Oesterdiekhoff*’s (German sociologist, born in 1957) publications are also intellectually inspiring, and many of his statements sounded for me at a first glance unbelievable or even mad. For instance, he wrote in a *Mankind Quarterly* article that in the Middle Ages, courts organized “Trials Against Animals”:

Caterpillars devastated some fields in the region of Lausanne, Switzerland, in 1519. An official messenger went to them and ordered to appear in court to a scheduled date. The judge held some of these animals in his hands and ordered them to leave the region within three days. (Oesterdiekhoff, 2009, p. 347f.)

People treated animals as if they were like humans possessing comprehension faculties. As I could not believe this claim, I checked the content, and it was true according to Dinzlacher (2006). Oesterdiekhoff is extremely productive in publishing voluminous scholarly books in the German language and in the (within the German intellectual sphere) most recognized publishing houses (Suhrkamp, Springer).<sup>20</sup> When I met him for the first time, at a conference that I organized in

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<sup>20</sup>Google-Harzing *h*-index = 18; Scopus *h* = 7. The impact of books is underestimated by this metric, e.g., the evangelists had an average of *h* = 1 (John, if one person, had an *h*-index of 2).

Magdeburg in October 2006<sup>21</sup>, he together with Erich Weede (psychologist, libertarian economist, and retired professor of sociology) and Gerhard Meisenberg contributed to an event that was inspiring. I have never seen so much knowledge in one person, being very broad-based and connecting with many different research fields.

Another exceptional person is *Edward Dutton* (born in 1980), a British theologian living in Finland. He has also written many books, but many of them did not find regular publishers.<sup>22</sup> This could be due to political reasons – as many of them are not compatible with the current leftist zeitgeist (e.g., Dutton, 2019) and some of them took positions outside of those typical of intelligence researchers (e.g., his critical book biography of J. Philippe Rushton; Dutton, 2018). Similar to Woodley of Menie and Oesterdiekhoff, he frequently surprises readers with new findings and, at first glance, barely believable theories (e.g., Robert E. Larzelere’s meta-analysis on the positive effects of conditional corporal punishment for child outcomes; Larzelere & Kuhn, 2005). Another one is his (2019) book on Finland’s *Silent Rape Epidemic* which, among others, addresses the Oulu child sexual exploitation scandal.

A further example is *Julien Delhez* (born in 1991), a young Egyptologist, who published a review on this author’s book in Latin (2019): “Cur sunt aliæ nationes liberæ, opulentæ democraticæque, cum aliæ pauperæ sint et a tyrannis rectæ?” Who else can do this? Traditionally, European scholars read literature in about three to six languages (English, French, German, Greek, Italian, Latin)<sup>23</sup>. However, US researchers today usually only know English and European ones usually only their mother tongue and English. Writing a review in Latin is intellectually outstanding, but far from being well integrated with respect to the current cognitive climate at universities.

### ***Emil O. W. Kirkegaard***

Emil Kirkegaard (born in 1989) studied linguistics and philosophy and achieved a Bachelor of Science degree. In 2014, aged 25 years, he launched two open-access journals, *Open Differential Psychology* and *Open Behavioral Genetics* (additionally in 2016 *Open Quantitative Sociology & Political Science*), all with open and

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<sup>21</sup>Title of the conference: “Culture and Cognition: The contributions of psychometrical research and Piaget’s cognitive development theory in understanding cultural differences”; Magdeburg, 20 and 21 October 2006. The aim of the conference was to bring together two different paradigms of intelligence research. A book containing contributions from the participants and from James Flynn was published in June 2008 in German (Oesterdiekhoff & Rindermann, 2008).

<sup>22</sup>Dutton has a Google-Harzing *h*-index of 14 (corrected by me for incorrect hits) and Scopus *h* = 7 (early spring 2020).

<sup>23</sup>For example, Niklas Luhmann, a sociologist, cited in his book *Love as Passion: The Codification of Intimacy* (1986/1982) works written and not translated in German, French, English, Spanish, and Italian.

published review process.<sup>24</sup> He preregistered studies before it became common practice (e.g., one published 2016).<sup>25</sup> Kirkegaard uses the programming language R for statistical analyses and has acquired a very high level of competence in the use of various software packages and data analytic techniques. He earns his living through these skills. He publishes a blog on philosophy and psychology (intelligence research). He is extremely hardworking.

However, he also currently seems to be the most controversial person in intelligence research.<sup>26</sup> First, he has detractors who have created an attack page about him on a website called “RationalWiki,” containing extremely negative “information” (“Danish far-right eugenicist ... white supremacist ... pseudoscientific ... crypto-fascist ... pseudointellectual ... batshit-crazy political ...”).<sup>27</sup> RationalWiki is so extreme in its mischaracterization of certain intelligence researchers that sometimes it is funny to read, e.g., Robert Plomin is presented as somebody “who advocates an absolutist version of biological determinism and eugenics”; Richard Haier is described as a “HBD pseudoscientist,” the same for this author (31.12.19). However, one of the most absurd pages is devoted to Woodley of Menie (“crank ... living in a huge manor house or castle ... pseudoscientific ‘expert’ ... uses a lot of statistical magic ...”; 31.12.19).

The second issue was that he extracted data from the dating app OkCupid in 2016, published it in an anonymized way, and wrote two papers analyzing the data. Kirkegaard and Bjerrekær (2016) and Kirkegaard and Lasker (2020) found that intelligence, based on some cognitive tasks given to OkCupid users, correlated negatively with religiosity (around  $r = -.30$ , corrected  $r = -.38$ ) and positively with political interest (around  $r = +.25$ ). However, the problem was with the data “scraping” (the process of extracting data from websites) and its open-access publication. The main question concerned whether the data had been made public before scraping or not. OkCupid has warned their users “that all information submitted on the Website might potentially be publicly accessible.”<sup>28</sup> Conventionally, OkCupid users use pseudonyms. Photos were not published by Kirkegaard, and

<sup>24</sup> Authors and reviewers are not anonymized (<https://openpsych.net/journals>). *Frontiers* publishes after the review the names of reviewers. It encourages openness as a value; additionally, it should increase intellectual responsibility leading to improved quality.

<sup>25</sup> Preregistrations are published on a website before data collection begins. The preregistration reports the hypothesis to be tested, the intended sampling procedure, research design, measures, and statistical analyses.

<sup>26</sup> He explains that his interest in intelligence research stems from the possibilities given for people, who strictly follow epistemic principles, and do not irrationally reject data on political grounds, and who will become scientifically successful: “An area ... where many hold beliefs that appear epistemically irrational (not based on evidence in a proper way) that I can attack with strong data and methods. Usually, these will be areas that others avoid due to political hostility” (Email 31 January 2020).

<sup>27</sup> An objection to RationalWiki given by Emil Kirkegaard: [https://emilkirkegaard.dk/en/?page\\_id=7034](https://emilkirkegaard.dk/en/?page_id=7034)

<sup>28</sup> [www.forbes.com/sites/emmawoollacott/2016/05/13/intimate-data-of-70000-okcupid-users-released](http://www.forbes.com/sites/emmawoollacott/2016/05/13/intimate-data-of-70000-okcupid-users-released)

there was no access to privately retained answers; later on, the data set was removed from the internet.<sup>29</sup> Kirkegaard and colleagues were not the first to have scraped data from the internet, e.g., flight ticket meta-search engines scrape the airlines' websites to find prices for flights.<sup>30</sup> In 2012, 1 mathematician scraped over 20,000 user profiles from OkCupid to find his optimal partner whom he later married; others have used these scraped data for educational purposes in statistics.<sup>31</sup>

However, this incident (and others about ethical problems in philosophy) also reveals that in the field of extraordinary intelligence research, unconventionality (including transgression of limits) may be a not uncommon trait, which also carries with it some costs. Unconventionality (and the originality that comes with it) is also a liability for its bearers. Only those people who conform to the zeitgeist will never be seen as controversial (provided no changes in zeitgeist). Additionally, what is exceptional is how Emil Kirkegaard dealt with the issue: he designed a website containing links to negative media reports about him and responded to them. To this author's knowledge, this has not been done by any other researchers.

### *Gerhard Meisenberg*

Gerhard Meisenberg (born in 1953) is a German biochemist who was a professor of physiology and biochemistry at Ross University, School of Medicine, in Dominica between 1984 and 2018. He had a high teaching load. He published a science textbook (*Principles of Medical Biochemistry*). Similar to all other persons previously mentioned, he is an autodidactic intelligence researcher. He is very bookish and conversant in biochemistry, genetics, social sciences, and intelligence research. He was or is currently editor-in-chief of the *Mankind Quarterly* in which each issue is introduced with an editorial from him enriched with original and somewhat unusual ideas. His Google *h*-index is around 28, his Scopus *h*-index is 23, and both are clearly above average. The two most cited articles in *Mankind Quarterly* are written by him (published several years before he became its editor-in-chief).

In several aspects, he was a trailblazer. For example, he was the first to systematically correlate indicators of brain size with intelligence at the level of nations; was the first to correlate indicators of culture (World Value Survey, religion) with intelligence; was the first to describe and explain the FLynn effect in developing countries; was leading in measuring the effects of ethnic, cultural, and racial diversity on

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<sup>29</sup> For an overview, see the collection of critical to neutral media reports on Kirkegaard's homepage, [https://emilkirkegaard.dk/en/?page\\_id=6742](https://emilkirkegaard.dk/en/?page_id=6742), and his critical response, <https://docs.google.com/document/d/10WYKoU9EdXxkOtuE4vBVEpdvap8PyW0ZmaUXHxFBiMA/edit>. There were no charges against Kirkegaard.

<sup>30</sup> For example, a summary: [www.wired.com/2016/05/okcupid-study-reveals-perils-big-data-science](http://www.wired.com/2016/05/okcupid-study-reveals-perils-big-data-science)

<sup>31</sup> <https://resources.distilnetworks.com/all-blog-posts/how-a-math-genius-hacked-okcupid-and-how-distil-would-have-stopped-him>, [www.datingsitesreviews.com/article.php?story=this-is-what-happens-when-a-math-genius-hacks-okcupid](http://www.datingsitesreviews.com/article.php?story=this-is-what-happens-when-a-math-genius-hacks-okcupid); Kim and Escobedo-Land (2015)

inequality; and was one of the firsts to predict economic growth for the twenty-first century based on cognitive ability and its assumed development.

I have presented several sketches of intelligence researchers of the “extraordinary” research camp and pointed out indicators of unconventionality in behavior. However, for the last three, persons of the older generation, all of whom were university professors of psychology, this is not true.<sup>32</sup>

### ***J. Philippe Rushton***

Philippe Rushton was a scientifically successful and generally well-regarded psychology researcher before he published studies on evolution, race, and intelligence. He then became the most controversial psychologist in his time (Rushton, 2020). In the time before publication of these articles, he received several fellowships. He was a tenured professor. He published in *Psychological Bulletin*, *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, *American Psychologist*, *Scientometrics*, *Psychological Science*, and *Proceedings of the Royal Society*. He had a Google *h*-index of 75 (Scopus *h* = 46) (December, 2019). He was very bookish. According to one journalist, he was the “most famous university professor in Canada” (Duffy, 2005).

At the same time, he was a scientifically upright person. In one such example, the journalist Andrew Duffy (2005) described Rushton’s positive reception of the Lahn studies on the Microcephalin gene and brain size as follows:

Published in the magazine *Science*, the University of Chicago study suggested that the brain continues to evolve rapidly because of the influence of two genes that help determine its size. What’s more, the study said, the genes are more readily found in some populations, such as in Europe and East Asia, than others, such as those in sub-Saharan Africa. Again, the report’s conclusions held nettlesome social implications. Mr. Rushton, however, said he was ‘delighted’ with the University of Chicago study, which identified, for the first time, a gene related to brain size. ‘This is exactly what all theory has to predict,’ he says. (Duffy, 2005)

There was no more important and more supportive study for Rushton’s (and other’s) evolutionary cold winters theory than this one. However, when I first saw Rushton, in December 2006 at the ISIR meeting in San Francisco, he spoke about his own study presenting an empirical *falsification* of this Microcephalin theory (published as Rushton et al., 2007). His presentation was remarkable as these findings went strongly against his own theory. He later mentioned we have to stick to the facts. As he said: “Beautiful theories killed by ugly facts.” This attitude is indeed quite rare among scientists.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>32</sup>Not included is Arthur Jensen whom I met only as an aged and sick person. Nyborg (2003b, p. XIX) described him as exhibiting very low neuroticism, but I would not count this as unconventionality.

<sup>33</sup>Interestingly, one of the first researchers who found sloppiness in Burt’s heritability studies was Arthur Jensen (1974). This went against his hereditarian viewpoint. Rushton as well as Jensen published studies with negative results for their own theories. Kirkegaard collected and published negative comments about himself.

Rushton was also a very good presenter. He was a calm, but tough and eloquent, discussant. He was a very generous and a supportive person. Rushton was interested in young scientists and in supporting them. I remember how he asked my research assistant about her research in emotional intelligence, a subject that was not his field. He was not at all narrow-minded. The most striking aspect of his personality was how psychologically healthy he was. How could he survive to be so healthy in the face of all this hostility?

### ***Helmuth Nyborg***

Helmuth Nyborg (born in 1937) is a Danish professor of developmental psychology (Aarhus in Denmark, officially retired). As a young man (of 23 years), he won the bronze medal at the 1960 Summer Olympics in Rome as a team member in canoeing. He became a father at the age of 68. Compared to others discussed in this chapter, he adopted a biophysiological approach in his research (stressing the role of hormones). He also edited several books bringing together the work of others (subjects: Jensen, Eysenck, Rushton, Lynn). His Google-Harzing *h*-index is 25 and Scopus *h* = 16 (both above average, December 2019).

Helmuth Nyborg won several lawsuits. He was accused by state institutions of having committed scientific misconduct. Nyborg sued those institutions and always won, was cleared, and/or received compensation.<sup>34</sup> Nyborg is a good example of the governmental harassment to which extraordinary intelligence researchers are sometimes subjected (similarly, e.g., Richard Lynn, Phil Rushton, Chris Brand). However, it seems to me that, by selection or modification, he draws strength from those quarrels. For his enemies, he is like Godzilla, who cannot be killed by atomic bombs which instead only make him stronger. Perhaps due to his experience as a young and successful competitive sportsman, he is a fighter and sensation seeker.<sup>35</sup>

### ***Richard Lynn***

Richard Lynn (born in 1930) is a retired British psychology professor, formerly with the University of Ulster. Lynn comes from a family of scientists. His father was a professor of botany, a plant geneticist, and a Fellow of different Royal Societies. His half-brother was a professor of child health. However, his father and his paternal family have had *no* environmental impact on him (he never met them in his childhood and adolescence). He was raised by a single mother. His life seems to be an

<sup>34</sup>For example, <https://retractionwatch.com/2016/03/30/denmark-court-clears-controversial-psychologist-of-misconduct-charges/>

<sup>35</sup>Applying research results on personality, when a person selects or produces environments, their shaping impact is smaller.

illustration of hereditarian influences and the empirical results of behavioral genetics:

I was born to a single mother of quite average intelligence, and it has typically been found that children born and brought up in these circumstances are disadvantaged. However, I do not subscribe to this conventional view. I believe the genes we inherit are much more important determinants of our life than our early years. ...

I did not see anything of my father during my childhood and adolescence because in my early childhood he was working in Trinidad as Director of the Imperial Cotton Research Institute. He was sacked from this position in 1937. My father had an aptitude for annoying people in authority, which I seem to have inherited. (Lynn in Nyborg, 2012, p. 79)

He studied with a scholarship in psychology at Cambridge and became a research professor at the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) in Dublin and then professor of psychology at the University of Ulster (Lynn, 2020).

Lynn has published in *Nature*; his Google-Harzing *h*-index is 75 and Scopus *h* = 39; both indicate an extremely high productivity and broad reception within science (of course, at 90 years of age, he has an advantage). He is a trailblazer in three different research fields: *national intelligence levels* and their impact on growth and wealth, *sex differences in general intelligence* from age 15 onward, and the *secular rise of intelligence* (“FLynn effect”). He has a very broad knowledge basis (psychology, economics, social sciences). However, his papers are rather simple. In the words of Emil Kirkegaard (2019, p. 6) reviewing his last book on national intelligence levels (Lynn & Becker, 2019), he opines:

There is little to no attempt at using advanced statistical methods to clarify matters of disputed causality or even just the relative importance of predictors. Existing studies on the question are not seriously discussed either, and an important opportunity is missed. The presentation is quite dry.

Lynn does not do any impression management. All his studies are similarly structured: Question 1 and question 2, maybe question 3. Then comes a list of what others say, including the majority opinion differing from his own. Then methods. Results are presented as a dry list of numbers in tables. The discussion comprises points 1 and 2, maybe 3. End. His writing is the embodiment of the principle of Occam’s razor. Lynn is seen as highly controversial (e.g., studies on eugenics or dysgenics, allegations of racism, managing the Pioneer Fund, sex differences in intelligence). In 2018, the University of Ulster withdrew his emeritus title.

## **The Relevance of Eccentricity (Bizarreness, Behavioral Originality)**

Unconventionality (a personality dimension) and originality (a domain of cognitive competence within creativity) are positively related (latent  $\beta = .58$ ,  $r = .64$ ; Andreas et al., 2016). It is also traditionally thought that “geniuses” are highly

unconventional. Frequently used terms are “eccentricity” or “bizarreness.” For instance, John Stuart Mill (2015/1859) saw the amount of eccentricity in a society as proportional to the frequency of geniuses within that society. Before I attended my first ISIR conference in 2006 in San Francisco, I was informed by a colleague that I may meet some rather unusual people. This was true, especially in the case of Donald Templer (1938–2016), who gave the last two presentations of the conference. Templer himself told me that the ISIR organization committee seems to rate his subjects as so controversial that they put him at the very end of the conference (e.g., see Templer & Arikawa, 2006, with critical commentary by Hunt & Sternberg, 2006). However, the style of his presentations was also unconventional.

Eccentricity (or bizarreness, behavioral originality) helps a person to come out of their shell, to cast off the shackles of the current zeitgeist, groupthink, and political conventionality. Eccentricity helps to make people more open to the new and uncommon – which is often considered an important component of creativity and ingenuity.

There is no inevitable dependence of accomplishment on eccentricity, and not all of the aforementioned researchers have shown attributes of eccentricity. However, it is not an uncommon feature among those who are prominent within the camp of extraordinary intelligence research. The causes are probably manifold: more eccentric persons may feel greater attraction to a controversialized research field. They may have more “strength of character” (Mill, 2015/1859) necessary for survival in such an environment. Or they become this way as a consequence of their experiences with controversies. Some may develop such a habit as a form of impression management and use it as means of expressing greater liberty in thinking and behavior (“when I am ‘eccentric’ I can do that”). However, any research field needs a strong contingent of average researchers doing the everyday, constructive, and synthesizing work and who can communicate inside and outside of the field in a convincing and ordinary way.

## Conclusion

Contrary to conventional wisdom – the huge stress caused by public condemnation can benefit science as an epistemic enterprise due to controversialization. The advantage for a (relevant and an attacked) minority among scientists not being part of the mainstream is that (if they want to withstand such attacks) they have to be better (e.g., they have to use better designs, statistics, and arguments). Of course, they have to be equipped with the means to do this. Important factors include certain person and personality effects: not only can research products be improved by headwinds, but the attributes of persons working in such fields can also be enhanced. Contrarians have to be smarter, and to a certain degree, they need to be more original, robust, and collegial. This comes with certain costs. Unconventional people in

a hostile environment may show more behavior that gets negatively labeled by others. This might enhance certain personality effects for some (i.e., “eccentricity”), by selection or by modification.<sup>36</sup>

Ultimately, the field is made up of people with different qualities to those in the mainstream. Leftist supremacy in science (Duarte et al., 2015; Inbar & Lammers, 2012) leads to higher quality among the outputs of those who work in minority (controversial) science. Nerd harassment produces an even nerdier people.

Can general conclusions be drawn? A recommendation for practice? What is to be done? Quite generally, “stand up straight with your shoulders back” (Peterson, 2018). At the same time, be smart. Observe. Learn from everybody including your opponents – as well as learn from the mistakes you yourself make. Read. Think. Follow the truth. Accept that when you have something important to say, it may create resistance in some. Evade unnecessary difficulties but not the struggles of a climb. Be supportive.

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<sup>36</sup>The controversialization described here involves different channels, ranging from public demonstrations to negative Wikipedia entries, from institutional means including sacking to disparaging media reports. It could also be understood as a kind of nerd harassment.

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# Chapter 28

## Ideological Bias in the Psychology of Sex and Gender



Marco Del Giudice

In this chapter, I discuss the influence of ideological bias in the psychological study of sex and gender. This kaleidoscopic issue would demand an entire book; attempting to be systematic and exhaustive would be an impossible task. Instead, I take a somewhat informal approach as I try to highlight key points of tension, clarify some conceptual muddles, offer interesting examples, and put everything in historical perspective. The last bit is especially important, because the received history of this topic is also ideologically slanted and full of distortions, half-truths, and sometimes sheer fabrications. To delimit the field and remain close to the topic of this volume, I focus mainly on academic psychology, leaving aside the applied psychological disciplines (e.g., psychotherapy) and the neurosciences.

### The Problem in a Nutshell

As pointed out by Winegard and Winegard (2018), bias in the social sciences is more often ideological than narrowly political (in the sense of left- vs. right-wing partisanship); the reason why sex and gender are hot topics is that they play a central role in egalitarian ideologies, of which feminism is a prime example. Most present-day feminists embrace what Winegard and Winegard labeled *cosmic egalitarianism*, or the belief that all ethnic and cultural groups, social classes, and sexes are relatively equal on all socially desired traits; note that “equal” should be read as *biologically* equal, because measurable differences may also arise because of differential

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socialization, prejudice, and discrimination.<sup>1</sup> Thus, egalitarianism and desire for social change toward equality go hand in hand with a social constructionist, “blank slate” perspective on human nature (see, e.g., Anomaly & Winegard, 2020; Eagly, 2018; Pinker, 2003; Murray, 2020; Winegard & Winegard, 2018). In short:

Feminist theorists view gender not as a biologically created reality, but as a socially constructed phenomenon. (Else-Quest & Hyde, 2018, p. 13)

Many feminists are wary of biological explanations of anything, in large part because biology always seems to end up being a convenient justification for perpetuating the status quo. (ibid., p. 45)

Because feminism is the dominant ideological influence in the study of sex and gender, this chapter takes a critical stance toward feminist theory and research. However, my goal is not to write an anti-feminist pamphlet. There is no doubt that feminist scholars have made valuable contributions to psychology and brought attention to important themes; evolutionary psychologists like myself have long recognized this (e.g., Buss & Schmitt, 2011; Campbell, 2006; Nicolas & Welling, 2015). In a recent exchange we had with some prominent feminist scientists, my colleagues and I found several points of agreement despite our different perspectives (Del Giudice et al., 2018a; Fine et al., 2018). While some feminist literature is—by design—polemical and one-sided, this is not necessarily a problem; sometimes, ideological biases help scholars see facts and explanations that others would miss. The dialectic can remain healthy as long as multiple viewpoints are allowed and ideas are evaluated on their own merits. The trouble begins when an entire field or discipline aligns in the same ideological direction, so that certain domains of research become “sacralized” and hence systematically distorted (see Winegard & Winegard, 2018).

From this standpoint, the state of psychological research on sex and gender is mixed, with a lot of variation across subdisciplines (and evolutionary psychology as the biggest outlier; see Buss, 2015; Pinker, 2003; Stewart-Williams, 2018). While sex is not nearly as sacralized as race, certain questions border on taboo; for example, biological explanations of sex differences in educational and occupational outcomes are likely to attract denunciations and attacks, especially if they reach the general public. As the ideological landscape evolves, previously uncontroversial issues become morally charged in the eyes of activists; right now, the idea that there are two biological sexes seems on its way to become “problematic” (more on this below).

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<sup>1</sup> So-called *difference feminism* has been out of fashion since the late 1990s and did not necessarily accept biological explanations of sex differences. Of course, one can be an equal-opportunity feminist while believing that some sex differences in behavior and cognition have a strong biological basis and contribute to determine enduring differences in social outcomes. But this viewpoint has virtually no traction on present-day feminism, which—especially in academia—is moving toward increasingly extreme versions of social constructionism (see, e.g., Else-Quest & Hyde, 2018; Pluckrose & Lindsay, 2020).

Because ideological pressures in this area of psychology are uneven and relatively subtle (especially compared with more politicized social sciences like sociology and cultural anthropology), they are mostly expressed as implicit “preferences” that affect the design, interpretation, publication, and divulgation of research. Roughly speaking:

- (a) No differences are better than any differences (unless they are presented as evidence of discrimination).
- (b) Small differences are better than large differences (same as above).
- (c) Variable, malleable differences are better than stable, unchanging differences.
- (d) Socialization is better than biology.

And the list may be expanding to include:

- (e) Nonbinary is better than binary.

To complete this summary, one should note that, from an egalitarian perspective, differences are better tolerated if they reflect positively on a group that is perceived as underprivileged or oppressed (e.g., findings of higher verbal ability in females tend to be less controversial than findings of higher spatial and mathematical ability in males). Note that the preferences listed above are not “wrong” in the sense that they should be reversed; to be sure, discrimination does occur, sex differences are often small, and many traits—including evolved traits—are expressed in a context-sensitive manner and can be shaped by the environment. The problem is that their collective weight pushes the field in a particular direction, making it easier (or harder) to publish certain kinds of results and formulate certain interpretations. These preferences are enforced more rigidly when approaching controversial topics, such as sex differences in educational and occupational outcomes. They also become more visible as one moves from the technical literature to the public interface of the discipline—for example, in introductory textbooks, course materials, and statements by professional associations. (One reason may be that ideological pressures in certain sections of the public are stronger than within psychology itself.<sup>2</sup>)

The result is that important topics are presented in a slanted fashion or not discussed at all; they include the theory of sexual selection (see Geary, 2021); the existence of large sex differences in occupational interests (e.g., Lippa, 2010; Morris, 2016), in multivariate profiles of personality (e.g., Del Giudice et al., 2012; Kaiser, 2019; Kaiser et al., 2020), and at the tails of cognitive abilities (e.g., Baye & Monseur, 2016; Wai et al., 2010, 2018); findings of temporal and cross-cultural stability (e.g., Schmitt & the International Sexuality Description Project, 2003; Stoet & Geary, 2020); “paradoxical” patterns that run against simple socialization accounts, with larger sex differences in more gender-egalitarian countries (e.g., Falk & Hermlé, 2018; Kaiser, 2019; Mac Giolla & Kajonius, 2019; Schmitt et al., 2017;

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<sup>2</sup>For a revealing example, consider the reactions to James Damore’s now-infamous “memo” on sex differences in tech jobs (Damore, 2017; see Anomaly & Winegard, 2020).

Stoet & Geary, 2015, 2018); and cross-species similarities in sexually differentiated behaviors (e.g., Alexander & Hines, 2002; Benenson, 2019; Cashdan & Gaulin, 2016; Hassett et al., 2008). For recent overviews of these and related topics, see Archer (2019), Geary (2021), and Murray (2020).

## Interlude: Sex, Gender, and the Binary

Up to this point, I have used “sex” and “gender” casually, but before moving ahead, it is important to do some conceptual clean-up.<sup>3</sup> While many scholars treat these terms as more or less synonyms (Haig, 2004), they have different histories and implications. The usage of “gender” as the social and/or psychological counterpart of biological sex was introduced in psychology by Money (1955), though Bentley (1945) had made the same distinction years before. The term was popularized by Stoller (1968) and quickly adopted by feminist scholars in the 1970s (Haig, 2004; Janssen, 2018). “Gender” was going to denote the social roles, behaviors, and aspects of identity associated with being male or female, as distinct from the biological characteristics of the two sexes. The assumption was that psychological differences are largely or exclusively determined by socialization (see Deaux, 1985; Oakley, 1972; Unger, 1979). Scholars began to use “gender” instead of “sex” even if the proposed definitions were frustratingly unclear. For example, a widely cited paper by Unger (1979) defined gender as:

[T]hose nonphysiological components of sex that are culturally regarded as appropriate to males or to females. Gender may be used for those traits for which sex acts as a stimulus variable, independently of whether those traits have their origin within the subject or not. It refers to a social label by which we distinguish two groups of people. (Unger, 1979, p. 1086)

This definition mixes correlations with social evaluations and individual traits with group labels. In fact, it may be impossible to make the concept of gender fully coherent *unless* one embraces a social constructionist view. The problem is that psychological traits arise from the interplay between social and biological processes—even worse, the very distinction between “social” and “biological” is blurry and ill-defined (see, e.g., Lippa, 2005). This makes the distinction between sex and gender effectively unworkable, as many have noted over the years (e.g., Blakemore et al., 2009; Eagly & Wood, 2013; Ellis et al., 2008; Haig, 2004). For a recent illustration, consider the guidelines in the latest APA publication manual:

*Gender* refers to the attitudes, feelings, and behaviors that a given culture associates with a person’s biological sex [...] *Gender* is a social construct and a social identity. [...] *Sex* refers to biological sex assignment; use the term “sex” when the biological distinction of sex assignment (e.g., sex assigned at birth) is predominant. [...] In some cases, there may not be a clear distinction between biological and acculturative factors, so a discussion of both sex and gender would be appropriate. (American Psychological Association, 2019, p. 138)

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<sup>3</sup>Parts of this section are adapted from Del Giudice (2020).

As usual, “gender” is defined from a social constructionist standpoint; but in practice, the distinction between biology and socialization is almost never clear-cut, so authors are instructed to discuss “both sex and gender” and then left to their own devices. Interestingly, biological sex is defined as something that gets “assigned” to people, an expression that is largely meaningless (unless one is talking about the treatment of intersex conditions) but conforms to the precepts of transgender activism.

The flaws of the sex-gender distinction have led some feminist scholars to adopt the hybrid term “sex/gender” (sometimes “gender/sex”) as a way to recognize that biological and social factors are inseparable and underscore the potential for plasticity (Fausto-Sterling, 2012; Hyde et al., 2019; Jordan-Young & Rumiati, 2012; Rippon et al., 2014). Unfortunately, this terminological fusion may end up deepening the conceptual confusion. The proponents of sex/gender usually describe it as a continuum or even a multidimensional collection of semi-independent features; a person’s sex/gender can be hybrid, fluid, or otherwise nonbinary (see, e.g., Hyde et al., 2019; Morgenroth & Ryan, 2020). One crucial implication is that biological sex is *also* nonbinary and socially constructed, in line with the tenets of fourth-wave feminism (Else-Quest & Hyde, 2018; Pluckrose & Lindsay, 2020). On this view, the “sex binary” is a socially constructed fiction; the old idea that there are two sexes is simplistic and inaccurate and does not stand up to sophisticated analysis. Hence, “male” and “female” should be replaced with multiple overlapping categories or even (multi)dimensional scores of gendered self-concepts and attitudes (Hyde et al., 2019; Joel & Fausto-Sterling, 2016). This argument can be seductive but has one problem—it fundamentally misunderstands the nature of sex. I now briefly discuss why.

### ***The Real Sex Binary***

In the social sciences, many scholars define sex as a collection of traits—X/Y chromosomes, gonads, hormones, and genitals—that cluster together in most people but may also occur in rare atypical combinations (e.g., Blakemore et al., 2009; Fausto-Sterling, 2012; Helgeson, 2016; Joel, 2012). This definition is the basis for the widely repeated claim that up to 2% of live births are intersex (Blackless et al., 2000; see, e.g., Hyde et al., 2019). In fact, the 2% figure is a gross overestimate. Blackless et al. (2000) defined intersex very broadly as individuals who deviate from the “Platonic ideal” of sex dimorphism; accordingly, they included several conditions (e.g., Klinefelter syndrome, vaginal agenesis, congenital adrenal hyperplasia) that affect sexual development but can be classified as “intersex” only in a very loose sense (Sax, 2002). If one restricts the term to conditions that involve a discordance between chromosomal and phenotypic sex, or a phenotype that cannot be classified unambiguously as either male or female, the frequency of intersex is almost certainly less than 0.02% (Sax, 2002; see also Hull, 2003).

On a deeper level, the “patchwork” definition of sex used in the social sciences is purely descriptive and lacks a functional rationale. This contrasts sharply with how the sexes are defined in biology. From a biological standpoint, what distinguishes the males and females of a species is the size of their gametes: males produce small gametes (e.g., sperm), and females produce large gametes (e.g., eggs; Kodric-Brown & Brown, 1987).<sup>4</sup> Dimorphism in gamete size or *anisogamy* is the dominant pattern in multicellular organisms, including animals. The evolution of two gamete types with different sizes and roles in fertilization is the predictable consequence of selection to maximize the efficiency of fertilization (Lehtonen & Kokko, 2011; Lehtonen & Parker, 2014). In turn, anisogamy set the stage for sexual selection (i.e., selection via mating competition and mate choice), with predictable consequences for the evolution of sexually differentiated traits in morphology, development, and behavior (Janicke et al., 2016; Lehtonen et al., 2016; Schärer et al., 2012). Of course, the existence of two distinct sexes does not mean that sex-related *traits* must also have binary, sharply bimodal distributions. The sex binary is perfectly compatible with large amounts of within-sex variation in anatomy, physiology, and behavior. In fact, sexual selection often amplifies individual variability in sex-related traits (typically more strongly in males) and can favor the evolution of multiple alternative phenotypes within each sex (see Del Giudice et al., 2018b; Taborsky & Brockmann, 2010).

To be clear, the biological definition of sex is not just one option among many equally valid alternatives; the very *existence* of differentiated males and females in a species depends on the existence of two gamete types. Chromosomes and hormones participate in the mechanics of sex determination and sexual differentiation, but do not play the same foundational role. The sex binary, then, is not a fiction but a basic biological fact: even if a given individual may fail to produce viable gametes, there are only two gamete types with no meaningful intermediate forms (Lehtonen & Parker, 2014; see also Cretella et al., 2019). This dichotomy is not statistical but *functional* and hence is not challenged by the existence of intersex conditions (regardless of their frequency), nonbinary gender identities, and other seeming exceptions. As a rule, scholars who argue against the “sex/gender binary” are happy to dive into the fine details of sexual differentiation, but typically avoid mentioning anisogamy, let alone grappling with its implications for the evolution of the sexes. This has not stopped the misconception that “sex is not binary” from spreading, not just in the social sciences but in the broader literature. In 2015, *Nature* published a feature claiming that sex had been “redefined” along nonbinary lines (Ainsworth, 2015); in 2020, a research update on the COVID-19 virus came with the disclaimer “*Nature* recognizes that sex and gender are neither binary nor fixed” (Nature, 2020).

In the rest of the chapter, I always use “sex” and “sex differences” whenever the distinction is between males and females as groups. When discussing research on

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<sup>4</sup>Species with *simultaneous hermaphroditism* (mostly plants and invertebrates) do not have distinct sexes, since any individual can produce both types of gametes at the same time.

stereotypes, social perception, identity, etc., I use “sex” and “gender” in a context-sensitive manner, without any implications about biology vs. socialization. (For example, it has become customary to talk of “gender stereotypes” instead of “sex stereotypes,” and I use the standard label for simplicity.)

## A Peek at the Recent Literature

### *Introductory Textbooks*

For many college students, introductory textbooks represent the first or only exposure to the field of psychology. As an informal survey of the field, I went through seven recent introductory psychology textbooks, five traditional (Burton et al., 2019; Grison & Gazzaniga, 2019; Kalat, 2016; Morris & Maisto, 2018; Schacter et al., 2020) and two open-access (Noba Project, 2020; Spielman, 2020). Note that I selected these textbooks based on availability, so this should not be mistaken for a systematic overview. In two texts out of seven (Grison & Gazzaniga, 2019; Spielman, 2020), sex differences in personality and cognition were not discussed at all, except for some vague references to gender stereotypes. Sex differences in personality were mentioned in only two textbooks (Kalat, 2016; Schacter et al., 2020); in both cases, the authors described them as small and emphasized overall similarities. All seven texts mentioned sex differences in aggression and/or mating and noted possible biological explanations (Burton et al., 2019; Kalat, 2016; Noba Project, 2020; Schacter et al., 2020), although in most cases the coverage was extremely cursory and partial. Five textbooks addressed sex differences in cognitive abilities while emphasizing similarity and/or malleability (Burton et al., 2019; Kalat, 2016; Morris & Maisto, 2018; Noba Project, 2020; Schacter et al., 2020). One of them cited evidence that cognitive sex differences are stable across time and places (Burton et al., 2019), but none discussed findings of stronger differences in gender-egalitarian countries. Five texts introduced at least *some* concepts related to sexual selection, however briefly (Burton et al., 2019; Kalat, 2016; Morris & Maisto, 2018; Noba Project, 2020;<sup>5</sup> Schacter et al., 2020). Finally, two texts out of seven offered “nonbinary” accounts of sex and/or gender (Grison & Gazzaniga, 2019; Noba Project, 2020).

This quick survey illustrates many of the trends I discussed earlier. As expected, there is an overall tendency to ignore and/or downplay sex differences, to the point that a substantial fraction of the textbooks was partly or completely silent on the issue. At the same time, there is quite a bit of variation in coverage, and a few outliers that deviate from the general trend. The textbooks also revealed a tension between the standard preferences of the discipline and the growing influence of

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<sup>5</sup>The Noba Project textbook is a collection of stand-alone chapters, each written by different authors. Sexual selection was discussed in the chapter on evolutionary psychology (Buss, 2020), but not in the one on gender, which took a decidedly social-constructionist approach (Brown et al., 2020).

evolutionary psychology, particularly in specific domains such as mating and aggression (see also Ferguson et al., 2018).

### ***Generalist Journals***

Within the technical literature, generalist journals facilitate the exchange of ideas and findings across specialized subfields. Because they publish papers from multiple areas of research, generalist journals should provide something like an “average” picture of the discipline, smoothing out the biases and intellectual traditions of individual areas. For this survey, I reviewed the papers published during the years 2018–2020 in six high-impact journals: *American Psychologist*, *Psychological Review*, *Psychological Bulletin*, *Annual Review of Psychology*, *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, and *Perspectives on Psychological Science*.<sup>6</sup> I selected relevant papers based on their title and abstract and counted a total of 19 articles dealing with sex and gender.<sup>7</sup>

Of the 19 papers, 4 centered on the idea of challenging the sex/gender binary: a widely disseminated paper by Hyde et al. (2019); two comments to Hyde et al., one favorable (Reilly, 2019) and one critical (Cretella et al., 2019); and a radical social-constructionist piece by Morgenroth and Ryan (2020).

Three papers dealt specifically with gender stereotypes. These were a review of the topic by Ellemers (2018), a historical analysis of stereotype changes in the USA by Eagly et al. (2020), and an experimental study on negative stereotypes about the intellectual ability of girls and women (Bian et al., 2018). In her review, Ellemers rejected the idea that gender stereotypes may reflect actual psychological differences between the sexes (“If there is a kernel of truth underlying gender stereotypes, it is a tiny kernel”; p. 278) and gave short shrift to possible biological explanations. In the study by Bian et al., participants seemed to assume that people with very high intelligence are more likely to be males than females. The authors dismissed this belief as a “negative stereotype about women”; they seemed unaware that males *are* in fact overrepresented at the high end of the IQ distribution (as well as the low end; e.g., Arden & Plomin, 2006; Johnson et al., 2008).<sup>8</sup> A fourth paper by Gruber et al. (2021) was a wide-ranging analysis of gender gaps in academic psychology (e.g., career advancement, salary, grants, publication and citation rates). This paper was noteworthy because it dismissed some robust empirical patterns—men are overrepresented at the highest levels of cognitive ability, men are more assertive and

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<sup>6</sup>I completed this survey on November 9, 2020, and included advance publication papers that were online at that time.

<sup>7</sup>One additional paper (Webermann & Murphy, 2020) offered recommendations to reduce “gender-based violence and misconduct on college campuses.” Since this paper had a strictly applied focus and did not deal with basic research on sex and gender, I excluded it from the survey.

<sup>8</sup>The issue of greater male variability in intellectual abilities has a long and contentious history, which I address later in the chapter.

dominant, and women are more communal—as mere stereotypes (see Del Giudice, 2015; Twenge, 1997). The authors also embraced a socialization account of sex differences and rejected the possibility that some of them may have an adaptive explanation.

Of the remaining 11 papers, 4 took an explicitly evolutionary approach: a review of men’s and women’s response to sexual versus emotional infidelity (Buss, 2018); a comparative analysis of peer relationships in male and female humans vs. other primates (Benenson, 2019); a paper on mitochondrial functioning as a mechanism for variation in general intelligence and a possible contributing factor to sex difference in variability (Geary, 2018); and a conceptual paper on gender as the basis for social cognition (Martin & Slepian, 2020).<sup>9</sup> Another experimental study (Treat et al., 2020) investigated men’s perception of women’s sexual interest, but—surprisingly—failed to mention the substantial evolutionary literature on this topic (e.g., Haselton, 2003; Haselton et al., 2016; Murray et al., 2017; Perilloux & Kurzban, 2015).

The final six papers were all meta-analyses or systematic reviews of sex differences. The topics were episodic memory (Asperholm et al., 2019), student achievement in reading/writing (Reilly et al., 2019), the initiation of negotiations (Kugler et al., 2018),<sup>10</sup> the development of spatial reasoning (Lauer et al., 2019), the prevalence of mental disorders (Hartung & Lefler, 2019), and maternal reminiscing styles (differentiated by the child’s sex; Waters et al., 2019). Of the meta-analyses that included a review of theoretical models, three considered both social and biological explanations (Asperholm et al., 2019; Hartung & Lefler, 2019; Reilly et al., 2019), while two only considered socialization effects (Kugler et al., 2018; Waters et al., 2019).

Once again, this brief survey of generalist journals reveals a fair amount of theoretical diversity, but also a pervasive tendency to emphasize socialization over biology and downplay robust empirical findings as “stereotypes.” Four out of 19 papers were motivated by the transparently ideological project of challenging (and ultimately “disrupting”) the sex/gender binary.

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<sup>9</sup>More precisely, Martin and Slepian (2020) mixed ideas about evolved psychological mechanisms from evolutionary psychology with the socialization account of social role theory (Eagly & Wood, 2012, 2016; see below). The result is a strangely incoherent theory, according to which (a) humans possess evolved, deeply ingrained, and stable gender schemas about typical masculine vs. feminine behaviors; but (b) masculine and feminine behaviors *themselves* are mainly shaped by socialization and malleable to the point that they can be changed with subtle linguistic interventions (e.g., relabeling assertive and competitive behaviors from “masculine” to “agentic” should help women become more competitive in the workplace).

<sup>10</sup>The meta-analysis by Kugler et al. (2018) found that sex differences in the initiation of negotiation (a behavior that is thought to contribute to gender inequalities) were “small” by conventional statistical criteria (for a detailed critique of conventional criteria for effect sizes, see Del Giudice, 2020). As I noted above, this is usually a preferred outcome—but *not* when differences are presented as evidence of discrimination. Indeed, the authors went to some length to explain that even small effects can cumulate over time and give rise to large differences in outcomes—a reasonable argument, but one that is rarely brought up in the literature on “gender similarities” (e.g., Hyde, 2005, 2014; but see Zell et al., 2015).

Among other things, this survey is a reminder of the continuing popularity of *social role theory* (SRT; Eagly & Wood, 1999, 2012, 2016; Wood & Eagly, 2012) in the sex differences literature. SRT played a major theoretical role in 4 of the papers (Gruber et al., 2021; Eagly et al., 2020; Kugler et al., 2018; Martin & Slepian, 2020) and was cited in another 4 (Ellemers, 2018; Hyde et al., 2019; Morgenroth & Ryan, 2020; Reilly et al., 2019), for a total of 8 papers out of 19. (SRT was also cited in four of the seven introductory textbooks: Burton et al., 2019; Kalat, 2016; Noba Project, 2020; and Schacter et al., 2020.) In a nutshell, the theory posits that evolved sex differences in physical and reproductive traits (e.g., size, strength, pregnancy, and lactation) have shaped the division of labor between men and women throughout history (e.g., warfare vs. child-rearing). In turn, the continued existence of sexually differentiated tasks has created powerful cultural stereotypes about masculine and feminine traits, most notably along the axes of dominance/agency vs. nurturance/communion. These stereotypes affect individual behavior through socialization (partly via role-congruent activation of hormonal changes, e.g., in testosterone and oxytocin levels), leading to the development of psychological differences between the sexes.

According to SRT, psychological sex differences are mostly constructed by socialization practices, but the fact that they are ultimately grounded in evolved physical differences explains their stability across time and cultures. From a biological standpoint, SRT is extremely implausible, as it postulates an unexplained dualism between physical traits (subject to natural and sexual selection) and psychological traits (more or less untouched by selection and only shaped by socialization, either directly or indirectly via hormonal regulation).<sup>11</sup> Moreover, the theory

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<sup>11</sup>In a recent video interview (October 10, 2019; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gPsXpDIE0LA>), Alice Eagly claimed that she had never denied the existence of sexually selected differences in psychological traits, but had simply chosen to emphasize the role of socialization. This is a transcript of the segment (starting at 17:56):

They [the evolutionary critics] put words in my mouth that I never said! I never said there weren't such influences. It's merely that I emphasized others that they forget about. So I would not claim that there are no such effects of prenatal androgenization or sexual selection or whatever, but the force of my work has been to show that there are other influences, and we need to get it all together.

This will come as a surprise to the many scholars who have used SRT *precisely* to discount the role of sexual selection and other biological factors. But the interview does raise the question of what SRT actually says in this regard. Re-reading the key papers presenting the theory, I could not find a single passage explicitly stating that psychological sex differences can be explained by sexual selection, though I did find a number of passages suggesting the opposite (e.g., Eagly & Wood, 1999, p. 415; Eagly & Wood, 2016, p. 464). Wood and Eagly (2012) came closest to accepting an organizational role for prenatal androgens, but described the evidence as equivocal and concluded that “[a]lthough sex-differentiated social experience surely does not operate on a blank slate, what is written on that slate has not been adequately deciphered so far” (p. 67). Throughout the chapter, they discussed how socialization may affect hormonal regulation, but not how hormonal differences may modulate social interactions (note that, in their Figure 1, socialization factors affect hormonal regulation, but not vice versa). Similarly, Wood and Eagly (2000) stated “[...] we recognize that such biological factors [hormones] work in concert with psychological processes involv-

fails to explain why many sex differences become larger in more gender-egalitarian cultures (see Friedman et al., 2000; Geary, 2021; Kenrick & Li, 2000; Schmitt, 2015). However, SRT has proven quite attractive to social scientists, likely because it allows them to effectively adopt a pure socialization perspective—and avoid inconvenient questions about evolved sex differences “in the brain”—without appearing to reject evolutionary biology (see also Geary, 2021).

## A Jump into the Time Warp

The received view on the history of sex and gender in psychology is nicely summarized by this quote, from an article in the *Monitor on Psychology* announcing the APA’s new and controversial “guidelines for psychological practice with boys and men”:

Prior to the second-wave feminist movement in the 1960s, all psychology was the psychology of men. Most major studies were done only on white men and boys, who stood in as proxies for humans as a whole. Researchers assumed that masculinity and femininity were opposite ends of a spectrum, and “healthy” psychology entailed identifying strongly with the gender roles conferred by a person’s biological sex. (Pappas, 2019, p. 35)

To call this a distorted account would be an understatement: as I show in this section, this familiar narrative turns out to be an almost complete fabrication. I do not blame the author of this quote, though; she simply distilled what can be found in ostensibly authoritative sources, such as this chapter by Denmark et al. (2008) in the second edition of *Psychology of Women*:<sup>12</sup>

When one examines the psychological research from Wundt’s 1874 establishment of the domain of psychology up to recent times, psychology appeared to focus almost exclusively on the behavior of men or male animals. In other words, the first method of examining woman was to categorize them as lacking. Much early research that included female subjects came to the conclusion that women were inferior in some way. Additionally, if females were included in the sample, neither sex nor gender differences were reported, which discounted the influence of these factors and, in essence, was an indication of the belief that men were the norm when considering various psychological factors. And again, if women were included in the studies, biased results indicated that women were by nature inferior. [...] However, generally speaking, most early research never investigated comparisons between women and men at all (Schwabacher, 1972). Wendy McKenna and Suzanne Kessler (1977) reported that over 95 percent of all early research did not examine female-

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ing social expectations and self-concepts to yield sex differences in behavior” and seemed to endorse “a feedback model in which testosterone affects socially dominant behavior and is in turn affected by such behavior and its outcomes.” My conclusion is that Eagly and Wood hedged their bets on the role of sex hormones; their writing on this issue invites a deflationary reading, but remains open to alternative interpretations (see also Eagly, 2018). On the other hand, as far as I can tell, these authors always portrayed SRT as an *alternative* to sexual selection on psychological traits, rather than a complementary explanation.

<sup>12</sup>I recommend the Denmark et al. chapter as a counterpoint to my “revisionist” account. For a less biased history of the field, see Chapter 2 in Blakemore et al. (2009).

male comparisons, therefore ignoring any possible differences due to sex and gender. Prior to the 1970s, almost all research on women had been relegated to the periphery of psychology rather than integrated into its main body. (Denmark et al., 2008, pp. 5–6)

The entire passage sounds immediately suspicious if one considers that, already in 1894, Havelock Ellis could draw on dozens of studies of psychological sex differences for his influential book *Man and Woman* (more on this below). I was particularly struck by the blanket statement about “over 95% of all early research,” so I looked up the original paper by McKenna and Kessler (1977; the 1976 date in the quote is incorrect). To my (mild) surprise, the actual study had little to do with the description. McKenna and Kessler did not analyze “all early research” in psychology, but the latest 312 human experiments on interpersonal attraction and 244 on aggression, ending on December 1973. The authors did not report the date of the earliest studies in the analysis, but it is unlikely that they went further back than 10–20 years.<sup>13</sup> They found that 38–45% of the studies included both males and females,<sup>14</sup> but did not say how many of those studies involved comparisons between the sexes.<sup>15</sup>

This is not an isolated case; feminist history is full of similar distortions and “urban legends” that rarely get corrected from the inside. Notable examples include the claim that women have been underrepresented as participants in medical research (Satel, 2002); that biologists clung to the idea of sperm as active and “macho” and eggs as passive and “coy” because of their sexist prejudices (Gross, 1998); that Victorian physicians used vibrators on female patients to treat hysteria (Lieberman & Schatzberg, 2018); and that before World War II, the color pink was associated with boys, while blue was associated with girls (Del Giudice, 2012, 2017). The problem is not with feminism per se but with activist history in general; whatever the virtues, an activist mindset is a major impediment to critical scrutiny and self-correction and encourages distortions in the service of the ideological narrative (Hoff Sommers, 2009). Unfortunately, activist history is often all one gets when it comes to the topic of sex and gender. In the rest of this section, I use citations from original sources to identify recurring themes and trace some trends that go back more than a hundred years. Some of the quotes are lengthy, but I think it is important to go beyond the soundbites and let the sources speak more freely.

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<sup>13</sup>The authors checked 600 entries for each topic as reported in the *Psychological Abstracts*. Google Scholar returns 1810 results for “interpersonal attraction” between 1953 and 1973 (searched on November 11, 2020). If one third of them was reported in the *Abstracts*, that would amount to about 600 entries.

<sup>14</sup>Combined data from Tables 1 and 2 in McKenna and Kessler (1977).

<sup>15</sup>McKenna and Kessler cited a paper by Carlson and Carlson (1960), who examined 298 human studies published in the *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology* between 1958 and 1960. They found that 36% of the studies included participants of both sexes and that 30% of those studies reported statistical tests of sex differences. There was no information about the proportion of studies that reported descriptive statistics for both sexes without performing a test (and vice versa).

## *The Dark Ages (Before the 1960s)*

The best place to start may be the first edition of Havelock Ellis' *Man and Woman* (1894). This book is a wide-ranging overview of sex differences and similarities in physical and psychological traits. Considering that it was written more than 120 years ago, I think it has aged remarkably well.<sup>16</sup> Throughout the book, Ellis took pains to acknowledge possible biases, strike a balance between nature and nurture, and reject the idea of female (or male) inferiority. Here are a few quotes that convey the spirit of the book:

It is also being recognised as reasonable that both sexes should study side by side at the school and the college, and where not side by side, still in closely similar fashion, while the recreations of each sex are to some extent becoming common to both. Such conditions have tended to remove artificial sexual differences, and have largely obliterated the coarser signs of superiority which may before have been possessed by one sex over another. The process of transition is still in rapid progress. (Ellis, 1894, p. 17)

### On biases in sex differences research:

We have to recognise, it will be seen, not merely the difficulties which come from too small a number of observations, where we have the resource of putting one series of observations against another, but also the more serious difficulty of inevitable bias in the investigator's mind. [...] Thus one conscientious investigator (like Manouvrier) may find that all the facts of anatomy and physiology point to the superiority of women; another, equally conscientious (like Delaunay), may find that they all point to the superiority of men. (ibid., pp. 28–29)

### On sex differences in brain anatomy:

While, however, the brain is at present an unprofitable region for the study of sexual difference, it is, as we have seen, an extremely instructive region for the study of sexual equality. Men possess no relative superiority of brain-mass; the superiority in brain-mass, so far as it exists, is on woman's side;<sup>17</sup> this, however, implies no intellectual superiority, but is merely a characteristic of short people and children. Nor is there any well-marked sexual arrangement of the nervous elements which implies relative inferiority on one side or the other. (ibid., p. 113)

### On sex differences in emotionality (discussed under the rubric of “affectability”):

The question still remains how far the affectability of women is natural and organic, how far it is the mere accidental result of external circumstances. Is the greater emotionality of women a permanent and ineradicable fact? There can be no doubt that to a very large extent

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<sup>16</sup>Needless to say, there are a lot of incorrect or outdated statements in the book, and some ideas of the time (e.g., the recurring distinction between “higher” and “lower” races) have definitely *not* aged well. But readers familiar with current research on sex differences will be struck by how many issues Ellis managed to get approximately right, despite the limited data and conceptual tools available at the time.

<sup>17</sup>Note that Ellis was talking about differences in *relative* brain mass, after adjusting for differences in body mass or size. Ellis spent several pages (pp. 95–101) reviewing alternative ways to make this adjustment and considering their limitations. In contrast with Ellis' conclusions, the recent evidence shows that men have a larger brain even controlling for body size (e.g., Ankney, 1992; Ritchie et al., 2018).

emotionality may be modified. [...] Just as we have sure reason to believe that sensibility may by training be increased, so there is still greater reason to believe that affectability may by training be decreased. That there is, however, a limit to this sexual equalisation of affectability remains extremely probable. [...] Affectability in women may be reduced to finer and more delicate shades; it can scarcely be brought to the male standard.

This result is by no means to be regretted. We have seen that the affectability of women ensures to them certain solid advantages, and assists to safeguard them against evils from which men are specially prone to suffer. (ibid., pp. 313–314)<sup>18</sup>

#### On Darwin's hypothesis of greater male variability:

Both the physical and the mental characters of men show wider limits of variation than do the physical and mental characters of women. Monsters are more often male than female. [...] Abnormal variations of nearly all kinds are more frequent in men than in women. [...] We must regard genius as an organic congenital abnormality (although the evidence in proof of this cannot be entered into here), and in nearly every department it is, undeniably, of more frequent occurrence among men than among women. The statement of this fact has sometimes been regarded by women as a slur upon their sex; they have sought to explain it by lack of opportunity, education, etc. It does not appear that women have been equally anxious to find fallacies in the statement that idiocy is more common among men. Yet the two statements must be taken together. Genius is more common among men by virtue of the same general tendency by which idiocy is more common among men. The two facts are but two aspects of a larger zoological fact—the greater variability of the male. (ibid., pp. 358–366)

#### And finally:

Any reader who has turned to this book for facts or arguments bearing on the everlasting discussion regarding the “alleged inferiority of women,” and who has followed me so far, will already have gathered the natural conclusion we reach on this point. We may regard all such discussion as absolutely futile and foolish. If it is a question of determining the existence and significance of some particular physical or psychic sexual difference a conclusion may not be impossible. To make any broad statement of the phenomena is to recognise that no general conclusion is possible. Now and again we come across facts which group themselves with a certain degree of uniformity, but as we continue we find other equally important facts which group themselves with equal uniformity in another sense. The result produces compensation. (ibid., pp. 393–394)

One should remember that first-wave feminism was already ascendant at the end of the nineteenth century and was going to intensify in the early decades of the twentieth. A key representative of this period was Helen Thompson Woolley, who in 1903 published *The Mental Traits of Sex*, a thorough experimental investigation of sex differences across dozens of tasks.<sup>19</sup> At the end of the book, Woolley took issue

<sup>18</sup>Neuroticism/emotional stability is one of the personality traits showing the largest and most robust differences between men and women. Sex differences become even larger in more gender-egalitarian countries, a finding that would have surprised even Ellis (see Mac Giolla & Kajonius, 2019; Schmitt et al., 2017).

<sup>19</sup>Unfortunately, the sample was very small (25 men and 25 women), so the results were far less reliable than assumed at the time. For example, Woolley failed to detect any sex differences in emotion-related measures and used this finding to argue that women's higher emotionality was a baseless stereotype (see below).

with then-current biological explanations of sex differences<sup>20</sup>—including the hypothesis of greater male variability—and concluded with a plea for environmental explanations:

The biological theory of psychological differences of sex is not in a condition to compel assent. While it is true, therefore, that the present investigation tends to support the theory, it is also true that the uncertain basis of the theory itself leaves room for other explanations of the facts, if there are other satisfactory ways of explaining them.

[...] Although the timeworn controversy is far from satisfactory settlement, the results of recent observation of individual development have tended to emphasize more and more the extreme importance of environment. [...]

The fact that very genuine and important differences of environment do exist can be denied only by the most superficial observer. Even in our country, where boys and girls are allowed to go to the same schools and to play together to some extent, the social atmosphere is different, from the cradle. Different toys are given them, different occupations and games are taught them, different ideals of conduct are held up before them. [...]

It will probably be said that this view of the case puts the cart before the horse—that the training and social surroundings of the sexes are different because their natural characteristics are different. It will be said that a boy is encouraged to activity because he is naturally active [...] But there are many indications that these very interests are socially stimulated. [...]

There are, as everyone must recognize, signs of a radical change in the social ideals of sex. The point to be emphasized as the outcome of this study is that, according to our present light, the psychological differences of sex seem to be largely due, not to difference of average capacity, nor to difference in type of mental activity, but to differences in the social influences brought to bear on the developing individual from early infancy to adult years. The question of the future development of the intellectual life of women is one of social necessities and ideals, rather than one of inborn psychological characteristics of sex. (Thompson, 1903, pp. 176–182)

Woolley's book exemplifies some then-developing trends that have persisted to this day, including the preference for socialization accounts and the diffidence toward biological explanations. In 1910 and 1914, Woolley wrote two influential reviews of sex differences research in the *Psychological Bulletin*. These reviews foreshadow other important themes—including the growing emphasis on sex similarities within psychology and the increasing divergence between the findings of rigorous research and laypeople's ideas about male and female psychology. For example:

[T]here seems to be a general trend toward the opinion that mind is probably not a secondary sexual character—in other words that there are probably few if any psychological differences of sex which are of biological origin—a statement which I think holds true in spite of the continued popularity of such books as Mobius' *Physiologischer [sic] Schwachsinn des Weibes* and Weininger's *Geschlecht und Character [sic]*. The tendency to minimize sexual differences is most marked with regard to intellectual processes, the field where most of the experimental work has been done, and in which the practical educational tests have

<sup>20</sup>In particular, Woolley criticized Geddes and Thomson's (1889) theory of the evolution of sex, a then-popular alternative to Darwin's (1871) theory of sexual selection. Many biologists regarded sexual selection theory as dubious until it was formalized by Fisher (1930); in the meantime, there were several attempts to develop an alternative account of the evolution of males and females. Geddes and Thomson's theory was one of those attempts, based on the opposition between anabolic and catabolic processes; in fairness to Woolley, there was plenty to be critical about.

been made. Even the time-honored belief that men are more capable of independent and creative work is beginning to give way in view of the successful competition of women in graduate work and in obtaining the doctorate [...]. The fundamental importance of sexual differences in affective processes and in standards of conduct still commands a larger measure of credence. The world at large is quite agreed that women are to a greater extent than men dominated by emotions, though the only direct experimental evidence does not support this view [...]

Finally, one might characterize the drift of recent discussion as a shift of emphasis from a biological to a sociological interpretation of the mental characteristics of sex. The very small amount of difference between the sexes in those functions open to experimentation, the contradictory results obtained from different series of investigations, and the nature of the differences which prove to be most constant, have led to the belief that the psychological differences of sex are of sociological rather than of biological origin. (Woolley, 1910, pp. 341–342)

In 1914, Woolley remarked that psychological research on sex differences was growing so fast that it had become impossible to keep up with all the new literature:

During the four years since my last review of the literature of the psychology of sex [...] the number of experimental investigations in the field has increased to such an extent that whereas it was difficult at that time to find anything to review, it is now impossible to review all I could find. (Woolley, 1914, p. 353)

Compare this statement with the narrative that “up to recent times, psychology appeared to focus almost exclusively on the behavior of men or male animals” or that “most early research never investigated comparisons between women and men at all” (Denmark et al., 2008). It can also be useful to stress that the psychologists of the 1910s were *not* simply concluding that “women were by nature inferior”; on the contrary, Woolley (1910, 1914) listed several areas in which women had been found to consistently outperform men, including aspects of perception, memory, and reasoning.

Psychological research in Europe slowed down during World War I, but there were enough studies to fill regular reviews in the *Psychological Bulletin*. Leta Stetter Hollingworth wrote a series of those reviews in 1916, 1918, and 1919. A recurring theme was the variability hypothesis, which Hollingworth herself had critiqued and researched (e.g., Hollingworth, 1914). The data available at this point were contradictory, and opinions on the topic remained sharply divided.<sup>21</sup> As I discuss later, the question of variability would take almost another hundred years to be answered with confidence. This is how Hollingworth concluded her 1919 review:

The year's work yields nothing consistent as a result of the comparison of the sexes in mental traits. In this respect it resembles the work of other years. Pressey finds that girls excel boys in mental tests at all ages, from 8 to 16 years, inclusive; Porteus finds that boys excel girls at nearly all ages. Pressey finds that boys are more variable than girls; Frasier finds that there are no sex differences in variability. In group after group of superior children, the highest intelligence is found now in a boy, now in a girl. Perhaps the logical conclusion to be reached on the basis of these findings is that the custom of perpetuating

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<sup>21</sup> For example, Edward Thorndike was an early advocate of the hypothesis (Thorndike, 1906); Lewis Terman initially argued against it, but changed his mind in his later work (see McNemar & Terman, 1936; Terman et al., 1946).

this review is no longer profitable, and may as well be abandoned. (Hollingworth, 1919, p. 373)

Like other feminist authors, Hollingworth was acutely skeptical of biological explanations and emphasized the role of environmental differences and the limitations imposed by pregnancy and childcare. By then, this attitude was fairly widespread in academic circles. I do not want to exaggerate the impact of egalitarian ideals on early twentieth-century psychology; especially in applied areas such as clinical psychology and education, it is easy to find influential works full of unsupported speculations about sex differences. A case in point is the often-quoted *Youth: Its Education, Regimen, and Hygiene* by G. Stanley Hall (1906).<sup>22</sup> But I do want to challenge the myth that academic psychology was indifferent or hostile to women until second-wave feminism came about in the 1960s and 1970s.<sup>23</sup>

As literature reviews on sex differences continued to be published regularly, the concerns of the field kept evolving. Allen (1927, 1930) noted the growing interest in sex hormones, fostered by the striking advances in endocrinology that were taking place in the 1920s and 1930s. While the variability hypothesis was still debated, the prevailing opinion was that sex differences are heavily influenced by environmental factors and tend to be relatively small across the board. Allen repeated the same conclusions in both his 1927 and 1930 reviews:

By way of summary, three points should be noted:

1. Few, if any, of the so-called “sex differences” are due solely to sex. Individual differences often are greater than differences determined on the basis of sex.
2. The social training of the two sexes is, and always has been, different, producing differential selective factors, interests, standards, etc.
3. The number of variables which either cannot or have not been controlled hitherto make conclusions uncertain. Among other factors, a more careful definition of terms is needed. (Allen, 1927, p. 301)

Before moving on, I want to briefly discuss Terman and Miles’ (1936) seminal work on masculinity-femininity (M-F) as a trait of individual variation. Terman and Miles measured M-F as a bipolar construct, an idea that was to come under fire in the 1970s and be quickly abandoned, only to be rediscovered in the 1990s (more on this below). The point I want to bring up is that, contrary to the received view, Terman and Miles did *not* equate mental health with a rigid identification with one’s biologically prescribed role. Instead, they described masculinity and femininity as

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<sup>22</sup>Then again, see Thorndike (1906) for a very different perspective on the same issue.

<sup>23</sup>Shields (1975) recounts the same period in the history of psychology, but from the standard feminist assumptions that sex differences are largely socially constructed; that the variability hypothesis (like other biological explanations) was only accepted because it justified women’s subordination; that the idea of an evolved “maternal instinct” is nothing but a subtly oppressive fiction; etc. From this vantage point, everything looks much darker. But even then, there is no ground for the narrative that “all psychology was the psychology of men”; and the contributions of Hollingworth, Woolley, and other feminist psychologists were not marginalized, but published in top journals, widely discussed, and accepted by many in the discipline.

continuous rather than mutually exclusive categories and argued that inflexible masculine/feminine roles take a toll on individuals and society:

Masculinity and femininity are important aspects of human personality. They are not to be thought of as lending to it merely a superficial coloring and flavor; rather they are one of a small number of cores around which the structure of personality gradually takes shape. The masculine-feminine contrast is probably as deeply grounded, whether by nature or by nurture, as any other which human temperament presents. [...] Whether it is less or more grounded in general physiological and biochemical factors than these remains to be seen. In how far the lines of cleavage it represents are inevitable is unknown, but the possibility of eliminating it from human nature is at least conceivable. The fact remains that the M-F dichotomy, in various patterns, has existed throughout history and is still firmly established in our mores. In a considerable fraction of the population it is the source of many acute difficulties in the individual's social and sexual adjustment and in a greater fraction it affords a most important impetus to creative work and happiness. The indications are that the present situation, together with the problems it raises for education, psychology, and social legislation, will remain with us for a long time to come.

As long as the child is faced by two relatively distinct patterns of personality, each attracting him by its unique features, and is yet required by social pressures to accept the one and reject the other, a healthy integration of personality may often be difficult to achieve. Cross-parent fixations will continue to foster sexual inversion; the less aggressively inclined males will be driven to absurd compensations to mask their femininity; the more aggressive and independent females will be at a disadvantage in the marriage market; competition between the sexes will be rife in industry, in politics, and in the home as it is today. (Terman & Miles, 1936, pp. 451–452)

This is what Terman and colleagues wrote 10 years later:

Present-day concepts of sexuality no longer regard maleness and femaleness as mutually exclusive categories. Sex is not an all-or-none affair; masculinity and femininity are relative terms. [...]

The biochemical forces which activate masculine and feminine behavior are in some degree present in both sexes. [...] As someone has stated it, there are no men, there are no women; there are only sexual majorities. (Terman et al., 1946, p. 955)

With the rise and consolidation of behaviorism, the eclipse of evolutionary psychology at the end of the 1930s (Gillette, 2007),<sup>24</sup> and the ebbing of fist-wave feminism, the 1940s and 1950s were relatively uneventful for sex differences research. The idea that popular stereotypes exaggerate small and inconsequential differences persisted (e.g., Fernberger, 1948); other scholars saw the possibility for a détente between nature and nurture:

For the present we may well avoid the extreme position common both among laymen and scientists a generation ago, that nearly all sex differences are to be accounted for in terms of original nature, and avoid equally the extreme position which holds that the temperaments of men and women are no more sex-determined than their clothing. Now that feminism is no longer a violent issue, it is becoming possible to examine the picture of sex differences unmoved by emotions deriving from sex rivalry. The physiologist has long

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<sup>24</sup>Few know that the term “evolutionary psychology” was not coined in the 1990s (e.g., Barkow et al., 1992), but was already in use in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. See, for example, Stanley (1895), Howard (1927), and Jastrow (1927). For a historical overview, see Gillette (2007).

known that woman is something other than a wombed man, the social psychologist is beginning to suspect it, and one dares look forward to a change in the present-day bias of the cultural anthropologists. (Johnson & Terman, 1940, p. 331)

All of this was going to change dramatically, starting with the late 1960s and culminating in the 1970s; so this is where I go next.

## *The 1970s*

The rise of second-wave feminism was not the only historical shift in the psychology of the 1970s. There were also the decline of behaviorism and psychoanalysis; the situationist turn in social and personality psychology; and the (attempted) resurrection of evolutionary psychology on the wings of the sociobiological revolution (see Segerstråle, 2000). The mix was explosive. The moment is best captured by Naomi Weisstein's famous essay *Psychology constructs the female*, first published in 1968:

It is an interesting but limited exercise to show that psychologists and psychiatrists embrace these sexist norms of our culture, that they do not see beyond the most superficial and stultifying media conceptions of female nature, and that their ideas of female nature serve industry and commerce so well. Just because it's good for business doesn't mean it's wrong. What I will show is that it is wrong; that there isn't the tiniest shred of evidence that these fantasies of servitude and childish dependence have anything to do with women's true potential; that the idea of the nature of human possibility which rests on the accidents of individual development or genitalia, on what is possible today because of what happened yesterday, on the fundamentalist myth of sex organ causality, has strangled and deflected psychology so that it is relatively useless in describing, explaining, or predicting humans and their behavior. [...]

[T]he evidence is collecting that what a person does, and who he believes himself to be, will in general be a function of what people around him expect him to be, and what the overall situation in which he is acting implies that he is. Compared to the influence of the social context within which a person lives, his or her history and "traits", as well as biological makeup, may simply be random variations, "noise" superimposed on the true signal which can predict behavior.

[...] If subjects under quite innocuous and non-coercive social conditions can be made to kill other subjects and other types of social conditions will positively refuse to do so; if subjects can react to a state of physiological fear by becoming euphoric because there is somebody else round who is euphoric or angry because there is somebody else round who is angry; if students become intelligent because teachers expect them to be intelligent, and rats run mazes better because experimenters are told the rats are bright, then it is obvious that a study of human behavior requires, first and foremost, a study of the social contexts within which people move, the expectations as to how they will behave, and the authority which tells them who they are and what they are supposed to do. [...]

Thus, for example, if out of two individuals diagnosed as having the adrenogenital syndrome of female hermaphroditism, one is raised as a girl and one as a boy, each will act and identify her/himself accordingly. The one raised as a girl will consider herself a girl; the one raised as a boy will consider himself a boy; and each will conduct her/himself successfully in accord with that self-definition.

So, identical behavior occurs given different physiological states; and different behavior occurs given an identical physiological starting point. So it is not clear that differences in sex hormones are at all relevant to behavior. [...]

But even for the limited function that primate arguments serve, the evidence has been misused. Invariably, only those primates have been cited which exhibit exactly the kind of behavior that the proponents of the biological basis of human female behavior wish were true for humans. Thus, baboons and rhesus monkeys are generally cited: males in these groups exhibit some of the most irritable and aggressive behavior found in primates, and if one wishes to argue that females are naturally passive and submissive, these groups provide vivid examples. [...] [I]n general, a counter-example can be found for every sex-role behavior cited, including, as mentioned in the case of marmosets, male “mothering”. (Weisstein, 1971)

Thus, the feminist psychologists of the 1970s recovered the classic themes of the earlier decades (often without knowing; see Shields, 1975), but took them much further in a social constructionist direction (see also Eagly, 2018; Eagly & Wood, 2013). The variability hypothesis was seen as permanently discredited and often brought up as an example of old-fashioned sexist pseudoscience (e.g., Shields, 1975; Seller, 1981; Unger, 1979). The concept of gender crystallized this attitude; to some scholars, it pointed to the socially constructed reality of biological sex and the male-female binary:

Scientific knowledge does not inform the answer to the question: what makes a person either a female or a male, a woman or a man? Rather, scientific knowledge justifies, appears to give grounds for, and reflexively demonstrates the already existing knowledge that a person is either a female or a male. Biological, psychological and sociological differences do not lead to two non-overlapping categories of people. Rather, the socially shared, common sense, methodical construction of a world of two and only two genders leads to the discovery of biological, psychological and sociological differences.

[...] Although it seems that the biological facts have an existence independent of gender labels (there are XY chromosomes, etc. and all these together are labeled “male”), the process, seen through the ethnomethodological approach, is the reverse. [...]

The role that biology plays in gender attribution is to provide “signs”, signs which serve as good reasons for our attributions. [...] In our culture, biological facts give grounds for, and support, the facticity of two genders. At the same time, biology is grounded in, and gets its support from, the basic assumption that there are two, and only two, genders. (McKenna, 1978, pp. 3–8)

But these radical ideas were ahead of their time and did not leave an enduring impression on the discipline. Another flare was Sandra Bem’s work on androgyny and psychological adjustment (Bem, 1974, 1975), which proved an empirical dead end and was soon attacked for being insidiously sexist and male-centric (see Lippa, 2001). On the other hand, Bem’s argument that masculinity and femininity are not the ends of a continuum, but rather independent dimensions of behavior, made a lasting contribution to the deconstruction of gender (see also Constantinople, 1973). Also, from the ashes of androgyny rose *gender schema theory* (Bem, 1981), which is still a mainstream approach to the development of gender and gender identity (see Blakemore et al., 2009; Liben, 2016).

In terms of staying power, the landmark contribution of this period was probably Maccoby and Jacklin’s hugely influential book *The Psychology of Sex Differences*

(1974). The authors collected and analyzed a large number of studies and concluded that only four differences could be regarded as well established, namely, males are more aggressive; females excel in verbal ability; males excel in visuospatial ability; and males have superior mathematical skills. They noted that the evidence was equivocal for sex differences in tactile sensitivity, fear and anxiety, activity levels, competitiveness, dominance, compliance, and nurturant/“maternal” behaviors but dismissed sex differences in sociability, suggestibility, self-esteem, and a host of other traits as “unfounded beliefs.” Also, they failed to find consistent evidence of differential socialization in boys and girls, although this particular conclusion is often glossed over.

Maccoby and Jacklin’s book cemented the perception that, with very few exceptions, laypeople’s ideas about male and female behavior are just groundless stereotypes:

How is it possible that people continue to believe, for example, that girls are more “social” than boys, when careful observation and measurement in a variety of situations show no sex difference? Of course it is possible that we have not studied those particular situations that contribute most to the popular beliefs. But if this is the problem it means that the alleged sex difference exists only in a limited range of situations and the sweeping generalizations embodied in popular beliefs are not warranted. [...] A more likely explanation for the perpetuation of “myths” we believe, is the fact that stereotypes are such powerful things. (Maccoby & Jacklin, 1974, p. 355)

*The Psychology of Sex Differences* has been canonized as a careful, rigorous, even-handed analysis of the literature of the time. In reality, it was a biased and surprisingly shoddy piece of work. The authors failed to analyze many studies finding significant differences, even though they had cited them in the bibliography; over-interpreted non-significant tests as evidence of no difference, without taking into account statistical power and measurement reliability; largely based their conclusions on studies of young children (12 years old or younger in 75% of the studies); and dismissed several patterns indicative of sex differences with ad hoc reasons. Block (1976) discussed these problems in detail and reanalyzed Maccoby and Jacklin’s main findings, reaching dramatically different conclusions. This did not prevent the book from becoming a classic that is still cited to this day, often uncritically.

### ***Where Are We? When Are We?***

Almost 50 years and two waves of feminism later, what is the state of the field? Evolutionary psychology is hopefully here to stay; but despite some attempts at reconciliation (e.g., Buss & Schmitt, 2011; Campbell, 2006; Nicolas & Welling, 2015) and the contributions of scholars with a distinct feminist perspective (e.g., Fisher et al., 2013; Hrdy, 2009), it continues to attract harsh criticism by feminists outside the field (e.g., Barnett & Rivers, 2004; Fausto-Sterling, 1992, 2000; Fine, 2017; McCaughey, 2007; Saini, 2017). A coherent evolutionary approach

challenges every single one of the preferences that inform the psychology of sex and gender, so there is no resolution in sight. Social role theory is a false compromise, and while I suspect that it will remain popular for some time, it cannot provide the needed common ground (see also Geary, 2021). Like a hundred years ago, sexual selection is the main target of feminist critiques, not just in psychology (e.g., Fine, 2017; Tavris, 1992) but also in anthropology and biology (e.g., Dunsworth, 2020; Fausto-Sterling, 1992; Roughgarden, 2013; see Hankinson Nelson, 2017). Since the basic logic of sexual selection seems to be essentially correct, but most feminists cannot bring themselves to accept it (Vandermassen, 2004), the debate does not advance, and it's *déjà vu* all over again.

In the meantime, the variability hypothesis—a “pernicious hypothesis” for Noddings (1992) and a “social Darwinist myth” for Denmark et al. (2008)—has been largely confirmed across species (Reinhold & Engqvist, 2013; Wyman & Rowe, 2014). In humans, larger samples and better analytical techniques have shown that males are systematically more variable than females, both in general intelligence (indexed by IQ) and in most specific cognitive skills (e.g., Arden & Plomin, 2006; Baye & Monseur, 2016; Feingold, 1992; He & Wong, 2011; Johnson et al., 2008; Lohman & Lakin, 2009; Machin & Pekkarinen, 2008). The same applies to many physical and physiological traits (Lehre et al., 2009). In the domain of personality, men's scores also tend to be somewhat more variable; the main exception is neuroticism/emotional stability, which shows significantly higher variability in women (see Del Giudice, 2015, 2020; Del Giudice et al., 2018b). Empirical confirmation has not made the hypothesis less incendiary, however. Both Larry Summers (former President of Harvard; see Taylor, 2005) and James Damore (see Anomaly & Winegard, 2020) were ostracized for mentioning greater male variability, among other things; in 2017, a mathematical paper that discussed the logic of the hypothesis (Hill, 2017) was immediately “un-published” after controversy erupted (see Hill, 2018). As I noted earlier, it is still quite possible to publish in top psychology journals without acknowledging the evidence of higher male variability in intellectual abilities.

In psychology, the landmark work of the 2000s was surely Janet Hyde's (2005) paper on the *gender similarities hypothesis*, or the hypothesis that “males and females are similar on most, but not all, psychological variables. That is, men and women, as well as boys and girls, are more alike than they are different” (Hyde, 2005, p. 581). This had also been the message of Maccoby and Jacklin's book, so what was new? First, Hyde relied on data from large meta-analyses instead of individual studies. And second, she used conventional thresholds to sort sex differences into “trivial,” “small,” “moderate,” and “large.”

On the positive side, the paper highlighted the importance of quantification and demonstrated the potential of integrating data on a large scale. But the idea of interpreting sex differences automatically and out of context, based on meaningless conventional thresholds, was deeply unfortunate (for extended discussion of why this is the case, see Del Giudice, 2020; Hill et al., 2008). In all likelihood, the paper's visibility has contributed to entrench this mechanical practice even deeper in the literature (e.g., Zell et al., 2015); to illustrate, three of the meta-analyses I surveyed

for this chapter interpreted their findings based on the same thresholds (Kugler et al., 2018; Lauer et al., 2019; Reilly et al., 2019). Other limitations of Hyde's approach include averaging functionally distinct traits within the same category, neglecting measurement error, and failing to consider that differences can cumulate across traits yielding large multivariate distances between male and female profiles (see Del Giudice, 2020; Del Giudice et al., 2012). Be as it may, the conclusion that most sex differences are trivial to small struck a chord, and the paper has become a standard reference in the literature on gender stereotypes (e.g., Ellemers, 2018).

As an aside, Hyde (2005, 2014) recognized that trait variability is often higher in males, even though she downplayed the practical significance of this finding and emphasized the context dependence of sex differences. In Hyde's view, it is not only laypeople who are victim of inflated stereotypes but also scientists—and they should stop caring so much:

When researchers find a gender difference, they might productively ask themselves, is this important, and why is it important? Are other issues more important?

Nonetheless, research on psychological gender differences will continue for years to come, given many scientists' firm beliefs that such differences exist and are large and the media's insatiable thirst for new findings of gender differences. (Hyde, 2014, p. 3.21)

This attitude toward sex differences is fairly common in the psychological literature. The underlying assumption is that “stereotypes” of large and/or stable sex differences are harmful, to both individuals and society at large (e.g., Barnett & Rivers, 2004; Ellemers, 2018; Gruber et al., 2021; Hyde, 2005, 2014). For example:

It is time to consider the costs of overinflated claims of gender differences. Arguably, they cause harm in numerous realms, including women's opportunities in the workplace, couple conflict and communication, and analyses of self-esteem problems among adolescents. (Hyde, 2005, p. 590)

I do not dispute that exaggerating sex differences, and depicting them as overly rigid and inflexible, can cause all sorts of problems. But the converse is also obviously true: if there *are* some meaningful and robust sex differences, minimizing or denying them can be just as harmful—for example, by distorting people's understanding of themselves and others, hindering communication between partners and on the workplace, reducing the effectiveness of psychotherapy, and encouraging the adoption of unrealistic or counterproductive policies. The virtually complete neglect of these potential risks—in the face of constant alarm about the dangers of exaggerated stereotypes—is one of the clearest manifestations of ideological bias in this area of research.

The other major theme I have discussed is the deconstruction of gender and sex. Starting from the 1990s, the idea that masculinity and femininity are independent dimensions of variation has been challenged by research showing that, even if M-F is not a simple unitary construct, it is possible to derive robust and meaningful M-F dimensions from patterns of interest and personality (see Lippa, 2001, 2010; Del Giudice, 2020). The more radical project of disrupting the “sex binary” started in the 1970s and was still underway in the 1990s (e.g., Fausto-Sterling, 1993), but did not start to get serious traction until the mid-2010s, when it merged with

fourth-wave feminism and transgender activism. It is still too early to know how psychology will be impacted, but I suspect that future (re)incarnations of this chapter will have an interesting story to tell.

## The Other Side of Bias

Before ending this exploration, it is important to consider the possible influence of other kinds of ideology besides feminism and egalitarianism. The polar opposite of cosmic egalitarianism is *anti-egalitarianism*—the belief that groups are naturally unequal, with “superior” groups that deserve to win and “inferior” ones that deserve to lose. Psychologically, this perspective aligns with the trait known as *social dominance orientation* (SDO; see Pratto et al., 1994). I’m not sure if I have ever talked to a single psychologist who held such an anti-egalitarian worldview. On the other hand, plenty of psychologists do not subscribe to cosmic egalitarianism and believe that there are robust—though not necessarily fixed—differences between males and females, which are rooted in our evolutionary history and not primarily caused by socialization. In the feminist literature, this is called “gender essentialism” and viewed as a set of defensive beliefs whose function is to resist social change, foster acceptance of (socially constructed) sex differences, and legitimize the status quo (e.g., Morton et al., 2009; Skewes et al., 2018; Wood & Eagly, 2012).

Naturally, the notion that the status quo is by definition unjust and in need of radical transformation is debatable—unless, of course, one is already an activist. And if one takes an activist perspective, the only real explanation for disagreement becomes *ideological* opposition, with the result that legitimate scientific debates get routinely recast as ideological ones. Reflecting on the influence of feminism in psychology, Eagly (2018) remarked that “ideology is the most difficult of biases to erase because its advocates seldom recognize or acknowledge it” (p. 12). To me, this seems disingenuous: throughout history, feminist scholars have openly acknowledged their ideological motivations and often embraced them with pride.<sup>25</sup> The ideological roots of feminist research are anything but hidden or implicit; the notion that “we are all ideologically biased” has a kernel of truth, but should not be used to suggest false equivalences between approaches that strive to minimize bias and those that seek to amplify it (see Tybur & Navarrete, 2018).

That said, the empirical data do indicate that “gender essentialist” beliefs tend to correlate with more conservative politics and higher SDO in the general population (Skewes et al., 2018). Also, perceiving larger differences between the sexes predicts stronger endorsement of so-called “sexist” beliefs (Zell et al., 2016)—although the latter mainly consist of being critical of feminism, attributing certain positive/negative qualities to women (e.g., good taste, being easily offended), and expressing

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<sup>25</sup>To give just one example, Else-Quest and Hyde (2018) advocate a feminist approach to psychology and clearly note that “[f]eminism is a political movement and ideology as well as a theoretical perspective” (p. 7).

protectiveness or romantic admiration.<sup>26</sup> The assumption that “essentialist” ideas about sex differences point to a hidden conservative agenda may explain why academics who are more liberal (in the sense of left-wing) tend to view evolutionary psychology with more skepticism (Buss & von Hippel, 2018, Jonason & Schmitt, 2016; see also Tybur & Navarrete, 2018). As it turns out, however, evolutionary psychologists and anthropologists are just as left-wing as their non-evolutionary colleagues (Lyle & Smith, 2012; Tybur et al., 2007).<sup>27</sup> Almost all my colleagues who study sex differences from a biological perspective are politically liberal and in favor of equalizing opportunities and conditions between the sexes as much as possible. This does not mean that subtle biases and distortions cannot happen; but the suspicion that evolutionary psychologists as a group are motivated by right-wing or anti-egalitarian concerns has no basis in reality.

More generally, the traditions and theoretical commitments of a field can easily create biases that, even if not “ideological” in a strong sense, end up distorting the science produced within that field. For example, the evidence for “human universals” has played a crucial role in lending credibility to evolutionary psychology (see Pinker, 2003). Even if cross-cultural variation is a major topic of research (e.g., Chapais, 2017; Gangestad et al., 2006; Schmitt, 2015; Schmitt et al., 2017), the field as a whole may be unduly biased in favor of constancy and universality, at the risk of discounting change and variability. On the issue of sex and gender, bias can take the form of exaggerating sex differences, downplaying the flexibility of sex roles in humans and other animals, and focusing too much on women’s attractiveness and mating while neglecting parenting and post-reproductive behavior (see, e.g., Burch, 2020; Eagly & Wood, 2013; Fisher et al., 2013; Stewart-Williams & Thomas, 2013). While the sex binary (properly understood) is not a myth to dispel but a fundamental

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<sup>26</sup>In fact, the questionnaire that is commonly used to measure sexism (the “ambivalent sexism inventory”; Glick & Fiske, 1996) is a textbook example of blatant ideological bias in psychology. Here are some sample items indicating “benevolent sexism”:

- In a disaster, women ought not necessarily to be rescued before men (reverse-scored).
- Women, as compared to men, tend to have a more refined sense of culture and good taste.
- Women, compared to men, tend to have a superior moral sensibility.
- No matter how accomplished he is, a man is not truly complete as a person unless he has the love of a woman.

And some examples of “hostile sexism”:

- Feminists are making entirely reasonable demands of men (reverse-scored).
- Many women are actually seeking special favors, such as hiring policies that favor them over men, under the guise of asking for “equality.”
- Women are too easily offended.
- Most women interpret innocent remarks or acts as being sexist.

The last item is especially ironic, considering that the questionnaire is full of arguably innocent remarks that are interpreted as indicators of sexism.

<sup>27</sup>To be clear, I do not think this is necessarily a good thing. While evolutionary psychology may be quite effective at limiting the impact of researchers’ ideological biases (thanks to the “buffering” effect of strong theory; Tybur & Navarrete, 2018), more political diversity would almost certainly benefit the field and add another layer of protection against conformity and groupthink.

biological reality, it is true that differences and variation in gender identity have not received the attention they deserve from evolutionists. I also think that evolutionary psychologists could do a better job of communicating the nuance of their theories and findings to the public, for example, by putting more emphasis on within-sex variation and context dependence. As usual, the best antidote to bias is open conversation (see Del Giudice et al., 2018a; Fine et al., 2018; Fine, 2020; von Hippel et al., 2020). The worst aspect of pervasive ideology is the way in which it suppresses dialogue and ensures that some ideas will not be heard and discussed.

## Conclusion: What's Next?

This is the point in the chapter where one looks at the future to offer suggestions and advice. I am writing this chapter at the end of 2020, as political/ideological tensions in the USA and other Western countries are reaching a peak of intensity. This may be just about the worst possible time to make predictions; but some trends seem reasonably clear and do not make me optimistic in the short run. At least for a while, egalitarian and anti-biological biases in psychology are going to get stronger, making universities and academic journals more hostile toward the “wrong” kind of research. Anecdotes from colleagues and in the news suggest that academic censorship is tightening, both before publication (ethical reviews, journal reviews, editorial decisions) and after (retraction campaigns; e.g., Reynolds, 2020). Even *teaching* about certain sex differences is becoming difficult or impossible; the speech codes of many American universities now proscribe “gender harassment,” an ill-defined concept that can be expanded to include any form of unwelcome “stereotyping” (e.g., Leskinen & Cortina, 2014). On the positive side, researchers have the option to reach the broader public through online videos, podcasts, blogs, and magazines, effectively creating a sort of academic counterculture. While this is not ideal (and online channels are also vulnerable to censorship), it may help the field survive a spell of ideological suppression. Another reason for hope is that large, information-rich datasets (often from multiple countries) are becoming increasingly common and easy to access. In this sense, there has never been a better time to study sex differences and similarities; even in a worsening ideological climate, I expect to see a lot of exciting new research—both by academics and by independent researchers.

Is there anything that can be done right now to mitigate bias? As I noted earlier, conversations across scientific/ideological barriers are extremely important and should be encouraged whenever possible. Recently, noted feminist psychologist Alice Eagly argued that her colleagues should break with a tradition of diffidence and start considering how biological influences contribute to shape behavior in males and females (Eagly, 2018). Unfortunately, mainstream feminism is moving fast in the opposite direction; also, some of the issues at stake (e.g., the role of sexual selection) have been contentious for more than a century—a fact that does not inspire hope for a resolution (Vandermassen, 2020). On the other hand, it is possible that more scholars will become frustrated with the growing polarization in their

field and begin to seek dialogue with “moderates” on the other side of these issues. Facilitating these exchanges should become a priority for non-partisan organizations, societies, and journals.

After spending some time on textbooks, I believe there are many untapped opportunities to combat bias at the level of introductory courses. A slanted introduction to the field—one that ignores or downplays sex differences and fails to provide the conceptual tools to make sense of them—can leave a lasting impression that is hard to correct later on (if it gets corrected at all). One option for sex differences researchers is to contact the authors of popular textbooks to offer feedback, advice, and links to useful teaching materials (e.g., videos, interviews, exchanges between researchers with different viewpoints). Another option would be to produce brief “supplements,” written in a textbook style and designed to balance out the standard narrative that students are likely to encounter. Supplements of this kind could be easily made available online and disseminated via social media and other channels (the same approach might work for other topics covered in this volume). There are probably many other ways to improve the curriculum and give students a fuller picture of the field while avoiding the pressures and compromises faced by textbooks authors and course instructors.

As I have stressed through the chapter, ideological biases in the psychology of sex and gender are deeply entrenched and as old as the discipline itself. Whatever happens in the next years, quick and simple fixes are not going to work; making real progress will require courage, patience, focused effort—and all the creativity we can muster.

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# Chapter 29

## Ideological Bias in Sex Research



**J. Michael Bailey**

Currently, academic research on topics related to sexuality and gender competes with research on race as the most ideologically controversial. Sexuality and gender research has a greater number of political minefields than even race research does. (Diversity is our strength!) Thus, I will have to narrow my focus to prevent this chapter from becoming a book. I do so by focusing on the topic I have studied for most of my career: sexual orientation. During the 35 years I have conducted relevant research, sexual orientation has evolved from a most controversial topic to one that is mainstream. Some touchy issues remain in this area, and I will get to them. First, though, I provide a history of ideological influences on sexual orientation research.

### Some Preliminaries

#### *My Career as a Researcher of Sex and Gender*

Since I decided on my dissertation topic in 1986 (“A test of the maternal stress hypothesis for human male homosexuality”), most of my academic research has focused on sexual orientation, broadly construed. I have been fortunate to have a tenure-line position at a research university since 1989, and so have had ample opportunity and incentive to conduct research. Here are some more unusual aspects of my career that have shaped my expertise in writing this chapter.

During 1995 I started an email discussion group (aka, a “listserv”) called “SEXNET” for sex researchers (again, broadly construed). SEXNET, which still exists in vibrant form, has enabled experts to discuss and debate empirical research

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as well as controversial ideas difficult to research. Participants have included researchers such as Simon LeVay, Dean Hamer, Kenneth Zucker, Richard Green, Ray Blanchard, Bruce Rind, Anne Lawrence, Michael Seto, and Neil Malamuth, among several hundred others. Influential journalists including Diana Davison, Katie Herzog, Meghan Murphy, Debbie Nathan, Dan Savage, Jesse Singal, and Debra Soh have also been welcome. As listowner (i.e., dictator), I have not closed off discussion of topics merely because they were controversial, or because some members complained or expressed offense. Indeed, in my view a primary purpose of the list was to discuss those topics thoughtfully and rigorously. I recall heated debates about the following topics, which hardly exhaust those discussed: the harmfulness of child-adult sexual contact, and in particular, whether forces align to exaggerate the harmfulness; whether some natal males' transsexualism is motivated by sexual arousal by the idea of being female; whether therapy attempting to help gender dysphoric children should focus on helping them be comfortable in their natal sex or supporting their cross-gender preference; whether sexual attraction to pubescents (persons just entering puberty) is typical and thus normal; whether the rate of sexual assault on college campuses in the United States has been exaggerated; whether all recovered memories of childhood sexual abuse are false; and whether delaying gender dysphoric youth's gender transition causes suicide. Here are my reasons for focusing so much on the unusual SEXNET platform: First, SEXNET allowed me to gain knowledge on contentious topics outside my immediate areas of expertise. I could ask some world experts to clarify; I could also challenge them to justify claims. Second, SEXNET is unusual because it is not counted in official academic benchmarks. There are no publications and so no citations. No one gets voted as SEXNET contributor of the year. I have gotten nothing except recognition among my peers (and sometimes, negative recognition) for my role there. And yet in its own way, SEXNET has been as important in shaping discussion and thought among some important sex researchers as any other, more traditional, outlet. Although I am quite proud of some of my research studies, none has had the influence of SEXNET. (Readers who value a scholarly and open approach to controversial sex research are welcome to join. Email me.)

In the mid-to-late 1990s I became aware of Ray Blanchard's work on transsexualism among natal males. My awareness was stimulated by my meeting actual transsexuals, who exemplified Blanchard's theory so well that I was ashamed I had not read this work beforehand. (Ray Blanchard and I had become friends.) I was so impressed by Blanchard's theory's alignment with what I saw in the transsexuals I met, and so appalled by sex researchers' ignorance of his theory, that I was moved to write a book. This book, *The Man Who Would Be Queen* (Bailey, 2003), and the reaction to it (Dreger, 2008), planted me firmly and permanently in the controversies of gender identity and dysphoria, which are currently the second most controversial of all sex- and gender-related topics. In a later section I will discuss autogynephilia, which is the unusual sexual orientation that caused my controversy.

The most controversial area related to sex and gender is the harmfulness to young persons (especially children) of sexual interactions with adults. I have conducted

some limited research in this area, but I have had a close view of how apostates – those who challenge the idea that youth-adult sex is invariably one of the most harmful of experiences – have been treated. In a later section I will discuss pedophilia.

The final aspect of my career that I will mention here because it informed my impressions about bias in sex research was my undergraduate course “Human Sexuality,” taught yearly from 1994 to 2011. For most of these years, this was the most popular course in my university. Teaching this course was informative about the kinds of issues that students found emotionally provocative. These reactions often correlated with ideological bias among academics.

### ***What’s Ideological Bias and How Does One Know It’s There?***

Ideological bias is influence on the scientific process, including the drawing of scientific conclusions, based on political, religious, or other non-scientific considerations advocated by a group of people. In examining the role of ideological bias, one cannot rely on conventional academic rubrics – things such as peer-reviewed publications, the convergence of expert opinion, or position papers from academic societies. The result of ideological bias is that these things are likely to be distorted and untrustworthy. That’s why we worry about ideological bias. Claims about ideological bias are necessarily contentious. I believe I feel its presence when there is an identifiable ideology associated with weakly argued truth claims along with emotional appeals. Effects of ideological bias are manifold and severe. They include how difficult or easy it is to publish, to win grants and awards, to be hired in the first place, and to keep one’s job. The more ideological a field, the less the quality of objective scholarship matters. The more ideological a field, the greater the likelihood that academic consensus does not reflect the truth.

Writing about academic ideological bias necessarily differs, and substantially, from writing about one’s academic specialty. At least it does for me. When I write about sexual orientation, for example, I provide ample citations of academic studies to support my argument. Furthermore, my scientific opinions about sexual orientation are largely based on academic studies. But I can’t do that in this chapter, at least with respect to ideological bias per se. There is little empirical research on ideological bias in my area, although I believe it has been frequent if not rampant. Much of what I write here must be my considered opinion.

### **Sexual Orientation Research and Ideological Bias: 1951–2021**

The change in social status of non-heterosexual persons during the past half-century has been dizzying, and to me reassuring. In 1973 only 11% of US adults in the General Social Survey believed that sexual relations between members of the same

sex were not morally wrong at all. By 2014, this figure had increased to 49% (Twenge et al., 2016), and by 2018, 66%, a massive change in less than half a century (Bowman, 2020). Homosexual persons can now be married with the same rights as heterosexual persons, something that would have been unimaginable not so long ago.

The scientific-medical establishment has shown parallel changes. Until 1973 the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of the American Psychiatric Association included homosexuality as a disorder. Until 1987 “ego-dystonic homosexuality”—suffering due to inability to accept one’s homosexuality—was considered a disorder of the person, rather than a problem of societal intolerance (Bayer, 1987; Drescher, 2015). Go back a little farther, and the mainstream “scientific” (or more accurately, “medical”) view of homosexuality was shocking, indeed. Recently the neuroscientist Simon LeVay approached the editor of *Journal of Nervous and Mental Disorders* about a 1951 article, “Observations on Homosexuality Among University Students” (Glover, 1951; LeVay, 2020). The article consisted entirely of the author’s unflattering, unsystematic, and decidedly non-scientific “observations” about homosexual students, including these: “...in a sense [homosexual students] burlesque love as a heterosexual knows it and yet they are a continual tragedy of failure to find either sex gratification or a person through whom they may enjoy continuously that measure of sex gratification they attain....they have little if any feeling for their parents and doubt that they would be upset beyond a small measure of inconvenience if death or severe illness were to involve them....There is a narcissistic selfishness in their disregard for people as a whole.... All feel distinctly inferior though their façade may be one of superiority.” The fact that such an article could be published demonstrates considerable ideological bias at the time. It was retracted in 2020 (Journal retracts 70-year-old article, 2020; Although I find this article offensive and without merit, I do not approve of its retraction. Allowing retraction due to offense, as opposed to fraud or data error, provides another avenue for ideological bias. It is better for journals to encourage critiques of offending publications.). In 1965 the eminent psychiatrist George Winokur coauthored an article entitled “Effeminate homosexuality: a disease of childhood” (Holemon & Winokur, 1965). This article contains data that were interesting at the time (but are no longer surprising), suggesting that childhood femininity is a common precursor of male homosexuality. Despite its offensive title, it has not yet been retracted. Although both articles were from before my academic time, and although I have not conducted a systematic review, I assume that their publication reflects ideological bias that seems shocking today.

Just before I went to graduate school in the early 1980s, the AIDS epidemic began. In North America and Western Europe, gay men were hit especially hard, for two reasons: their high rate of unprotected anal sex (especially for those in the receptive role) and their high number of sex partners. (Both of these facts were true on average, not universally.) The AIDS epidemic revealed two opposing ideological factions with respect to attitudes toward gay men. A social conservative faction blamed AIDS largely on gay men’s immorality (and sometimes secondarily, God’s wish to punish them). A liberal faction blamed society’s intolerance that insufficient

resources were marshalled to find effective treatments. During the 1980s both factions were represented in the mainstream media, although the gay-tolerant one was more prominent. Since that time, the tolerant faction has been the clear winner.

By the time when I began publishing sexual orientation research in 1989, it was no longer fashionable to assume homosexuality was a mental illness or a negative trait. I was hired for my first (and current) academic job that year partly after giving a job talk in which I made fun of psychiatry's past inclusion of homosexuality among its diagnoses. (I also gave a scientific presentation on the causes of male homosexuality.) But even then, ideological bias effectively opposed certain research construed as "pro-gay." Times were different. Nowadays, ideological biases are overwhelmingly opposed to research that might be construed, even incorrectly, as "anti-gay." The main point here is that relevant ideological changes have been sufficiently rapid, and my career sufficiently long, to allow me to see a wide range of biases. I address some sexual orientation-related research areas that have been especially susceptible to biases in the following sections.

### *The Choice Wars*

Since the 1980s research on the causes of sexual orientation – how do people become heterosexual, bisexual, or homosexual – has often provoked great public interest. This interest peaked in the early 1990s with three studies receiving widespread attention. Simon LeVay found evidence that the brains of homosexual men shared features in common with heterosexual women (LeVay, 1991). Using twins, I found evidence that male sexual orientation is moderately heritable (Bailey & Pillard, 1991a). Using DNA evidence, Dean Hamer found evidence that a gene on the X chromosome influences male sexual orientation (Hamer et al., 1993). These studies were featured on national television news and talk shows, in the *New York Times*, and on the cover of news magazines – remember, this was back when this kind of coverage was a big deal. Ignoring whether these findings have held up (see Bailey et al., 2016 for the latest), what accounts for the widespread interest? I believe there were two primary reasons: first, the question is intrinsically interesting to the intellectually curious; second and more important back in the 1980s and 1990s, many people believed answers to the nature-nurture question had important implications for how gay and lesbian people should be viewed and treated. Specifically, they reasoned that to the extent that sexual orientation was influenced by nature, then it was not "chosen," and hence homosexual people are not blame-worthy (and sometimes there was the additional conclusion that nature-friendly findings mean that homosexuality is "natural"). Nurture findings allegedly meant that sexual orientation was chosen and that homosexuals could be judged.

The moral reasoning underlying the "choice" debate was incorrect. Sexual orientation comprises the strength of sexual attraction and arousal toward women versus men. We don't choose our patterns of sexual attraction and arousal. The sentence, "I choose to be more attracted to women than to men" does not accord with normal

experience. Of course, we do choose whether to act on those feelings – the sentence “I choose to have sex with women rather than men” is meaningful. Nor does “nature” absolve us from sin. Urges to commit violent acts (e.g., due to sexual sadism) likely have innate influences, but those who do not resist the urges should be blamed. (For a more extended analysis of these issues, see Bailey et al. [2016]). The persistence of the “choice” framing was partly attributable to the fact that neither the participating scientists nor journalists nor interested laypersons were careful philosophical thinkers. The scientists also enjoyed the attention. (With regret, I admit that I published an op-ed in the *New York Times* arguing that my twin study had moral implications [Bailey & Pillard, 1991b].)

The “choice” debate reflected political biases that impeded scientific progress. On the one hand, social conservatives were committed to the idea that homosexuality was “chosen,” and thus, homosexuals could (and should) choose to change. Liberals supporting the “born that way” position were oppositely committed. Given what we know now about problems with replicability, these scientifically irrelevant political concerns are unlikely to have improved the scientific product. Furthermore, LeVay and Hamer are both proudly gay, and both emphasized political implications of their work. Social conservatives were apt to dismiss their research as being biased. And the conservatives also effectively opposed funding of these kinds of scientific studies. After LeVay’s study was published, for example, a federal grant to replicate and extend this research (by another scientist) was funded on the condition that its title be changed to hide the intention to study sexual orientation. NIH was worried that conservative politicians would find the grant and use it to make trouble for NIH to reduce its funding. I know of at least two other similar requests by NIH to hide sexual orientation from grant titles and abstracts, even though that was a central part of the grants. Research on the causes of sexual orientation was, to my knowledge, barely funded by the NIH until the early 2000s. This kind of research is better funded now, albeit not generously. (What is?) This is partly due to a marked increase in NIH funding starting around 1999 (<https://report.nih.gov/nihdatabook/category/1>). But it also likely reflects the waning influence of anti-gay social conservatives.

### ***Are Homosexual People Harmful?***

Does reading this heading upset you? Or do you think the answer is likely “yes?” (The second reaction is unlikely in 2021, for persons reading this book. But in, say, 1991 it was much more common.) If you have either reaction, you are exhibiting ideological bias. The idea that homosexual people harm others in various ways is far more relevant to how they should be valued and treated than whether homosexuality is “chosen.” During the 1990s and prior to the success of the gay rights revolution, debates about this question were common in the mainstream media if not in academia. To be sure, claims of harmfulness comprised specific accusations, and I address several of them in the next few sections.

The two opposite sides of this general debate have included many researchers and public intellectuals, but two especially influential voices have been Paul Cameron (who believes that homosexual people are harmful) and Gregory Herek (who does not). Both Cameron and Herek are psychologists. Cameron began the Family Research Institute, which has focused its attention on issues that threaten the “traditional family,” homosexuality being preeminent. The Family Research Institute has received some limited funding from social conservatives. It has been declared a hate group by the Southern Poverty Law Center, and Cameron has been ejected from the American Psychological Association (APA). In contrast, Herek has received several awards from the APA and a great deal of federal funding. For the most part, I agree with Herek, because his arguments have been superior. (I will consider some examples below.) Importantly, it is the arguments between the likes of Cameron and Herek that have been illuminating and useful to the public. The professional sanctions against Cameron – who to my knowledge has never been accused of falsifying data, merely drawing incorrect conclusions from it – have detracted from the intellectual debate. They have allowed Cameron and his allies to cast aspersions on the objectivity of organizations such as the APA. These aspersions have often been justified (see, e.g., O’Donohue & Dyslin, 1996). APA should be in the business of assembling panels of experts to research controversial issues objectively and not of punishing those holding opinions they find obnoxious.

### **Do Homosexuals Molest Children?**

Virtually all child molesters are male. Boys are sexually molested (defined here as having a sexual experience with an adult, regardless of the boys’ attitude about the experience) far more often than the rate of men attracted to adult men. For example, the rate of male attraction among adult men is less than 5% in the industrialized West (Bailey et al., 2016). But more than one-third of children molested by male pedophiles are boys (Blanchard et al., 1999; see Fig. 1). Based on data such as these, Cameron has argued that homosexual men are especially likely to molest children (Cameron et al., 1986). However, ample empirical research shows that there is a fundamental difference between adult-attracted homosexual (“androphilic”) men and men who are attracted to prepubescent and pubescent boys (Blanchard et al., 2012; Bailey et al., 2021). Most importantly, men sexually aroused by adult men tend to show little sexual arousal to boys, and men aroused by boys tend to show little sexual arousal to men. Herek provided a good rebuttal to Cameron’s insinuations, although it is poorly referenced (Herek, n.d.). This incendiary issue should be about as settled as any in the sexological literature. Importantly, its resolution has required programmatic research from those willing to ask uncomfortable basic scientific questions to which they did not already know the answers. I am concerned that this kind of openness no longer exists.

## Do Homosexuals Make Bad Parents?

Until recently, homosexual persons were unlikely to be allowed to adopt children, because of concerns that they are not good parents (Rudolph, 2017). Both attitudinal and legal changes have eroded virtually all adoption barriers due to sexual orientation. During this transition, several empirical studies of children of homosexual parents elicited widespread attention, and they have influenced courts and public opinion. Most of these studies have failed to find evidence that children raised by homosexual parents are disadvantaged in any way (Patterson, 2006). One exception was a study by Regnerus (2012) purporting to show marked disadvantages in children of non-heterosexual parents. For example, children of “homosexually experienced mothers” had higher rates of welfare assistance, unemployment, having experienced coercive sex, depression, marijuana use, tobacco smoking, and having been arrested and lower levels of education, income, and physical health. There were fewer children of “homosexually experienced fathers,” but these also showed some disadvantages compared with children of exclusively heterosexual parents.

Reactions to the differing findings in this literature have been revealing. Findings of no differences between children raised by homosexual versus heterosexual parents tended to come from small, self-selected samples. Statistical power to find differences was typically low, and serious problems were uncommon among these children. Although researchers acknowledged these limitations (e.g., Patterson & Redding, 1996), those supporting equal rights for homosexual parents rarely mentioned them. (Those opposing parental and adoption rights for homosexual people tended to ignore these studies if they ever learned of them.) In contrast, Regnerus’ study provoked fury. His data were obtained in a manner that appeared to be superior to the prior studies, because it was a carefully assembled “probability sample.” Several gay and bisexual members of my listserv, SEXNET, were sufficiently outraged that they strategized to get the editor who accepted Regnerus’ article fired. (I do not know how far this went, and regardless, the editor was not fired.) This controversy went far beyond SEXNET, with a letter of protest signed by 201 academics, and a subsequent investigation finding no editorial misconduct. To be sure, there were complaints about Regnerus’ study design, especially the fact that few of these children had lived with “homosexually experienced fathers.” But I had never heard complaints about limitations of the studies finding no differences – and there certainly were limitations. Redding (2013) asserted that had Regnerus’ study found the usual – no differences between children raised by homosexual and heterosexual parents – there would have been no concerns about the study and no outrage. This is surely correct.

It turned out that the Regnerus article did have problems. A high percentage of ostensible cases of children raised by non-heterosexual parents appear to have been misclassified. Adjusting for these errors removed most differences between children of heterosexual and non-heterosexual parents. Furthermore, a recent and apparently careful large study from the Netherlands claimed that children of non-heterosexual parents were actually better adjusted compared with those of heterosexual parents (Mazrekaj et al., 2020). I am skeptical of all claims that parental sexual orientation

is an important social influence on children's life outcomes. This is because there is considerable evidence that parental social influences on their children are weak (e.g., Turkheimer, 2000; in contrast, parental genetic influences are strong). Greater appreciation of this fact could reduce the size of many an ideological battlefield.

### ***Sexual Orientation, Mental Health, and Minority Stress***

Evelyn Hooker achieved near-saintly status by conducting a study purporting to show that homosexual men were as mentally healthy as heterosexual men (Milar, 2011). She had all her subjects complete three projective psychological tests, including the well-known Rorschach and Thematic Apperception Test. She then showed the test responses to alleged experts, who could not tell which were produced by heterosexual men and which were produced by homosexual men. A major problem with this study is that these measures have low validity (e.g., Hunsley & Bailey, 1999, 2001). Showing that they fail to correlate with sexual orientation is inadequate evidence to conclude that homosexual and heterosexual men are similar in their mental health. Yet the study has been cited more than 1000 times.

I previously mentioned that homosexuality was listed as a mental disorder in the psychiatric diagnostic manual until 1973. The process by it was removed is fascinating and in ways inspiring (Bayer, 1987). But it did not include a careful and balanced review of the research literature. I think this was apt. The decision to include a candidate category in the psychiatric diagnostic manual ultimately requires the value judgment that there is something intrinsically undesirable about the category. It was rejection of that value judgment about homosexuality – and not anything scientists learned in careful studies – that was most important in its removal from the diagnostic manual.

### **Sexual Orientation and Mental Health**

Beginning in the 1990s, several large, epidemiological surveys were conducted on people in North America and Europe about their sexual behavior. Soon after, large epidemiological studies of psychiatric diagnoses began to include questions related to sexual orientation. In general, these studies have found increased rates of some psychiatric disorders among non-heterosexual persons (Cochran et al., 2003; Herek & Garnets, 2007; Semlyen et al., 2016). These results, which contradict Hooker's, have not been used to argue for reinstatement of homosexuality into the DSM. This is sensible. For example, the increased rate of affective disorders among homosexuals is like the elevation among women compared with men. Female sex is not a disorder. Still, the question remains, why the elevation? Think about the possibilities for a minute before proceeding to the next paragraph.

In 1999 after publication of two of the new, large, and carefully sampled studies showing elevated mental illness among non-heterosexual persons, I was invited to

write an editorial about the articles. I offered several potential explanations, including societal oppression, biological developmental perturbation, gender atypicality, and lifestyle differences (Bailey, 1999). After acknowledging the clear fact that none of these hypotheses had been ruled out, I closed by urging open-minded investigation: “it would be a shame – most of all for gay men and lesbians whose mental health is at stake – if sociopolitical concerns prevented researchers from conscientious consideration of any reasonable hypothesis.” Unfortunately, my worry has come to pass.

### **Minority Stress**

Meyer (1995) had previously proposed the theory that being raised in a heterosexist society led sexual minorities (here, non-heterosexual people) to be chronically stressed. This stress causes mental illness in a subset of the non-heterosexuals. This plausible theory has been enormously influential. For example, one of Meyer’s articles on this topic has been cited more than 10,000 times (Meyer, 2003). Subsequently, many scholars have focused a great deal of attention on this well-funded research area. Indeed, they have invariably found that non-heterosexuals report increased discrimination and harassment compared with heterosexuals and that those who report the most minority stressors have the most psychological problems. The Minority Stress explanation of increased psychopathology among non-heterosexual people has received support.

So, what’s the problem? First, the empirical support for Minority Stress Theory is weak by its very nature. The data are non-experimental (obviously) and self-reported. It is likely that the association between reports of minority stressors and reports of psychological symptoms reflects a tendency of some people both to feel both more scorn and more anxiety and depression compared with other people. That is, people who are more neurotic may be especially apt to overreport mistreatment by others and to experience and report more psychological symptoms. It could even be the case that the causes of non-heterosexual orientation overlap with the causes of some psychiatric conditions such as depression.

Although these alternatives might strike some as unlikely and raising them uncharitable – even suspicious – there is in fact evidence for them. For example, homosexual men tend to be higher than heterosexual men on trait neuroticism (Allen & Robson, 2020). Furthermore, these differences are associated with increased mental health issues. For example, a careful study of young adult Swiss military conscripts found “noteworthy differences in personality traits by sexual orientation,” and that “much of the increased mental morbidity appears to be accounted for by such underlying differences, with important implications for etiology and treatment” (Wang et al., 2014). A recent large and sophisticated genetic study of sexual orientation found a moderate genetic correlation in both sexes between non-heterosexuality and both anxiety and depression (Ganna et al., 2019). That is, non-heterosexual persons tend to have genes associated with some mental health problems.

The findings I have mentioned here do not disprove the Minority Stress Theory nor do they establish that non-heterosexual persons have more of certain mental illnesses because of their temperament unrelated to their treatment by others. However, they certainly both raise concerns about Minority Stress Theory and suggest a plausible alternative hypothesis. The exclusion of rival hypotheses is one main way that science progresses. In a perfect world (to me this would include forces being aligned for scientists to pursue scientific knowledge about important and controversial phenomena), scientists would be eager to conduct research that pitted Minority Stress Theory against Temperament Theory. Having recently looked at this literature, however, I am confident that this has not been occurring. Furthermore, I know of researchers who have won millions of government-funded dollars for causally impotent correlational research intended to support Minority Stress Theory. I don't know of any funded grants intending to examine the competition between that theory and Temperament Theory. Recently, in this domain as in so many others, current trends are toward supporting favored narratives rather than finding out what is true.

### *Two Atypical Sexual Orientations That Are Also Minefields*

The term “sexual orientation” has recently acquired a broader connotation than one's degree of attraction to men versus women. Although this broadening is controversial, I approve. Sexual orientation should be understood as something like “sexual motivation to engage in sexual activity with a particular kind of person or thing.” During the past decade I have also studied unusual sexual orientations classified as “paraphilias.” The two paraphilias I have researched the most – autogynephilia and pedophilia – are (coincidentally?) perhaps the two most controversial sexual orientations. I am using “controversial” here in its ideological, rather than its scientific, sense. Both sexual orientations are important for understanding phenomena that preoccupy our current culture. Yet cultural forces have arisen to thwart the objective, dispassionate study of either.

#### **Autogynephilia**

Autogynephilia is a natal male's sexual arousal by the fantasy of being a woman, or by the imitation of women, most often via cross-dressing. Autogynephilia is the motivation for cross-dressing among heterosexual men (clinically, “transvestism”), and it has been the predominant motivation for sex reassignment surgery in North America and Western Europe for more than two decades (Lawrence, 2013). One cannot understand transgender phenomena among natal males without knowing about autogynephilia. In 2022 transgender is a cultural obsession. Yet chances are that unless you are a sex researcher, you have never heard of autogynephilia.

There are at least three reasons why. First, autogynephilia is inconsistent with the predominant narrative for transgender males, which is that they have the minds and

brains of natal females. That is what most people have learned – it is what I believed until I met an autogynephilic transsexual and studied the literature. Complicating this “feminine essence narrative” (Dreger, 2008) is especially difficult because autogynephilia is a sexual motivation. Thinking about sex can be uncomfortable.

The second reason for autogynephilia’s low profile is that many transgender persons—even autogynephilic transgender persons – strongly dislike that explanation of their condition. I know this from bitter experience, having had my life made unpleasant for a few years by their attacks (Dreger, 2008, 2016). Specifically, transsexual activists angry at me for writing about autogynephilia tried to get me fired by filing complaints at my IRB and the Illinois Board of Psychology and by very publicly smearing my reputation. These complaints were baseless but still quite painful. These activists failed in their attempt to suppress the idea of autogynephilia – indeed, it has become far more widely known, likely due to the controversy they stoked. But few scientists or journalists have risked delving into the topic. Writing positively about autogynephilia is bound to draw negative attention from people willing to punish.

It is the third reason for autogynephilia erasure that concerns us here, because it is ideological: many academics, researchers, and clinicians have decided that because some transgender persons dislike the idea of autogynephilia, it should be excluded from intellectual life. Unlike the first two reasons I have discussed, the third is recent. An episode involving my then-graduate student, Kevin Hsu, is illustrative (see Bailey, 2019, for an extensive discussion). Kevin won an award (the Ira and Harriet Reiss Theory Award for “the best social science article, chapter, or book published in the previous year in which theoretical explanations of human sexual attitudes and behaviors are developed”) for a first-authored scientific article closely related to autogynephilia (Hsu et al., 2016). The award entailed Kevin presenting a talk about the research at the annual meeting of the Society for the Scientific Study of Sexuality (SSSS). Kevin’s talk was repeatedly interrupted by one individual who was infuriated by the ideas in his talk, especially autogynephilia. Other audience members appealed without success to this individual to let Kevin speak unimpeded. Several days after the talk, the officers of SSSS sent an apologetic email to the membership. Shockingly – to me, at least in 2018 – rather than apologizing to the audience for the affront to academic decorum and freedom, they apologized to the SSSS membership for Kevin’s talk:

The SSSS Executive Committee is aware of past and more recent incidents of language and behavior that has made transgender persons and other attendees feel unwelcome, unsupported, marginalized, or attacked at our Annual Meetings. We apologize. We want to assure all Members and attendees that we fully support you and stand with you. We are trans-allies.<sup>1</sup>

SSSS was once an important organization for the promotion of sex research. Although it has not been especially scientific for decades, SSSS’ transformation

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<sup>1</sup>The founder of the Reiss Award, Ira Reiss, publicly condemned the SSSS statement. See Cantor (2020), footnote 5.

from a respectable organization to a hotbed of identity-related activism has been rapid (Cantor, 2020). Ideas that offend favored sexual and gender minorities are simply off limits at that organization's meeting and listserv – though thankfully, not yet at its journal, *Journal of Sex Research*, which has maintained intellectual independence under its editor Cynthia Graham.

The need for scholarly investigation and discussion of autogynephilia is far more important than the disintegration of SSSS. As I have mentioned, autogynephilia has been the predominant motivation for natal males pursuing sex reassignment surgery, and it is likely still the only reason why natal males who are not exclusively attracted to men ever manifest as transgender. Autogynephilia is such an odd sexuality – the central sexual fantasy involves transformation of the self rather than sexual interaction with an attractive other – that many autogynephilic persons have little self-understanding. I have received more correspondence thanking me for shedding light on autogynephilia than condemning me for promoting the idea – though to be sure, I have received plenty of the latter. The following passage from the most recent email I received, 6 weeks before writing this paragraph, is a fine exemplar of the positive feedback:

The information on autogynephilia was a much needed illumination into myself. My “late-onset” interests have been the cause of depression, anxiety, and confusion for me; and for my wife. However, without these traits, I wouldn't have left [my] church... so I suppose there is some benefit there.

Now that I better understand myself, I will know better how to proceed with my life. I will not transition, of that I am certain. I'm [age redacted], married, and [a] father of a [age redacted] boy. I have not accepted myself (maybe someday I will) and so of course I worry about my son's future and if he will inherit the traits which have been painful and confusing to me.

Your book gives me hope.

This individual's decision not to undergo gender transition upon learning about autogynephilia is not a universal reaction. Some others who appreciated my book elected to become transwomen and to obtain sex reassignment surgery. What seems clear, though, is that knowing about autogynephilia enables autogynephilic persons to make more informed decisions than they otherwise would have made. And informed decisions are most likely to lead to good outcomes. The current movement toward blocking scholarly consideration of autogynephilia is taking sides with those offended by an idea against those who might benefit from knowing about it. Of course, even if no autogynephilic persons appreciated scholarship focusing on autogynephilia, avoiding such scholarship would be harmful to the pursuit of knowledge.

## **Pedophilia**

Pedophilia is closely associated with childhood sexual abuse, one of the two most controversial topics in social science (the other being race differences in socially valued traits). Controversy starts whenever one challenges any of the following beliefs, not all of which are strictly empirical:

Childhood sexual abuse is one of the most traumatic and damaging human experiences.

Pedophiles will invariably offend.

Pedophilic offenders are irredeemable.

Convicted child molesters should be punished as harshly as murderers.

Viewing child pornography should be punished severely.

In fact, there is good empirical evidence against these empirical claims, and good arguments against the moral/policy claims. None of these intellectual controversies has been decisively resolved. But both personal experience and the vicarious horror of observing others whose scholarship has challenged the above assertions has shown me the perils of open inquiry in this domain. I briefly review three illustrative episodes – one from the late 1990s and two from the recent past – before returning addressing the implications of ideological bias here.

## The Rind Study of Correlates of Childhood Sexual Abuse

In 1998 Bruce Rind and collaborators published a meta-analysis in the prestigious journal *Psychological Bulletin* concluding that differences in psychological adjustment between college students with and without experiences typically labeled “childhood sexual abuse” were small (Rind et al., 1998). Two of the authors had previously published a less technically ambitious meta-analysis of non-college samples, with the same basic conclusion (Rind & Tromovitch, 1997). Both studies were rigorous, and their results were surprising to many, me included. At first, it seemed this research would be discussed exclusively by academics. But when discovered by socially conservative journalists (especially Dr. Laura), negative reactions exploded (Lilienfeld, 2002; Rind et al., 2000). These culminated in condemnation of the article by an act of the US Congress, with no dissenting votes (but respect to 13 congresspersons who voted “present.”). It was unprecedented in 1998 for Congress to take sides in academic controversies.

I reviewed the articles that *Psychological Bulletin* published that attempted to rebut Rind et al. (1998), as well as Rind et al.’s rejoinders. I thought Rind et al. won the debate, but that more and better research was needed to clarify key issues. The divergence between the high quality of Rind et al.’s scholarship and the one-sided condemnation of the article and authors was striking, and entirely too predictable.

The American Psychological Association (APA), which publishes *Psychological Bulletin*, was clearly embarrassed and intimidated by the brouhaha, and it asked the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) to form a committee to retrospectively review Rind et al.’s paper. The AAAS refused and took the opportunity to criticize the critics of Rind et al. rather than the authors. The AAAS correctly observed that the critics had badly misrepresented Rind et al.’s article.

Bruce Rind was an adjunct lecturer at Temple University when the article was published. The meta-analyses and rejoinders that Rind authored (with the same

colleagues) during this time have been cited more than 2000 times as of January 2022. Rind has continued to pursue research on sexual interactions between younger and older partners, sometimes comparing these experiences to interactions between two young partners, or between two old partners. I have often reviewed these papers and have generally found them interesting – even surprising – and challenging to conventional attitudes about age-discrepant sexual experiences. They are invariably well conducted and argued. But Rind lost his appointment at Temple, and he has never obtained a tenure-track academic position.

## **Thomas Hubbard, Pederasty in Ancient Greek, and Age of Consent**

Thomas Hubbard was a distinguished Professor of Classics at the University of Texas at Austin. One of his areas of studies is “pederasty,” or sexual relationships between adult men and adolescent males, that occurred in ancient Greece. Hubbard (and many other scholars) believes that pederastic relationships were common, and neither stigmatized nor generally harmful to the younger partner. He also has become interested in some contemporary issues distantly related to his primary research, including age of consent traditions – he has noted that the age of 18 is unusually high cross culturally and that evidence may support a lower age of consent for males than for females. He also became concerned after the University of Texas funded and publicized a study suggesting high rates of sexual assault of college students, based on a survey he considered weak (e.g., a convenience sample with a low response rate). He wrote a detailed letter to UT administrators decrying the study.

During November 2019, a student in one of his classes distributed a flyer widely claiming that Hubbard was advocating for pederasty (which she incorrectly equated with pedophilia) and had done so for his entire career; that he was closely associated with pedophilic groups; and that he “used his position to further a community of individuals hoping to prey on underaged boys.” The flyer also included a demand that Hubbard be fired: “an individual who advocates for violent crime against teen boys has no business teaching the leaders of tomorrow. It is clear that the University of Texas does not have its students’ safety, health, and welfare in mind . . . . We refuse to stand by while this man uses his status to promote pedophilia” (Volokh, 2021). Hubbard denied these accusations, claiming libel. The situation rapidly deteriorated:

At 3:30 AM in the morning of December 9, 2019, the last day of classes, Prof. Hubbard was awakened in his Austin home by the sound of crashing glass in the front room of his residence. When the police arrived some 20 minutes later, he found that a cinderblock fragment had been thrown through the window and the front of his house was spray-painted in red with hammer-and-sickle logos and large letters spelling CHILD RAPIST. Threatening graffiti was also left at other locations in his neighborhood. At 6:00 PM that evening, a mob of 15–20 masked protestors invaded his property, pounding on doors and windows, shining

bright lights at the windows on every side, and chanting defamatory slogans through loud-speakers. The demonstrators also put leaflets in every mailbox in his neighborhood with his photos and claims that he was a dangerous child predator. The hour-long demonstration was videorecorded and broadcast live online, as well as being archived by the ANTIFA-linked revolutionary website *Incendiary News*. (Crinto, 2021)

Subsequently, the *Dallas Morning News* published an editorial highly critical of Hubbard entitled “A UT professor studies pederasty: why are we paying for it?” The editorial also made the connection between Hubbard’s work and pedophilia. The next day UT’s President wrote a letter to the Editor to the *Morning News* calling Hubbard’s ideas “outrageous” (Levine, 2020).

Hubbard, understandably fearful for his safety, relocated to California. Able to afford top legal representation, he filed separate libel lawsuits against the three students most responsible for creating and disseminating the flyer. He also filed an EEOC complaint against UT for not protecting him, as a gay man falsely accused of pedophilia. According to Hubbard, filing the separate lawsuits allowed him to use discovery to learn facts embarrassing to UT, including the fact that the student leader was the daughter of a prominent Texas conservative politician and that she had reason to believe that she had the support of UT administrators. Hubbard accepted a payment of \$750,000 to retire at age 65 and to cease legal discovery efforts. There was no non-disclosure requirement in the settlement. These terms were highly favorable to Hubbard and strongly suggest that he was vindicated.

## **Former Assistant Professor Allyn Walker’s Sympathy for Non-offending Pedophiles/MAPS**

Allyn Walker was an assistant professor of Sociology and Criminal Justice at Old Dominion University. They (Walker is transgender and prefers they/them pronouns) conducted research on persons sexually attracted to children – whom I often call pedophiles in my empirical work, although I also use the descriptor “child-attracted.” Walker prefers the term “Minor Attracted Persons” or MAPs, because the child-attracted persons they have studied prefer that term – it is less stigmatizing than “pedophiles.” Walker recently published a book on qualitative research they did with non-offending MAPs entitled *A Long Dark Shadow: Minor-Attracted People and Their Pursuit of Dignity* (Walker, 2021), which was described by the publisher as follows:

Challenging widespread assumptions that persons who are preferentially attracted to minors—often referred to as “pedophiles”—are necessarily also predators and sex offenders, this book takes readers into the lives of non-offending minor-attracted persons (MAPs)

In November 2021 Walker was interviewed for a YouTube podcast by Noah Berlatsky of the ProStasia Foundation, about their book and research (The ProStasia Conversations, 2021). Walker’s main points included the following: no one can help it if they are attracted to children; but MAPs can – and should – control their sexual

attraction to children; helping child-attracted persons resist their desires is not helped by the self-hatred our culture instills in even MAPs who do not offend; sexual abuse of children is never acceptable.

Walker's interview attracted attention from the website 4W.Pub, which focuses on sexual violence against women and children (Slatz, 2021). The article on 4W.Pub cast aspersions on Walker's motives and associations with ProStasia and the organization B4UAct, suggesting that they are "pro-pedophile," meaning pro child molestation. But these suggestions were plainly contradicted by everything Walker said in the interview and everything Walker has ever written on this topic. Walker repeatedly said that MAPs should not act on their sexual attraction to children.

Subsequent attention led to a furor on Twitter as well as Old Dominion. Walker was put on administrative leave, due to both the controversy and threats to their safety. Two letters of support were sent to Old Dominion on Walker's behalf. Both letters included both scientific experts on pedophilia and clinicians who treat sex offenders. One letter was authorized by the Association for Treatment of Sexual Abusers, whose *raison d'être* is making society safer by preventing sexual abuse. Both letters conveyed that Walker shared this goal and that their approach was reasonable. To no avail. Less than a week later, on November 24, Walker and Old Dominion released a joint statement that Walker was resigning their (tenure track) position. No details about any compensation were released (Flaherty, 2021).

## **The Minefield of Scholarship Related to Pedophilia and Childhood Sexual Abuse**

The three episodes demonstrate the dire consequences that can befall scholars studying pedophilia and childhood sexual abuse who do not strictly adhere to permissible boundaries. In none of these cases did scholars advocate for child abuse. Yet all were accused of promoting abuse, at least indirectly. Furthermore, all suffered grave professional consequences. To be sure, their views are debatable, and it would have been good to have them thoroughly debated. Instead, these scholars had their ideas misrepresented, their safety threatened, and their academic careers ended. None were supported by their universities.

One interesting aspect of pedophilia and related topics is that both the Right and the Left are intolerant of open inquiry in these domains. Recall that the US Congress was nearly unanimous in its censure of Rind et al. (1998). Hubbard was attacked by both conservatives and by Antifa-like radicals. Walker was condemned by conservatives, but also by some in the "GLBTQ+ Community" (Tillinghast, 2021). Neither side wants to be associated with pedophilia. This fact is an important demonstration that neither Left nor Right can be trusted to uphold open inquiry when they can away with suppressing views they dislike. It is also relevant to why I prefer to refer to "ideological bias" rather than "political bias."

Who wants to be associated with pedophilia, anyway? And is it so bad to suppress its discussion in any way other than condemnation? My answers: no one of right mind, and yes, it is terrible to suppress discussion. The extreme reactions against Rind, Hubbard, and Walker reflect the fact that many people believe these issues are extremely important. Yet those who reacted did not behave as if their positions were well supported. Having facts and reason on one's side obviates the need for misrepresentation and intimidation. Issues related to pedophilia and childhood sexual abuse are important, and some of them remain unsettled. These include the degree of harmfulness of child-adult sex, and what factors moderate harmfulness; the optimal ages of sexual consent for males and for females in contemporary Western societies; and whether treating non-offending pedophiles as decent persons who do not deserve condemnation helps these persons resist their sexual attraction to children. Resolving these issues can only benefit by careful scholarship. They will certainly not be resolved by acts of Congress, throwing rocks through windows, or getting young scholars fired.

### ***Some General Observations About Ideological Barriers to Scientific Progress***

I have mostly focused so far on issues related to sexual orientation, broadly construed, in which ideology has harmfully intruded. I end this chapter with some more general observations.

#### **Language Wars**

Which of these words is unlike the others: faggot, fag, queer, fairy, pansy, homosexual?

Anyone from my generation (raised in the 1960s and 1970s) knows that the first five words were used to insult persons (mainly men) with the sexual orientation denoted by the final word. They were also used to insult heterosexual persons by impugning their sexuality at a time when most people believed that homosexuality is bad. To be sure, some homosexual persons used the first five words in an edgy way analogous to African-Americans using the N-word. But when heterosexual people used the first five words, their typical motivation was meanness. Not so the final word, "homosexual," which was most often used in serious discussion, such as "Is Paul Lynde homosexual?" or "Why are some people homosexual?"

I raise this terminological history because of a recent disagreement I had with an Associate Editor (AE) of an academic journal. In a recent article from my lab, we used the adjectives "heterosexual" and "homosexual" to distinguish subjects of differing sexual orientations. The AE admonished us that "homosexual" was pejorative and told us to replace it with androphilic/gynephilic or "same-sex attracted." After I

objected, the AE insisted that it would be “unethical” to use the word “homosexual,” and that if I insisted on using it, the paper must be handled by another editor. I retained the “unethical” terminology, and thankfully, was done with that AE.

I had published several-to-many scientific articles using “homosexual” in precisely the same manner I used in my submission, right up to that altercation. Although I occasionally received (and ignored) requests to use “gay” and “lesbian,” no prior reviewer or editor had thrown down the gauntlet. On what basis is “homosexual” plausibly unethical?

The AE did not provide an argument other than asserting that the word is “pejorative.” Google led me to a *New York Times* article from 2014 entitled “The Decline and Fall of the H Word” (Peters, 2014). Its opening words: “To most ears, it probably sounds inoffensive. A little outdated and clinical, perhaps, but innocuous enough: homosexual.” Well, yes. I’m not sure about “outdated” but perhaps “clinical.” I am a scientist, and when I write basic science articles about sexual orientation – I study its origins, development, and expression – clinical is precisely how I want to sound. The article goes on to gather vague quotes from the historian George Chauncey, the anthropologist William Leap (with academic specialty “lavender linguistics”), and the cognitive scientist George Lakoff, as well as the Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD), which has put “homosexual” on its list of offensive terms. The closest any of these sources comes to making an argument is Lakoff who asserts: “Gay doesn’t use the word sex,” he said. “Lesbian doesn’t use the word sex. Homosexual does.” For a researcher of sexual orientation, this is a strong argument for “homosexual.”

Lakoff continued: “It also contains ‘homo,’ which is an old derogatory.... They want to have that idea there. They want to say this is not normal sex, this is not normal family, it’s going against God.” But who are “they?” (I am not one of *them!*) Regarding the fact that “homosexual” contains the insult “homo,” Lakoff surely is aware that “homosexual” came first. “Homo” was insulting to the extent that persons understood that “homosexual” means “attracted to the same sex” and disliked the implication of that word. This is an example of what Pinker (2003) has called the “euphemism treadmill,” or the process in which words introduced to replace offensive words (as “retarded” replaced “imbecile” and “homosexual” replaced “sodomite”) become offensive themselves (or in mutated forms as in “retard” and “homo”). This process is never-ending, because it doesn’t solve the underlying problem: some people’s aversion to the concept associated with the word. Importantly, it is not words that cause the problem.

Ironically, the words preferred by political and academic activists and organizations – “queer” and “gay,” respectively – also have some baggage. “Queer” has a long history of pejorative connotation (“Queer,” n.d.). And even my gay friends sometimes say “that’s so gay,” in which “gay” is equivalent to “lame.” There is no principled and persuasive argument that we must reject “homosexual” but retain “queer” and “gay.”

Language-related demands are sometimes camouflaged attempts to exclude ideas that demanders dislike. For example, according to Wikipedia “she-male” is disliked by “many transgender people” because it “emphasizes the natal sex of a

person and neglects their gender identity” (“Shemale,” n.d.) But she-males are natal males with breasts and penises. To insist that we refrain from using any word other than “female” or “woman” is an obvious attempt to shape thought by constraining language, and the desired thought of those who would outlaw “she-male” is dubious.

Similarly, I believe that recent demands by some individuals that they be referred to with non-gendered pronouns (e.g., “they” rather than “he” or “she”) reflects their ideology that gender is non-binary rather than their deep-seated discomfort at being mislabeled. In the extensive clinical literature on gender dysphoria, one will search in vain for good evidence of a syndrome in which a person suffers because of being gendered. Gender dysphoria is due to being the *wrong* gender (of two possible). That is, I do not believe the justification that special pronouns are necessary because people are hurt if we don’t use them. Those who insist they are “they” are using people’s naïve sympathy in the service of ideology.

A final motivation for poorly justified term-switching is virtue signaling. Declaring a word off limits and then excoriating those who use it is a good way to show that one has both virtue and influence. Like the euphemism treadmill, virtue-signaling and power-grabbing are never-ending.

Why bother with all this? I suppose that instead of “homosexual/heterosexual,” I could use “same-sex attracted/other-sex attracted” or “androphilic/gynephilic” without extraordinary effort (at the expense of some additional processing time for the reader). But to do so would legitimize undue policing of language by self-appointed language scolds. It would reinforce the idea that sexologists should avoid offending sexual minorities at all costs, even if there were little evidence that sexual minorities would be offended and no good argument that they should be. It would reinforce the idea that sexologists are activists first and empiricists second. Thus, I will continue to use the adjective “homosexual” to describe attraction to one’s own sex. Furthermore, contrary to official APA policy, I have been using “homosexual” as a noun in this chapter. No one has been harmed.

## Sexual Identity of Researchers

Since I began studying sexual orientation, I have occasionally been asked about my own sexuality. I am an unapologetic heterosexual man, and sometimes non-heterosexual persons have expressed concern about my motives for studying them. Analogously, non-heterosexual researchers have had their motives and integrity questioned by some who disliked their conclusions (e.g., Thomas, 1995). It would be naïve to reject the possibility that researchers’ political motivations never affect their work. But casting aspersions on researchers’ motivations ensures that scientific progress is delayed. There is simply no substitute for digging into the work.

I have generally tried to consult individuals with the atypical sexualities I studied. Indeed, I have sometimes collaborated with them. I did not do this for political insulation. Rather, they knew things I didn’t. I suppose this is a version of “lived experience” that is so highly valued in some quarters these days. However, sexual minorities often have biases that reduce their accuracy. For example, some gay men

deny the moderate-to-strong correlation between homosexual orientation and gender non-conformity (Bailey, 2003). Some bisexuals ignore the evidence that homosexual people often misrepresent themselves as bisexual before coming out as homosexual (Semon et al., 2017). Some pedophiles insist that adult-attracted men are sexually aroused by children in laboratory studies, without acknowledging the latter's arousal is much reduced compared with pedophiles' (Blanchard et al., 2012). Some furies deny any influence of sexual motivation on furies in general, despite strong evidence to the contrary (Hsu & Bailey, 2019). And so on. These biases are interesting in themselves. The combination of researchers without "lived experience" of unusual sexualities and self-presentational biases among sexual minorities suggests that research on atypical sexualities truly benefits from relevant diversity.

### **Bias from the Right Versus Bias from the Left**

Social conservatives have largely opposed sex research because they have worried that some researchers were trying to change society in ways they dislike. They have preferred the wisdom of our sometimes-intolerant ancestors. (To be sure, tolerance is not always good.) During the 1990s, social conservatives' worries included the fear of legalizing gay marriage. During the 2020s, their worries have included "normalizing pedophilia" (e.g., Verbruggen, 2021). The 1990s worries have come to pass, and most people in countries that have legalized gay marriage have no regrets. The more recent concerns about "normalizing pedophilia" are vague. Few if any sex researchers want to encourage children to have sex with adults. More sex researchers believe that it would be better if child-attracted persons were not hated for feelings they didn't – and wouldn't – choose, but were judged for behaviors they can control. I am among the latter, but we remain a fairly small, intimidated, group.

The current Left is most concerned about sexual and gender minorities whom they consider unfairly marginalized. These include, for example, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, intersex, pansexual, two spirit, androgynous, and asexual persons (LGBTQQIP2SAA, n.d.). Other identities are also occasionally defended, but pedophiles are not. The Left's focus on some marginalized identities differs from the sexually progressive Left of some previous generations, such as those who promoted sexual liberation in the 1960s and 1970s. Indeed, Millennials, whom the Right finds especially problematic ideologically, are having fewer sex partners and less sex compared with prior generations (Twenge et al., 2017).

Current political struggles over sex research include disagreements about the desirability of adopting non-heterosexual, non-cisgender identities, especially during childhood. For example, the state of Florida is considering legislation to ban classroom teaching about sexual orientation or gender identity through third grade (Alfonseca, 2022). Although evidence suggests that male sexual orientation is unlikely to be altered by social influence (Bailey et al., 2016), female sexual orientation and gender identity may be more so (Bailey & Blanchard, 2017). Indeed, there is a concerning epidemic of transgender identification among adolescent natal

females who were not masculine girls before puberty, and some research suggests such identification is socially transmitted, peer-to-peer (Bailey & Blanchard, 2017; Zucker, 2019). Healthy resolution of these political disagreements requires empirical research that addresses issues raised by both the Left and the Right. Can politicians, the media, and academics cooperate to collect needed data? History gives us little reason to be optimistic.

## Knowledge Is Good

I close this chapter with a nostalgic reminder. The 1978 movie “Animal House” opened with a scene from fictional Faber College. The camera pans to a statue of college founder Emil Faber, with the quotation on the statue’s base: “Knowledge is good.” In 1978 this was ridiculously hilarious – a college bothering to point out that “knowledge is good!” Times have changed.

I have more and more frequently encountered the contention that there are simply some things that shouldn’t be studied. This is often accompanied by the assertion that we already know what is true about certain topics and, therefore, studying them evidences dangerous ill will. Those who assert such things are the enemies of scientific progress, knowledge, and enlightenment (Hunt, 1998; Pinker, 2018; Rauch, 2013). These ends remain highly desirable and obtaining them requires open inquiry. If there must be any ideological influence on sex research, let it be the primacy of open inquiry constrained by reason.

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# Chapter 30

## Sacred Values, Politics, and Moral Panic: A Potent Mix Biasing the Science behind Child Sexual Abuse and Related Phenomena



Bruce Rind

### Moral Panic Bias in Child Sexual Abuse Research: A Personal Case Study

The nature of implicit values within morality and politics has been highly variable across time and place, being based on differing and often changing sociopolitical ideologies. Science, by contrast, concerns what is objectively true in a more permanent sense, not what is currently desirable or fashionable. Nevertheless, morality, politics, and science have frequently been conflated—particularly in the social sciences—which can bias the science (Haidt, 2011). To be sure, morality and politics play important and legitimate roles—not just in society but also in the social sciences in particular. In society, morality attempts to structure behavior to enable communal living, and politics can act as a means to promote what is seen as good and ameliorate what is seen as bad. In the social sciences, morality and politics can motivate researchers to investigate important issues of societal concern. For example, research on homosexuality before the mid-1970s was motivated by its intense conflict with the morals and laws of the day, which prompted some researchers, accepting these morals and laws, to search for etiology and treatment (e.g., Bieber, 1962; Socarides, 1975), while prompting other researchers, adopting what are now called progressive values, to interrogate the psychological claims-making derived from these morals and laws (e.g., Hooker, 1957; Tripp, 1975). In these contrasting approaches, it is not the motivational aspect that was problematic—before the mid-1970s, either side might have been right given the knowledge of the day, and each of their differing motives could be seen to valid. What would have been, or was, problematic, however, was conflating moral-political motives with factual

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conclusions, such that the latter were constructed to fit the former rather than follow any sort of systematic empiricism accompanied by valid inference. In general, this kind of bias in the social sciences may ensue because the researcher is partisan, committed above all else to a given morality and politics, or is prone to yield to dominant moral-political pressures in order to avoid conflict (Bailey, 2019; Rind, 2019a). The problem is greater to the extent that morality and politics are more deeply intertwined with the research topic, as they have been in the area of homosexuality. In general in the social sciences, this entanglement has been most evident within the areas of sex, gender, and race (Haidt, 2011).

In this chapter, I discuss some of my own sexuality research concerning “child sexual abuse” (CSA), a topic whose entanglement with moral and political interests has been especially acute since the mid-1970s, with the result that the potential for bias in research on it has been high. In the context of radically shifting cultural ideologies regarding sexual behavior in the 1970s, with some boundaries of right and wrong being moved or weakened (e.g., homosexuality) and others being fortified (e.g., sex involving minors), various researchers began delving into the nature of CSA, rejecting non-alarmist views that dominated professional opinion up to that point and replacing them with alarmist ones (Finkelhor, 1979; Jenkins, 1998). The authority provided by newly proffered alarmist professional opinion, on top of other social forces of the time, shortly sparked moral panic in the 1980s (see below), which has persisted ever since in one form or another (Angelides, 2019; Jenkins, 1998, 2006; Lancaster, 2011; Nathan & Snedeker, 1995). As argued here and in my studies (e.g., Rind, 2009), the moral panic, in turn, acted as a particularly potent form of moral-political influence on psychological research regarding all behaviors classifiable as CSA, with bias being amplified regarding factual conclusions. For making these arguments, my works have in turn been counterattacked as themselves supposedly being morally or politically biased. Clearly, then, an examination of moral-political bias regarding “knowledge” about the nature and effects of CSA is in order, and that is the mission of this chapter.

## **Moral-Political Bias in Social Science**

### ***Bias Defined***

Before continuing, it will be helpful to operationalize bias in scientific research. First, any side in research can, and is entitled to, have an opinion on the “rightness” or “wrongness” of a behavior or an issue. Just having an opinion is not in and of itself biased. If it were, all humans could be said to be biased. Scientific bias comes into play when the researcher does something improper in the conceptualization, design, execution, and/or interpretation of research results, any of which is unduly influenced by the researcher’s moral-political opinions. In the final analysis, such bias will fail to converge on “truth” (assuming agreed-upon criteria concerning how truth can be known).

### ***Example 1: Pederasty and Homosexuality***

Suppose a researcher argued that pederasty (i.e., sexual relations between men and adolescent boys) was natural and healthy because, in many times and places, sexual relations between adult men were not only viewed as acceptable but also seen to serve useful social functions. The research community would view such an argument as biased—putting it mildly—because the researcher was appropriating a form of homosexual behavior very different on dimensions such as age-structure, maturity, and power. This community would likely attribute to the researcher a moral-political agenda in the misuse of evidence and its seemingly willful misinterpretation. Suppose instead the reverse: a researcher used historical and cross-cultural examples of institutionalized pederasty, seen in those societies as serving useful social functions, to argue that gay relations between adult men in our society are natural and healthy. Would the research community see this appropriation as biased? The first example was hypothetical—no researcher, to my knowledge, has ever done it. But the second example has been *commonplace* among sexologists and other scholars (Rind, 1998). Compared to the first example, the second arguably represents far more extreme bias because, typically, such researchers, in using pederasty elsewhere to affirm gay sexuality in our society simultaneously condemn pederasty in our society. The presence and impact of political-moral bias here is palpable—such blind-sidedness is a telltale sign. This example alerts that moral-political bias regarding homosexuality is not confined to the political right. Given its didactic value regarding clear political-moral bias coming from the political left, I examine this example later in the chapter in greater depth.

### ***Example 2: Pubertal Marriage***

Suppose one set of researchers condemns pubertal marriage (i.e., generally between early adolescent girls and significantly older males, often young men), holding that (1) girls of that age are intrinsically too immature to successfully raise children and (2) it is preferable in *all* societies for girls to get fully educated, choose career, court, and only then get married and bear children. Suppose another set of researchers judges pubertal marriage to be adaptive in various settings. Which, if either, is scientifically biased based on moral-political influence? The World Health Organization (WHO) has formally condemned pubertal marriage in all societies, most Western-educated professionals may be likely to consider sexual relations between younger adolescent girls and men, even within marriage, exploitative because of maturity and power differences (i.e., a form of CSA), and so one might infer the first set of researchers to be unbiased, but not the second.

The reality, however, is arguably just the opposite. These two positions were debated in a professional conference four decades ago on the problem of school-age pregnancy in the USA (Whiting et al., 2009). Whiting et al., who argued for the

adaptiveness of pubertal marriage in certain contexts, later published, based on their presentation, what came to be *the* authoritative anthropological survey of maidenhood (i.e., length of time between menarche and marriage, examined comparatively in 28 postindustrial and 50 preindustrial societies). They rejected the other researchers' first point (i.e., too immature to raise children), noting that it is "clearly not supported in the ethnographic record" (p. 303). They added that, "Through most of human history, young women have married and born their first child within four years of menarche while still in their teens" (p. 303) and that, except in postindustrial societies, the community has supported teens with offspring, enabling this strategy to succeed. They documented that most preindustrial societies married their girls within a short time of menarche, and argued that pubertal marriage was adaptive in such societies, which needed to make full use of the reproductive lives of their females owing to lifestyle constraints (e.g., long nursing with frequent feeding bouts), which increased birth spacing and so decreased birth rate. They rejected the other researchers' second point (i.e., much delayed marriage is always preferable), commenting that "there is nothing sacrosanct about it," noting that "most human societies for most of human history have fared well without it" (p. 304). They commented that the most that could be said for the maidenhood strategy of complex European and Asian societies is that it has been well adapted to their historic needs.

Whiting et al. employed extensive broad-based data to argue against the claims by the other researchers, which proceeded from limited narrow-based data at best, but which centrally constituted *moral inference* (e.g., it must be harmful or maladaptive because it violates "our" values and morals). Moral inference is *not* scientific inference and is especially prone to bias in terms of factual conclusions. At the end of their talk, Whiting et al. sharply criticized this kind of thinking, asserting: "What we need most is to lose some of our ethnocentric beliefs about what is right and proper, and recognize that there are viable alternative maidenhood strategies" (p. 304).

Importantly, unlike the first set of researchers, who were acting as advocates for certain social arrangements and behavior, Whiting et al. were championing science—understanding a social behavior as it is, despite moral-political pressures to see it otherwise. Moreover, they were *not* suggesting that complex societies, including the USA, adopt pubertal marriage or sexual relations between adolescent girls and men, which they acknowledged misfit our culture. This example highlights that researchers can attribute function, rather than pathology, to a morally and politically reproved behavior without being advocates or scientifically biased. Their opponents' treatment illustrates that making assertions under the cover of science, which comfort and accord with strongly held dominant moral and political positions, should not *prima facie* be assumed to be scientifically unbiased.

## *Moral Panic*

The foregoing examples are relevant to professional bias vis-à-vis CSA—both involve behaviors or relations often labeled CSA in contemporary discourse—but neither captures the extremes that have erupted in this area under the influence of the moral panic over CSA that took hold by the early 1980s.

CSA has been defined as any sexual experience, unwanted or willing, contact or noncontact, between a minor under age 18 and someone 5 or more years older, or as any sexual experience between minors where coercion is involved. This is the definition provided by Rind et al. (1998) based on typical definitions found in the studies they reviewed in their meta-analysis, and it will be the working definition here. Before the 1980s, most researchers held either that CSA, in the absence of aggravating factors, was typically *not* psychologically harmful or that it was only a minor hazard at most (Finkelhor, 1979; Jenkins, 1998). Finkelhor called these researchers “non-alarmists.” He noted that a small number of clinicians, referred to as “alarmists,” held the opposite view that CSA was extremely harmful to development and adjustment, on par with rape of adult women. Finkelhor speculated that this debate would take many years to resolve. In fact, however, within just a few years, the alarmist view became dominant, nearly monopolistic. This rapid “overnight” transition, as Clancy (2009) and Jenkins (1998) documented, did not come from a distinguished body of systematic empiricism but from advocacy, an advocacy that resonated with newly arisen social anxieties and other currents of the time, such that it quickly became assimilated into mental health, legal, and public discourse and thinking as established fact. The view that emerged was that CSA, in any of its many forms, similarly produced severe trauma, which led to extreme psychological, social, and sexual maladjustment in most cases. This view, in interaction with victimological advocacies that had developed over the previous decade, directly and quickly led to moral panic.

A moral panic, following Cohen’s (1973) moral panic theory, occurs when (a) official reaction to some matter of concern is out of all proportion to the actual threat, (b) “experts” begin perceiving the threat in all but identical terms and speaking with one voice on rates, diagnoses, prognoses, and solutions, and (c) media representations begin universally stressing sudden and dramatic increases in the problem that far exceed sober appraisal. Well-known previous examples in American history include the Salem witch trials in Massachusetts (1692–1693), in which several hundred people were accused of being witches, 30 were convicted, and 19 executed; the Red Scare and McCarthyism in the late 1940s and early 1950s, where thousands of persons were harassed by law enforcement, stigmatized in their communities, and dismissed from their jobs for supposedly being communist sympathizers, charges that were mostly false or exaggerated; and the war on drugs, starting in the 1970s, peaking in the 1980s and 1990s, and fueling the development of mass incarceration, which has characterized American criminal justice ever since. In each of these examples, “social devils” were identified in the context of pushes for social control, in which these targets were then used to stoke public anxiety as an effective

means to advancing this control and associated benefits (Drew, 2022). Aside from the CSA panic, other well-known sex panics have included the masturbation hysteria (late eighteenth through early twentieth centuries) and various homosexual panics across time. Past extremist thinking regarding masturbation and homosexuality is detailed below to inform understanding of present extremist thinking about CSA.

The elements comprising the CSA moral panic began coalescing by 1976 in the wake of massive social, economic, and cultural changes over the previous decade, including the sexual revolution and then counterrevolution, the new emphasis on consent as the arbiter of acceptable sex rather than traditional morality, the women's movement with its emphasis on victimization, the emergence of sexual victimology in response to women's concerns, and legislation mandating increased attention to child protection, for which it began providing generous and durable funding (Jenkins, 1998, 2006; Lancaster, 2011; Nathan & Snedeker, 1995). These events led to establishment of a "child abuse industry," with psychologists and related professionals playing a leading role in efforts at social control. In this role, they lent critical authority to the emerging view that CSA was especially harmful. Shortly afterward, moral panic erupted, first in allegations of satanic ritual abuse (SRA) in daycare in the earlier 1980s (always with CSA being a central element), and next in claims by adult psychotherapy patients in the later 1980s of repressed and recovered memories of childhood incest. Both involved bizarre accusations stretching the imagination, both were eventually discredited, and both illustrate how a discipline (psychology, psychiatry) can run amok when departing science to join a moral crusade.

These panics are detailed later. For now what is important to note here is a central argument that the moral panic acted as an extreme form of moral-political influence in biasing scientific understanding of the nature and effects of interactions classified as CSA. Because this panic is ongoing, it will not be obvious to many that any real or significant bias has been occurring, under the assumption that professionals have dealt with the issue rationally. The following section is presented didactically to illustrate just how biased professional opinion can be on sexual matters when morals and politics are deeply intertwined. It illustrates how morals can produce politics, how politics can produce morals, and how the two can corrupt science.

## Two Didactic Models for Moral-Political Bias

In order to convey the potential enormity of the problem of moral-political bias in psychology and related fields (e.g., psychiatry, sexology) to produce *extreme* claims of pathology, in preparation for later discussion of CSA, I review two examples from the past: masturbation and homosexuality. In this review, I delve into history, morals, and politics, and their interplay with the science that emerged to illustrate classic cases of social science faltering under extra-scientific influences. In particular, these cases are intended to serve as models for the difficulties in objective appraisal of behaviors considered highly immoral. As models, they can help to

understand the scientific misunderstandings that have evolved surrounding the nature and effects of CSA (discussed in detail below), perhaps the most taboo behavior of our day. Before proceeding, it is important to emphasize that no moral equivalence is being suggested between the behaviors serving as the models and CSA. They are different in important ways. Nevertheless, all three have in common the manner in which they have been judged by the experts of their day, consisting of extreme claims of harm and pathology widely held with iron-clad certitude. In the cases of masturbation and homosexuality, in retrospect, it will be clear to most that morals and politics created this biased thinking among professionals (as elaborated upon below). Less clear to many may be that similar forces have biased professional thinking regarding CSA, but much evidence shows that they have (discussed below). Addressing this bias, it is contended, can benefit from first recognizing parallels with the classic cases in terms of how psychologizing tends to work regarding immoral, impure behavior. Beyond that, its amelioration is intended not to render CSA moral but rather to straighten out the science surrounding it for its own sake as well as to weaken the moral panic that emerged as a direct result of professional overstatement four decades ago (elaborated upon below) (Jenkins, 1998, 2006).

### *Masturbation*

In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, Scholastic theologians classified masturbation as an “unnatural” sexual sin, putting it into the same category as sodomy and bestiality, two of the most despised behaviors in Christian morality (Rice, n.d.). The stage was set for physicians later on (in the eighteenth century), when they began replacing clerics as the go-to authorities on sex, to transform masturbation from sin to sickness. Physicians did not simply claim that masturbation caused harm, they claimed that it led to the most *severe* forms of harm: paralysis, madness, idiocy, epilepsy, suicide, and cancer (Hare, 1962). One nineteenth-century physician proclaimed that “neither the plague, nor war, nor small-pox, nor similar diseases have produced results so disastrous” (Adam Clarke, quoted in Kellogg, 1881, p. 268). John Harvey Kellogg (1881), also a physician, held that masturbation was the “most dangerous of all sexual abuses” (p. 315). Not only were physicians, preachers, and common people taken in by these claims, but so were many of the great thinkers of the day. Asserting that all physicians had agreed, philosopher Jeremy Bentham (1978/1785) declared that, of all the sexual “irregularities,” masturbation was the “most incontestably pernicious” with “the most serious effects on health” and mental well-being. Philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau asserted that masturbation was equivalent to “mental rape” (Soble, 2003).

Medical professionals began believing in grave harm from masturbation after eighteenth-century physicians offered mechanistic explanations (e.g., the Swiss physician Tissot proclaimed that physical and mental debilities resulted from the loss of vital bodily fluids). Notably, all such explanations were conjecture—never tested, never verified, but nonetheless facilely absorbed into the medical field

because of their moral resonance. With the pathology view in place, physicians cherry-picked anecdotes and unsystematic data for confirmation (e.g., mental asylum patients were seen to openly practice masturbation, so masturbation was assumed to have been the cause of their mental illness). In the meantime, physicians and self-proclaimed healers endorsed therapeutic quackery, including innocuous preventatives such as *Kellogg's Cornflakes* and the *Graham Cracker* (claimed to counteract temptation through their blandness) and iatrogenic treatments such as chastity belts, electric shock, cauterization, blistering the penis with nitric acid, circumcision, and castration (Hodges, 2005).

Whorton (2001) held that the masturbation panic began to fade at the end of the nineteenth century, when certain physicians and other researchers set aside moral judgment and began thinking scientifically (e.g., was masturbation in asylum patients the cause *or* the effect of their mental illness; did asylum observations generalize to non-patients). Hodges (2005) noted that Kinsey's research in the middle of the twentieth century, finding masturbation to be nearly universal among males, added weight to the argument that masturbation is not associated with disease. Hall (1992) noted that, in spite of any research done or scientific opinion offered, panic abatement was slow across the twentieth century, lasting well into the second half, and attitudes on masturbation seemed to transition into non-alarm and then approval only in relation to changing cultural ideologies (e.g., greater dominance of the progressive voice, which departed from traditional sexual morality). The argument here, then, is not that masturbation is seen more benignly today because science has triumphed over morality, but rather that the regnant morality that brought masturbation into panic has been contained and essentially removed from biasing the science as it considers this behavior going forward.

## ***Homosexual Behavior***

From its inception, Christianity universally condemned homosexual behavior (Crompton, 2003; Rice, n.d.). Church fathers attacked it with vitriol, writing that it was a "monstrosity," the "enormity of the crime silences the tongue," and it was worse than murder (the latter merely separates the soul from the body; the former destroys the soul). In late Rome, Christian emperors blamed earthquakes, famine, and pestilence on homosexual behavior, establishing laws with torture and execution as punishment for offenders. In later centuries, calamities such as economic depressions were attributed to the behavior. The moral repugnance continually pronounced by the Church, along with draconian punishments applied by the state based on these pronouncements, conditioned the peoples of the West to abhor the behavior and recoil at its mention. Jeremy Bentham (1978/1785), taken in by the masturbation panic, wrote skeptically about contemporary claims of homosexual behavior's harmfulness. In the end, he never published out of fear of being attacked, complaining in his side notes, "To other subjects it is expected that you sit down

cool, but on this subject if you let it be seen that you have not sat down in a rage you have given judgment against yourself at once" (Crompton, 2003, p. 532).

Well into the twentieth century, physicians and therapists still generally felt "disgust, anger, and hostility" toward homosexual behavior (Hooker, 1957, p. 18). Representing mid-century thinking, Karl Menninger (1963), known as the dean of American psychiatry, wrote that it is a "tragedy," which ranks "high in the kingdom of evils" and "ruins the lives of millions and breaks the hearts of millions more" (p. 5). Clinicians designated homosexuality a severe psychopathology in the first several editions of the DSM. Bieber, a leading proponent of this view, asserted that "a homosexual is a person whose heterosexual function is crippled, like the legs of a polio victim" (Myers, 1991). Clinicians tried to cure it aggressively through aversion therapy or more gradually by identifying patients' childhood adversities as its etiological source. In either case, their approach was essentially iatrogenic.

Christian antipathy toward the behavior was inherited and constructed from earlier Jewish prohibitions (Lev. 18:22, Lev. 20:13) and myth (Genesis 18–19) and from Greco-Roman ascetic philosophical counsel (e.g., Pythagoreans, Plato, Stoics). Jewish biblical authors called homosexual intercourse an abomination deserving of death and wrote that God destroyed cities (e.g., Sodom) for it. The Pythagoreans introduced the doctrine of procreationism, holding that sex was only for reproducing and should be done without pleasure. Plato introduced the notion that homosexual behavior was "against nature," holding that it wasted the seed and animals did not do it. The Stoics invented the doctrine of natural law, holding that man's moral end was to live according to nature, adding God as the source to lend authority to this directive. The early Christians found these myths, counsels, and supposed facts congenial, fitting in with their broader ascetic views on sex, and adopted them wholesale in condemning homosexual behavior (Crompton, 2003; Rice, n.d.).

Research setting aside moral judgment has rendered both religious claims and clinical moral inferences from them untenable. Homosexual behavior, rather than being against nature because animals do not do it, is commonplace in numerous species (Bagemihl, 1999; Sommer & Vasey, 2006), especially those most closely related to humans (Dixson, 2010; Ford & Beach, 1951; Vasey, 1995). These sources have all concluded that the human manifestation of this behavior has non-pathological evolutionary roots. Moreover, non-procreative heterosexual sex is pervasive across mammals (Bagemihl, 1999), and bonding, through the pleasure sex yields, is an important function above and beyond procreation in humans (Barron & Hare, 2020; Buss, 2007). Christian moral antipathy toward homosexual behavior is culture-bound, not innate—most societies in cross-cultural surveys have approved homosexual behavior in one form or another (Ford & Beach, 1951; Greenberg, 1988), as did most of the high civilizations of the West and East in the past before Christian influence entered (Crompton, 2003; Rice, n.d.). In the USA, when moral antipathy still dominated, males' potential to behave homosexually at some point in their lives was substantial rather than rare and highly deviant (Kinsey et al., 1948). Finally, rather than being an essential scourge to communal order, homosexual

behavior in certain forms has frequently served cultural functions in numerous societies (Crapo, 1995; Ford & Beach, 1951; Herdt, 1991; Kirkpatrick, 2000).

It is important to qualify that it is not the case that the science just reviewed triumphed over older moral views in changing cultural attitudes to the greater tolerance or acceptance we have today. Campaigns for gay rights occurred during at least three distinct periods in the twentieth century (c. 1920s, 1950s, and 1970s), which were met with derision the first two times. The third time, with essentially the same arguments, the campaign resonated with cultural shifts occurring, including ascendancy of the new congenial ideology of sexual self-determination over the older one of community interests, values, and morals. What the newly created tolerance for homosexuality did was to legitimize studying it outside the moral-pathology framework (Greenberg, 1988), resulting in works that essentially comported with the new cultural attitude.

### *Morality and Politics*

Masturbation and homosexuality represent classic illustrations of sexual morality producing extremist feelings and beliefs in lay persons and professionals alike, strongly biasing the latter in their professional judgments. They are also relevant to later discussion of two controversies surrounding my research, one involving CSA, with parallels to the masturbation panic (Malón, 2010), and the other pederasty, which figures centrally in the scholarly and scientific reviews of homosexual behavior just cited. Masturbation and homosexuality also illustrate how politics may shape morality in the first place, as reviewed next. Indeed, politics and morality have worked hand in hand, as if two sides of the same coin, in the past to bias sexual opinion, and the argument here is that they still do, considerably.

In the case of masturbation, physicians who constructed its pathological status did so within a cultural milieu that set up demands for such a construction (Foucault, 1978; Szasz, 1990). During the emerging industrial era, states began seeing increased utility in greater numbers of the populace as potential or actual contributors to the new economy, prompting more focused attention on child development as preparatory. Sexual behavior became a chief concern, as its containment was often thought essential to controlling youth for the sake of their later productivity. In this context, physicians, who had become the go-to experts on sex, stepped in by transforming masturbation into a disease, in effect as a means of social control (e.g., scaring youth away from temptation; getting them to focus on more “useful” things). This social service enhanced physicians’ standing and their profession’s prestige in the eyes of their sponsor, the state. But the physicians’ claims-making was in no way scientific. It was in service of political ends, which facilely capitalized on masturbation’s extant immorality to create exigent alarm over it, which in turn substantially heightened the immorality of this behavior.

In the case of homosexual behavior, historians attribute Jewish biblical authors’ moral condemnation of homosexual intercourse in Leviticus, written after the

Babylonian Exile, to Jews' more general attempts to disidentify with their neighbors and former captors, whose customs included homosexual behavior (Rice, n.d.). Moreover, the tale of Sodom in the Old Testament appeared in multiple sections, but only once in reference to homosexual behavior. Historians hold that the original message of the Sodom tale was a warning about general decadence, including inhospitality, idolatry, injustice, oppression, and neglect of the poor, vices attributed to the Plain's peoples' wealth, luxury, idleness, and pride. During the Hellenistic period, when Jews first came into contact with Greek customs, they were confronted with widespread pederasty. As a means of attacking it, over several centuries they refashioned the Sodom tale to be principally about the heinous sin of homosexual intercourse and its terrible consequences for the community. This homosexualization of the Sodom tale reached completion in the writings of the Jewish philosopher Philo (ca. 20 BCE to ca. 50 CE). Once Christianity appeared, it not only condemned homosexual behavior morally because of Jewish political-moral and Greco-Roman ascetic-philosophical influences but also out of political utility specifically serving the new Christian religion. The vehemence that was added to the moral condemnation, as evident in the scathing moral tirades of the Church fathers, was directly aimed at winning pagan converts by scandalizing the male gods they worshipped, all of whom were said to have boy lovers, thereby demonizing these pagan religions in the process. The vehemence also served in the attempt to extirpate homosexual behavior categorically, whose prevailing pervasive practice as part of a culture-wide bisexual pattern was a threat to Christianity's success because of its pagan associations and incompatibility with Christianity's emphasis on asceticism in life and especially in sex (Rice, n.d.).

In short, morals can create politics, as in energizing activism to uphold the morals, but politics can also create, reshape, or intensify morals. Once in place, politics and morality can severely bias scientific opinion on matters intertwined with them. Aware of this problem, seminal works in *scientific* sexology have generally emphasized the absolute need to eschew moral-political judgment. Ford and Beach (1951) stipulated at the outset of their review: "We consistently eschewed any discussion of rightness or wrongness of a particular type of sexual behavior. Moral evaluations form no part of this book" (p. 14). Kinsey et al. (1948) asserted: "The interviewer who makes moral appraisals of any type of sexual behavior is immediately forestalled from securing an honest record, and as scientists we have, of course, renounced our right to make such evaluations" (p. 57).

It has been noted that Kinsey grew up in a strictly religious Christian home, was conflicted there because of bisexual feelings, later rejected his religion under the influence of his Harvard mentor (and staunch Darwinist), and then attacked what he saw as repressive sexual laws and social attitudes when later teaching (Brown & Fee, 2003). Critics of Kinsey have used this background to impute bias in his sex research (e.g., Jones, 1997). Such criticism fallaciously implies that accepting the moral values of his upbringing, retaining them into adulthood, espousing them in teachings, and possessing only heterosexual interests would have rendered him unbiased. Arguably, the latter profile, being the dominant one of Kinsey's day, would be *more* prone to bias because it, being invisible to the researcher, would be

less likely to prompt alternative thinking, essential in science. Regardless of Kinsey's attitudes, he was non-judgmental regarding interviewees' sexual conduct; he interviewed thousands, obtained them across broad swaths of the USA, ferreted out actual rather than defensive sex histories, and often employed hundred-percent sampling to counteract volunteer bias. Compared to the state of the art in his day, his advances were monumental. He approached sexual behavior as the entomologist he was—documenting the variety that existed through large sampling rather than imposing “normality” based on handfuls of highly selected cases, as his contemporaries had done. Finally, he did intentionally oversample some groups (e.g., homosexuals) to attempt to understand them better. But, as Gebhard and Johnson (1979) later showed in reanalysis after removing such participants, Kinsey's basic findings held with little or no bias.

The foregoing does not imply that bias comes only from the political right (with its adherence to traditional religious morality). The political right's impact could occur then because of its dominance, both popular and professional. Now the political left is dominant in sex research (and social science more generally), and so that is where we are now likely to find the most impactful bias.

## Moral-Political Bias from the Left

Haidt (2011) discussed *sacred values* as values that are transcendental and non-negotiable among a given group of persons, leading them, as if pulled by *moral force fields*, to vigorously defend these values if perceived to be under threat. These force fields, he argued, tend to bias not just lay thinking but also that of professionals. Haidt also held that religious sacred values tend to be structured vertically, from God at the top (whose order must be defended) to the devil at the bottom (whose order must be attacked). Following Haidt, past professional views on masturbation and homosexuality can be understood as having been biased by religiously-based moral force fields. Both nineteenth-century religious *and* medical discourse warned boys against temptation from the devil. Church fathers, in inveighing against homosexual intercourse, identified its source as the devil, an attribution that became standard over the next two millennia, which informed mid-twentieth-century clinical revulsion against homosexuality. By contrast, current dominant ideologies and moral force fields in the social sciences are secular and liberal, Haidt argued. Here, the sacred is not identified with God but with the victim, and it is not the devil but the offender who violates the sacred, Haidt maintained. In this framework, power and hierarchy are the villains in producing victimization, and equality, not just in opportunity but in outcome, is remedial and sacred. Accordingly, in the social sciences, Haidt argued, special deference has been accorded to perceived victim classes, including women, racial minorities, and sexual minorities.

The term *liberal* is somewhat problematic, because it has encompassed both those who value various freedoms (e.g., expression) and those who prioritize the perceived oppressed, which may conflict with certain freedoms (e.g., expression).

The latter version of liberal has been identified with the term *progressive* in discussions of trends in the social sciences regarding potential bias (e.g., Bailey, 2019; Rind, 2019a) and will generally be employed in this chapter. The secular-progressive trend in the social sciences particularly gained dominance in the 1960s and 1970s in consequence of major cultural events including the civil rights movement, introduction of the birth-control pill, the Vietnam War, the sexual revolution, the women's movement, women entering the workforce, and gay liberation, all of which challenged traditional authority, mores, and morals, turning emphasis to individual rights and addressing inequality and injustices, past and ongoing. This was the context that occasioned the emergence of a variety of victimology movements, from which "grievance politics" soon arose, and to which the social sciences contributed through research and advocacy (Best, 1997; Sommers, 1995, 2000).

In the wider culture a half century ago in terms of sexual behavior, an individual's self-determination and informed consent became central to licit sex, as opposed to community-based traditional notions such as community standards, honor, purity, and social function, which had dominated beforehand (Rind & Welter, 2016). Following the early 1970s' sexual revolution, morally acceptable sex in the mainstream became relational rather than procreational (Levine & Troiden, 1988). These cultural shifts enabled certain formerly taboo forms of sex, particularly homosexual behavior between legally consenting partners, to become more tolerated. At the same time, they created new classes of victims based on perceived violations of sexual self-determination. Whether the shifts involved new freedoms or victims, left-leaning politics and morality were at the fore, which influentially filtered into the progressive social sciences.

Haidt (2011) illustrated progressive bias in psychology and the academe more generally with several examples, one being Larry Summers, president of Harvard, who was forced to resign after a talk, in which he hypothesized that men have dominated math and science departments at top universities not because of a higher mean IQ but a larger standard deviation. The hypothesis has evidential support, Haidt noted, but to say it was to commit sacrilege against liberal politics. According to such politics, no innate differences are permissible and to suggest otherwise "blames the victim, rather than the powerful." My own introduction to these politics occurred within the context of being interviewed for graduate school in the mid-1980s by a female professor and ardent feminist. I noted that she had a book by E. O. Wilson on her shelf. She said, yes, "to know the enemy." I said that Wilson's sociobiological explanation for gender differences based on phylogenetic history seemed plausible. She averred that there are no human gender differences except for gestation. Two decades later, I listened to a National Public Radio broadcast of a panel of gender experts—all female psychologists—discussing gender at an annual American Psychological Association (APA) conference. In a Q & A, a male audience member pointed to clearly observable gender differences in play behavior in boys and girls at age two. Janet Hyde, panel member and leading feminist in the field, asserted flatly that such differences are entirely conditioned (no matter how young), with no contribution from biology. When I was a professor, male colleagues, who thought

that these and related claims were not only false but also preposterous, said to me that you cannot object if you want to maintain the peace.

The intensity in the gender wars at the academy and in general society was well documented by Sommers (1995, 2000), a philosophy of logic professor asked to teach a course on gender studies. When she looked into the literature, she found research and claims-making driven by politics, with bias and distortions pervasive. Describing herself as an older-style feminist, advocating equal opportunity as opposed to outcome, she reviewed the transformation of mainstream feminism in the 1970s into “grievance politics,” in which partisans became “atrocious collectors” to demonize the other side. She documented how the mainstream media, predominately left-leaning, characteristically disseminated grievance claims uncritically and sensationalistically, influentially implanting political research bias into the cultural psyche.

This one-sided discourse on gender has considerably strengthened over the decades, with stridency and forced deference becoming commonplace. Transgender issues are an extension, as recent examples illustrate. At the 2018 annual meeting of the Society for the Scientific of Sexuality (SSSS), a presenter discussing transgender research was aggressively heckled by a disagreeing audience member, a psychologist and advocate for sex-change treatment for more people at younger ages. The presenter had been invited by the SSSS to receive his SSSS-granted award for best research of the previous year. Nevertheless, after the talk, the SSSS apologized, not to the presenter, but to the heckler, writing in a mass email that “We are trans-allies” (Bailey, 2019, p. 1007). In 2019, art historian and noted intellectual Camille Paglia was vigorously and repeatedly heckled by organized protestors (students and other progressives) at one of her talks for having previously pointed to the potential harm in child and adolescent sexual transitioning, mediated by the psychological and medical fields (Orso, 2019). In 2020, vigorous attempts at censorship followed journalist Abigail Shrier’s publication of her book entitled *Irreversible damage: The transgender craze seducing our daughters*, in which she amplified points made by Paglia and others by discussing the relevant research dealing with iatrogenic harm (Taibbi, 2020). When Alice Dreger delved into the transgender issue in her 2015 book *Galileo’s Middle Finger*, presenting a competent review of the science and controversies, she was received hostilely by the LBGTQ community, which judged her book only in regard to whether it was affirming of LBGTQ lives.

With this background of older biases from the right and newer biases from the left influencing clinical, other professional, and popular thinking on sex-gender issues, I now move to areas related to my own research involving CSA, where I argue that morality and politics have had a particularly strong biasing impact on professional opinion, far outpacing that discussed previously in the cases of masturbation and homosexuality. This much greater impact stems from the far greater institutionalization of the psychology and related professions today (along with their concomitant much greater influence on lay opinion and public policy), as well as the convergence of left-right politics on the issue of CSA.

## Left-Right Political Bias: CSA and Moral Panic

Acts classified as CSA are viewed today as among the most immoral of behaviors, with a correlate being the claim that they are also extraordinarily harmful. The background just presented, however, advises caution concerning the latter—conclusions as to fact. Skepticism is directly indicated by looking back into how psychologists and other mental health professionals first came to a consensus on CSA's supposed special harmfulness. It occurred in the context of moral and political upheavals in the 1970s, mentioned previously, which led to moral-political constructions of CSA's effects, which then led to moral panic, which in turn consolidated and instated culture-wide beliefs in extreme harmfulness (Angelides, 2019; Clancy, 2009; Jenkins, 1998, 2006; Rind, 2009). As also noted previously, before the 1980s, CSA, absent aggravating circumstances, was regarded by most academic researchers as typically not harmful in the long term or only a minor hazard at most. But “almost overnight,” as Jenkins (1998) put it, psychologists and others began to see CSA as intensely traumatic and harmful, a dramatic shift that reflected advocacy and politics, not science.

Allegations of satanic ritual abuse (SRA) in daycare were the first significant outbreak of moral panic. Once made in a few high-profile cases, similar charges quickly spread to other daycare centers across the USA. Allegations were routinely issued with bizarre details such as molestation in hot-air balloons, secret tunnels, or ships surrounded by sharks trained to prevent children from escaping. Despite the absurdity of these claims, prosecutors eagerly brought daycare workers to trial, resulting in some of the longest and most expensive criminal trials in US history, including the McMartin preschool case in California running from 1983 to 1990 and the Little Rascals preschool case in North Carolina from 1989 to 1995 (Frontline, 1991, 1993, 1998; Rabinowitz, 2003). Widespread public and professional credence in such allegations resulted from a number of influences. First and foremost was the pronouncement by psychologists and related professionals of CSA's extreme harmfulness. Beyond this were the following: a new anxiety about children as mothers went to work and daycare became a repository for their preschool-aged offspring; left-leaning psychologists' focus on the victim along with the religious right's bringing Satan into the narrative; the collaboration of the two; and the mainstream media's continual and uncritical dissemination of the left-right conspiracy claims embellished with sensationalism. In the end, claims of SRA were discredited as fictions manufactured by overzealous social workers, therapists, and prosecutors exploiting the public's newly constructed gullibility. In the meantime, however, much damage was done, including iatrogenic harm to the children who were not actually victims, intense psychological and economic harm to the wrongly accused adults, and a warping of certain aspects of the social fabric, including parts of the legal system (Jenkins, 1998, 2006; Lancaster, 2011; Nathan, 1990; Nathan & Snedeker, 1995; Rabinowitz, 2003).

The second significant outbreak of moral panic erupted in the later 1980s, when adult psychotherapy patients—mostly women—across the USA were being coaxed

into “remembering” having experienced childhood incest, even though they had no recollection at the beginning of the therapy. Once again, the media, through sensationalism, facilitated belief in “recovered memories,” which frequently also contained bizarre elements of SRA, as well as claims of multiple personality disorder (MPD) supposedly caused by the alleged abuse (Loftus & Ketcham, 1994). The ground was originally laid in the 1970s for later facile belief in recovered memories, when feminist advocates and various mental health professionals argued for the revival of Freud’s 1896 seduction theory, which held that childhood sexual seduction (with a focus on father-daughter incest) was so overwhelmingly traumatic that it caused memory repression, which later manifested itself in neurosis, the relief of which required recovering the memories. Freud soon abandoned the theory, but feminist advocates and their therapeutic allies in the 1970s attacked Freud, alleging cowardice, claiming that he knew that his theory was correct but rejected it to protect his professional peers, all male. Even though never scientifically established, let alone even validly scientifically supported, and with much empirical evidence against it in cognitive science (Brandon et al., 1998; Otgaar et al., 2019), the repressed-recovered memory view resonated politically with feminist grievances concerning claims of male oppression, and so it was promoted and widely treated as settled science by the later 1980s in clinical circles, in which women predominated as patients. Bass and Davis (1988), exemplifying this political grievance-based attitude, helped to consolidate widespread public acceptance of recovered memories with their popular manual *The Courage to Heal*, which encouraged women with any problems to suspect repressed memories of incest as the culprit. For therapists, repressed memories also served as an easy, quick solution to “understanding” and then “treating” patients’ problems that were actually ambiguous in their etiologies. With their therapists’ encouragement to sue as part of the healing process, thousands of adult female patients filed lawsuits against their parents based on their “recovered memories,” demanding millions for alleged damages, but in the process tearing formerly intact family relations apart. In the end, these claims, like those of daycare abuse, were also discredited as fictions, products of therapeutic overreach and pseudoscience occasioned by moral panic (Frontline, 1995a, b; Otgaar et al., 2019).

In view of the enormity of the allegations, their fantastical nature and yet scientific packaging, and the havoc they were wreaking, various researchers and investigators began interrogating basic psychological assumptions. Researchers demonstrated empirically that false memories could readily be implanted in preschoolers (e.g., Ceci & Bruck, 1993), especially with the full range of coercive techniques commonly used in the field (e.g., Garven et al., 1998). Investigative reports added to the debunking by graphically detailing these techniques, as routinely employed by social workers, therapists, and prosecutors in actual SRA cases to elicit false testimonies (e.g., Frontline, 1991, 1993, 1998; Nathan, 1990; Nathan & Snedeker, 1995). Other researchers, interrogating therapists’ use of suggestive techniques in recovered memory therapy, began demonstrating that implantation of false memories of past events could also be achieved in adult subjects (e.g., Loftus, 1993; Loftus & Ketcham, 1994; Ofshe & Watters, 1993), demonstrations that

mounted over time (Otgaar et al., 2019). Cognitive scientists have noted that traumatic memories are seared into conscious memory, rather than buried, that people with PTSD suffer from intrusive recollections of the trauma rather than total unawareness, and repeated events (as CSA in therapy is typically reported to be) are generally well recollected (McNally, 2003). Investigative reports published or broadcast during the height of the “memory wars” in the mid-1990s documented the ferocity with which recovered memory therapists and advocates defended their beliefs and claims (e.g., Frontline, 1995a, b), a ferocity that betrayed political motivations and a quasi-religious quest to champion the sexual-victim class while demonizing the offender-oppressor class in the “gender wars,” as opposed to pursuing science disinterestedly (cf. Haidt, 2011). In this quest, to “champion” was to be heroic, exemplified by psychiatrist Bennett Braun, who was iconically shown at an award ceremony being honored for his leading role in MPD treatment with feminist Gloria Steinem at his side exuding admiration. Soon thereafter, however, Braun was exposed for quackery and iatrogenic abuse of his patients (Frontline, 1995b).

After the 1990s, recovered memories and their therapy lost credibility in mainstream science and the courts, becoming increasingly disallowed as evidence in the legal system in states across the USA. Nevertheless, even though without credible scientific merit, it has persisted in clinical circles, making a comeback under the new name “dissociative amnesia,” with three-quarters of clinicians and other professionals currently believing in it (Herzog, 2019; Otgaar et al., 2019). Recovered memories were embraced for their ideological and political utility. They represent a particularly harmful form of political bias in the psychology field. As Harvard psychologist Richard McNally wrote in his amicus letter to the California Supreme Court when it was hearing a case involving recovered memories: “The notion that traumatic events can be repressed and later recovered is the most pernicious bit of folklore ever to infect psychology and psychiatry. It has provided the theoretical basis for ‘recovered memory therapy’—the worst catastrophe to befall the mental health field since the lobotomy era” (McNally, 2005).

Another telling episode in the 1990s of the reach of the moral panic, its contagion potential, and its influence in the helping professions in terms of occasioning serious and false claims-making regarding CSA was that of facilitated communication (Frontline, 1994; Jacobson et al., 1995). The episode involved large numbers of nonverbal autistic children, whom facilitators “helped” to communicate by holding their arms as the children typed on a keyboard. But soon children, through this technique, began accusing parents of CSA, leading to legal involvement, and ultimately to critical scrutiny of the methods of facilitated communication. In controlled experiments, when facilitators knew the objects the children were being shown, children typed in the correct answer. But when facilitators did not know, children always typed in the wrong answer. The unmistakable conclusion was that the facilitators were the authors of the CSA accusations, not the children. Why facilitators would have done this has never been adequately addressed. But answers must lie in the atmosphere of the day created by grievance politics, politically biased and hyperbolized psychological theory, a sense of heroism in championing the victim (even if not actually a victim), and moral panic contagion.

It is important to note that skepticism leveled at SRA and recovered memories did not cause psychologists and therapists advocating their validity to retreat. Just the opposite occurred. Leaders and adherents in each movement created professional organizations to defend their claims. The first such organization was the American Professional Society on the Abuse of Children (APSAC), founded in 1985 to counter skepticism regarding the McMartin preschool case. As Nathan and Snedeker (1995, p. 135) noted: "From its inception, APSAC's leadership roster was a veritable directory of ritual-abuse architects." They then listed some members (e.g., Ann Burgess, David Finkelhor, Kee MacFarlane, Roland Summit, Jon Conte), individuals who were also key players behind the moral-political transformation of CSA from minor hazard to major devastation. Promoting this new view throughout their field, among the public, and in policy reform became a major goal of the organization, then and since.

A second key professional organization, which formed in the 1990s in response to skepticism concerning recovered memories and mounting lawsuits against therapists practicing recovered memory therapy, was the Leadership Council for Mental Health, Justice and the Media. Its website boasted that it contained "many of the nation's most prominent mental health leaders" whose mission it was to "insure the public receives accurate information about mental health issues." Like APSAC, its members' professional practices rested on the assumption that CSA was almost uniquely devastating, and its core mission was to safeguard this view in the public mind and public policy.

## **1998 Meta-Analysis on CSA Adjustment Correlates in College Samples**

The moral panic just described was the context and the prompt for our *Psychological Bulletin* meta-analysis (Rind et al., 1998), which critically examined key assertions that were commonly made by CSA researchers and then accepted across the psychology field. While other skeptical researchers were critically examining other claims contributing to the moral panic (e.g., memory repression), we zeroed in on the core claim from which the other claims were derived: CSA pervasively causes intense trauma and harm, equally for boys and girls. (In the meta-analysis, we operationally defined "intense" harm as poorer adjustment in the CSA versus control groups—a difference with a large effect size, where zero or small effect sizes would be contradictory, and where the poorer adjustment could reasonably be assumed to be caused by the CSA.)

Morality played a role in our research—we thought that the *moral* panic was *immoral* in its demeanor and madder than a hatter in its irrationality. As noted earlier, a moral sense can legitimately motivate research, but it must not determine factual conclusions. Our factual conclusions were based on explicit attention to issues such as external, internal, construct, and predictive validity, enabling the

valid scientific inferences that we drew. In this sense, our review differed substantially from the previous *Psychological Bulletin* review on CSA adjustment correlates by Kendall-Tackett et al. (1993), which was morally-politically based from start to finish. It paid attention to *none* of the validity issues just listed. It employed highly biased samples, got outlier results, and yet assumed to be speaking for all events classified as CSA. Worse, it was received in the psychology field as *the* authoritative work on CSA consequences, in no small part owing to its moral-political resonance. (See below for a point-by-point comparison between our competing *Psychological Bulletin* reviews.)

### ***Meta-Analysis Summary***

At the outset of our study, we documented the thinking of the day among many professionals concerning how harmful they believed CSA typically was. For example, we quoted McMillen et al. (1995, p. 1037), who asserted that “child sexual abuse is a traumatic event for which there may be few peers,” and we quoted Seligman (1994, p. 232), who critically summed up common belief in the psychology field as being that CSA is a “special destroyer of adult mental health.”

Our meta-analysis was based on 59 studies using college samples, substantially more probative regarding the general population than analyses based on clinical samples (e.g., as in the Kendall-Tackett et al., 1993, review). It found that the magnitude of the relationship between CSA and later adjustment was small, wherein CSA accounted for less than 1% of the adjustment variance—a finding contradicting the prevailing view that CSA was intensely and durably harmful for nearly everyone exposed to it. As we noted, this small magnitude of relation between CSA and adjustment was identical to that reported the previous year in a meta-analysis that two of us conducted using nationally representative samples (Rind & Tromovitch, 1997), suggesting the college results had generalizability. The college results also suggested that the small CSA-adjustment relationship obtained could not be validly causally construed due to reliable confounding with a third variable—family environment. This factor accounted for nine times more adjustment variance than CSA did. The meta-analysis found that a substantial majority of boys and a sizable minority of girls having CSA did not react negatively to the experience at the time or in retrospect, contrary to the prevailing view that all CSA was traumatic by nature. Results showed that participants were not infrequently willing<sup>1</sup> and that level of consent moderated the CSA-adjustment relationship for boys—it became non-significant when boys were willing. We concluded that one reason that the overall relationship between CSA and adjustment was small was that heterogeneous events were being combined into a single category (e.g., willing and unwanted

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<sup>1</sup> See below for more detailed evidence on frequency of willingness in national probability samples in the section “Empirical Update.”

events; child and adolescent subjects). Hence, to improve construct and predictive validity, we recommended that willing sexual encounters with positive reactions, given their *prima facie* lack of abusive qualities (socio-legal definitions and constructions aside), as well as their non-association with poorer long-term adjustment for males, not be included in the “abuse” category. To further improve these validities, we recommended drawing distinctions between children and adolescents.

It was these recommendations that were seized upon by critics to attack our article. Later in this chapter, I review their main criticisms in more detail. But before proceeding, given that notions of willingness, consent, and non-abuse raised such a storm, it will be useful to review how we responded in our 2001 *Psychological Bulletin* article (Rind et al., 2001), which was a rebuttal to two hostile critiques in the same volume (see below). First, regarding the “abuse” construct, we noted the context in which we ended up making the recommendation: the action editor specifically requested that we say something about it, because it was clear from the results of our meta-analysis that “CSA” was having poor predictive validity, seemingly stemming from mixing very different events and contexts into a single construct. We agreed with the action editor, and so developed the recommendations that we offered. Notably, his direction was fully vindicated by later empirical research by a variety of researchers, who defined abuse and non-abuse among their research participants as we suggested and confirmed that only the former was associated with poorer adjustment compared to controls (see below).

In our rebuttal, we noted that many other sexologists and researchers had warned that uncritical use of victimological language in CSA research can create problems in scientific validity. We listed 11 examples, four by authors of studies included in our meta-analysis. For example, we discussed what West (1998) had to say on this issue—he was a prominent criminologist from Cambridge University and co-author of two of the studies we used. He argued that professional use of terms such as *abuse*, *perpetrator*, *victim*, and *survivor* had incorrectly reinforced the idea that any kind of sexual incident with a minor is likely to cause great and lasting harm. He stated that this usage in the field has introduced a moral tone “alien to scientific inquiry” (p. 539). We then discussed the opinion of Richard Green (1992), psychiatrist, lawyer, and editor at the time of the *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, who reached similar conclusions to ours after himself reviewing the CSA literature. He stated the following:

Ultimately, scientists, if no one else, must be objective in their approach to this emotional issue. Judgmental terminology regarding intergenerational sexuality is more dramatic than that in the earlier psychiatric literature on homosexuality. There, patients were labeled *perverts* and *psychopaths*. Here, the experience is always *abuse*, the children are invariably *victims*, the adults are *perpetrators*, and those who later report childhood sexual experiences are, without apology to victims of the Nazi Holocaust, *survivors*. (p. 175)

We argued that our recommendations therefore were clearly in line with both scientific principles concerning issues of validity and sexological precedent. We noted that the further one moves away from the clinical realm, the clearer it becomes that neutral rather than morally loaded victimological language is the norm. Not only clinicians but also historians, anthropologists, and zoologists have also frequently

discussed adult-minor or mature-immature sexual interactions, generally entirely free of value-laden language, concerned to describe events without imposing moral meaning on them. Such researchers, owing in part to the broader perspective their line of research necessarily produces, understand that contemporary morals in our society are neither universal nor sacrosanct, and furthermore can have biasing influence if used in interpretation.

In terms of the “consent” construct, we divided our response into two sections: “simple consent” and “informed consent.” Regarding the former, we noted that this construct was employed in the studies we meta-analyzed, where researchers who did not restrict their participants to those having unwanted events labeled CSA, the majority of studies, frequently encountered participants who perceived that they had been willing, irrespective of the construct “informed consent,” which is different. To be clear on how we dealt with this issue, I fully quote below what we wrote (note, for the citations, refer to Rind et al., 2001):

First, *consent* does not always mean informed consent. Webster’s Third New International Dictionary (1981), for example, defines consent first as “compliance or approval, especially of what is done or proposed by another” and second as “capable, deliberate, and voluntary agreement to or concurrence in some act or purpose implying physical and mental power and free action” (p. 482). The first definition may be termed *simple consent*, the one used in the primary studies we examined, as well as in other nonclinical research (e.g., Condy et al., 1987; Coxell et al., 1999; A. Nelson & Oliver, 1998; Rind, 2001; Sandfort, 1992; West & Woodhouse, 1993). Simple consent, which might alternatively be labeled willingness or assent, can be observed in adolescents or children in a whole range of behaviors. As discussed previously in this rebuttal and elsewhere (Rind, Bauserman, & Tromovitch, 2000; Rind, Tromovitch, & Bauserman, 2000a), the simple consent construct has predictive utility, making it a scientifically valid construct. The second definition involves *informed consent*, which was not implied in our study or any others just cited. At no point did we claim in any way that adolescents or children, even if they perceive their sexual contact with an adult as willing, are providing informed consent in an adult sense.

Because our critics appear to view even simple consent, willingness, or assent as impossible by definition, on the basis of legal and moral arguments (e.g., Finkelhor, 1979b, 1984), they made errors in inference. For example, as shown in Tables 1 and 6, all definitions in the junior and senior high school surveys and the community surveys that Dallam et al. (2001) used to make broad statements about CSA all specified unwanted CSA, not CSA in general (i.e., sociolegal CSA). Clearly, many participants in national, community, college, and secondary school samples seem willing to make distinctions about whether their sexual contacts were wanted or unwanted, willing or unwilling. (p. 752)

Having distinguished between simple and informed consent, we next proceeded to discuss in detail the latter. Some important points made include that informed consent had not been actually studied in research, even while seized upon to make assumptions or claims as to how it affects reactions and outcomes to events labeled CSA. This statement applies presently as well. Another key point is that legal ages of consent, based on the notion of informed consent, have varied widely across time and even within location. Clearly, this variation has been sociolegal and *not* scientific, so that to hold a particular age as a scientific marker, below which trauma occurs, above which bliss occurs, is purely arbitrary and *not* scientific. A third key point is that what researchers may conclude about informed-consent capacity is

itself influenced by morals and politics, as the abortion example below suggests, where girls 11 to 13 are now considered capable because abortion is seen as useful. Here is what we wrote about informed consent (note, for the citations, refer to Rind et al., 2001):

Firm statements are made about informed sexual consent, as if this construct has been empirically studied. To our knowledge, it has not. Instead, opinion is drawn from moral philosophy and the law. Ondersma et al. (2001) cited Finkelhor (1979b) as an example of cogent thinking on this issue. Finkelhor argued that harm is not required to condemn CSA. Rather, it is wrong because children cannot consent because they do not know what they are getting into and cannot say no. These shortcomings are no problem for nonsexual behaviors, Finkelhor (1984) later argued, because CSA is more likely to be harmful. This circular reasoning is not cogent. With respect to the law, statutes vary considerably across nations. Whereas the median age of consent is 16 in the United States, it is 14 in Europe, ranging from 12 to 17 (Graupner, 2000). At times it has been set as high as 21 but historically has been considerably lower, with an age of 10 in most U.S. states before the 1880s (Jenkins, 1998). Thus, many cases considered CSA in current U.S. research are not legally such in other Western countries or even in the United States in the past. The law can also be contradictory, as in the case of teenage girls who can consent to sex with much older men in many states if married but cannot otherwise. In short, legal statutes are not a reliable guide for scientific evaluation of ability to consent.

In a related area (consent to an abortion in adolescence), the APA prepared an amicus curiae brief for the US Supreme Court in October 1989 in which, on the basis of a review of cognitive, social, and moral development, they concluded

by age 14 most adolescents have developed adult-like intellectual and social capacities including specific abilities outlined in the law as necessary for understanding treatment alternatives, considering risks and benefits, and giving legally competent consent. ... [Additionally,] there are some 11- to 13-year-olds who possess adult-like capabilities in these areas. (p. 20)

These conclusions, which were based on developmental research in many areas, cast doubt on the validity of automatic inclusion of adolescents into the category of CSA on the basis of an informed consent criterion. This validity is further weakened by the opinions of various European governmental commissions assigned to study the legal age of sexual consent, most of which recommended 14 (e.g., Austria, Denmark, Germany, Sweden, Switzerland; Graupner, 1997). (p. 752)

### *Reactions to the Meta-Analysis*

In the spring and summer of 1999, the article was attacked by psychotherapists on both the political left and right, and by religious groups, media commentators, and politicians on the right. The APA defended the study initially. In an exchange on the cable network MSNBC in May that year between a Republican congressman and Raymond Fowler, the then CEO of the APA, the congressman asserted that our meta-analysis was “a very, very bad study...based on some very, very bad data.” Fowler responded: “Well, with all due respect, it isn’t a bad study. It’s been peer-reviewed by the same principles as any kind of scientific publication. It’s been examined by statistical experts. It’s a good study.” But the pressure on Fowler was

enormous. In June he emailed me, writing that he was “in hand to hand combat with congressmen, talk show hosts, the Christian Right, [and] the American Psychiatric Association.” The next day he buckled under the pressure, writing a letter to Tom DeLay, the lead congressman attacking the study, making full concessions to his demands, including agreeing to have our study re-reviewed by an independent scientific group. In the letter, he abandoned scientific principles in exchange for political safety as the official stance of the APA: “It is the position of the Association that sexual activity between children and adults should never be considered or labeled as harmless or acceptable. Furthermore, it is the position of the Association that children cannot consent to sexual activities with adults.”

The next month, in its resolution (*H. Con. Res. 107*), Congress praised the APA for its compliance, continuing that it “condemns and denounces all suggestions ... [that] sexual relationships between adults and willing children are less harmful than believed and might even be positive for ‘willing’ children.” It concluded by encouraging “competent investigations to continue to research the effects of child sexual abuse using the best methodology so that the public and public policymakers may act upon accurate information.” As soon as the resolution was passed, the attacks on the study and the APA in the media and by other interest groups quieted down. Rather than being relieved by this downturn, however, Fowler reacted with a nervous breakdown after all the stress and had to take a leave of absence from his position. The downturn, however, was a relief to my co-authors, me, and the universities we were associated with.

### *Permeating Political Bias*

As Fowler agreed, our study was re-reviewed by an independent scientific group—the Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS), publisher of *Science*, and the largest scientific organization in the USA. Its report was issued later in the fall of 1999. It stated that after “examining all the materials available to the Committee, we saw no clear evidence of improper application of methodology or other questionable practices on the part of the article’s authors.” It then issued a stern rebuke to our critics:

The Committee also wishes to express its grave concerns with the politicization of the debate over the article’s methods and findings. In reviewing the set of background materials available to us, we found it deeply disconcerting that so many of the comments made by those in the political arena and in the media indicate a lack of understanding of the analysis presented by the authors or misrepresented the article’s findings. All citizens, especially those in a position of public trust, have a responsibility to be accurate about the evidence that informs their public statements. We see little indication of that from the most vocal on this matter, behavior that the Committee finds very distressing. (quoted in Rind et al., 2001, p. 735)

The whole affair, in short, was permeated with politics. Aside from political interference by right-wing media commentators and politicians, political bias within

psychology was pronounced, as various therapist groups worked openly and behind the scenes to sabotage the study so as to maintain the prevailing view of CSA's *special* harmfulness (in our 2001 reply to critics, we further documented this belief as standard—see below). Political bias was also the end product in the APA's pronouncement in yielding to Congress and in its formal position ever since.

### ***The Leadership Council and Dallam et al. (1999, 2001)***

The Leadership Council played a key role in giving Congress cover to condemn our study. In the spring of 1999, it sent certain members of Congress a draft of a critique of our meta-analysis, authored by some of its members (Dallam et al., 1999). The draft was angry in tone, ad hominem in many places, and essentially a “kitchen sink” attack, throwing everything at our study irrespective of accuracy, substance, or relevance (Rind et al., 2000). When Congress did act, the Leadership Council took credit for the condemnation in an unpublished letter submitted to the *Los Angeles Times* (Fink et al., 1999): “Congress passed the bill only *after* receiving our analysis” (italics in the original).

In the Spring of 1999, Fink, the president of the organization, also sent a letter to “Dr. Laura” Schlessinger, a nationally syndicated columnist and radio talk show host espousing ultra-conservative social positions. Schlessinger opposed the APA's liberal social stances and used our meta-analysis mainly to attack the APA. She got several clinicians from NARTH (National Association for the Research and Treatment of Homosexuality), a religiously conservative-affiliated organization, founded by psychiatrist Charles Socarides, with mission to convert homosexuals to heterosexuals through psychoanalytically oriented therapy, to “review” our study. She reported in one of her columns their judgment: “junk science.” One of the clinicians compared us to Nazi doctors. In Dr. Laura's first broadcast that discussed our study, she called it “garbage research with a dangerous statement at the end,” criticizing the general method of meta-analysis by stating that, “I frankly have never seen this in general science.... This [pooling of studies] is so outrageous” (quoted in Rind et al., 2001, p. 735).

Fink's choice of “Dr. Laura” to disseminate his group's analysis of our study clearly revealed his actual goals: politics, not science. In his letter to her, he wrote that one reason that our study was flawed was that we “loaded” our analysis with one study conducted over 40 years before (i.e., Landis, 1956), with data involving primarily mild adult-child interactions with no physical contact, but which, he claimed, made up 60% of the data in our analysis. This false and highly misleading claim became a key attacking point for Dr. Laura and others to follow, including the congressman debating Fowler on MSNBC. The congressman also used this fallacious claim in his speech to Congress urging condemnation of our study just before the vote in July 1999. As we later pointed out (Rind et al., 2000), the study in question was *not* included in our main analysis—the meta-analysis of CSA-adjustment

relations. We did include it in our analysis of reactions at the time to the CSA, but its inclusion *weakened* rather than *strengthened* our general thesis: the overall rate of positive reactions across studies was substantially *lowered* and the rate of negative reactions substantially *increased*. For example, with Landis, boys reacted positively in 37% of cases; without Landis, 50%. With Landis, they reacted negatively in 33% of cases; without Landis, 24% (Rind et al., 2000).

This tactic of pointing to some issue that *could* be a problem and then proclaiming that it *was*—but never checking to *verify*—was employed repeatedly by Dallam et al. (1999), by Fink, and later by Dallam et al. (2001) in their published critique in *Psychological Bulletin*. The day this critique was published, the Leadership Council issued a press release titled, “Controversial study defending child molesters is debunked.” Aside from the highly inappropriate politically loaded framing, this attack was simply wrong on substance, once again proclaiming without verifying. In their rush to claim victory in the debate, they did not wait to look at our rebuttal, published along with their critique (i.e., Rind et al., 2001), which refuted all of their central arguments.

Their 2001 critique was a polished and calmer version of their 1999 attack, but essentially the same in substance and merit. They attempted to show, for example, that our result for the magnitude of the relationship between CSA and adjustment (i.e., effect size) was substantially underestimated, that our samples did not generalize, and that our statistical control to examine causation was inadequate. In our rebuttal, we refuted each claim. For example, concerning precision, they claimed that we incorrectly coded one study, producing underestimation of the overall effect size. In response, we noted that the overall effect size we originally reported was  $r = .0948$  (small in size according to Cohen’s, 1988, guidelines, in which small, medium, and large effect sizes correspond to  $r$ s = .10, .30, and .50, respectively), but with Dallam et al.’s correction, it became only  $r = .0969$ —a trivial and meaningless difference. In fact, we *correctly* coded the result as published—the author of the study later informed Dallam et al. that *she* incorrectly reported her result. Concerning external validity, Dallam et al. claimed that our college samples did not generalize, one reason being that CSA victims may not make it to college because of their CSA. They cited various studies using junior high and high schools samples as more valid, implying their effect sizes would be much larger and more accurate. But they did not actually compute these effect sizes, but we did in rebuttal. The junior-senior high school and college effect sizes were nearly the *same*. Regarding internal validity (causation), they argued that our statistical control was flawed, dubiously claiming that the ANCOVAs and hierarchical regressions used in the studies we reviewed were not appropriate. They then presented a table of other studies that they claimed were “more appropriate,” but which, as we pointed out in rebuttal, also mostly employed ANCOVAs and hierarchical regressions!

### ***Comparing Rind et al. (1998) with Kendall-Tackett et al. (1993)***

While taking great efforts to look for any possible avenue of attack, no matter how trivial or irrelevant, in order to try to discredit our inferences regarding key issues such as external and internal validity, Dallam et al. (as well as Ondersma et al., 2001, the other critique of our study in *Psychological Bulletin*—see below), uncritically touted the Kendall-Tackett et al. (1993) review as authoritative. In response, we included a section entitled “Comparison of Kendall-Tackett et al. (1993) and Rind et al. (1998)” (pp. 748–749). We showed that Kendall-Tackett et al.’s mean effect sizes were large for emotional ( $r = .57$ ) and behavioral ( $r = .63$ ) problems in their clinical samples involving minors. In comparison, we noted that the corresponding effect sizes were  $r_s = .13$  and  $.11$  in our junior and senior high school samples (also restricted to minors), values consistent with the college, community, and nationally representative samples that we also meta-analyzed. In other words, Kendall-Tackett et al.’s findings were statistical outliers ( $z_s = 2.86$  and  $3.77$ , respectively)—they were *not* externally valid. Whereas we were explicit and thorough in our discussion of generalizability, Kendall-Tackett et al. never discussed it, implying and conveying that their findings applied to all events labeled CSA. Next, we compared the two reviews on internal validity (causation). We noted that, whereas we explicitly and extensively addressed the issue, Kendall-Tackett et al. never considered it—they presumed and implied that all correlates of CSA were effects caused by the CSA. We further pointed out that a number of their included studies were daycare SRA cases, including the McMartin preschool, typically with half the children falling in the PTSD range. Kendall-Tackett et al. never alerted the reader that these were SRA cases, which had been discredited before publication of their review. The children’s symptoms in these cases were clearly iatrogenic, making them internally invalid with respect to CSA causation. We pointed out other threats to internal validity in the studies in their review, including therapists’ reluctance to report asymptomatic cases, “perhaps out of concern that such figures might be misinterpreted or misused” (Kendall-Tackett et al., 1993, p. 168), and parental reporting bias (in many studies, symptoms were parent-reported). Kendall-Tackett et al. dismissed parental reporting bias, arguing that parents’ and therapists’ judgments were usually similar, even though children’s self-reports, when taken, were generally much less negative and were poorly related to parents’ reports. Kendall-Tackett et al., however, ignored the large literature on researcher (therapist) expectancy effects and demand characteristics (cf. Rosenthal & Rosnow, 2009), which may have biased therapists’ perceptions (and parents’, too), as they clearly had in the facilitated communication hoax discussed previously.

### ***APSAC and Ondersma et al. (2001)***

Ondersma et al. (2001) uncritically accepted Dallam et al.’s (1999) flawed methodological criticisms as valid, repeating a number of them. Most of their critique, however, focused on other complaints that were essentially political or ideological.

They argued that our study was part of the “backlash” that continues against their profession, and that it would hurt their ability to “service victims of child maltreatment” (p. 708). They provided a section on “sociohistorical context” to buttress the claim of backlash, positioning modern victimology, their paradigm, as being in a struggle for truth against prejudice and obscurantism. This perspective, however, was Marxian-like, involving a skewed collection of historical events and nonevents and of facts and non-facts for the goal of social criticism, not social science. Key to their sociohistorical review was reliance on an analysis by Olafson et al. (1993)—two of the three authors in this publication served as psychiatrists in the McMartin preschool case, lending crucial credibility to that hoax. Olafson et al. held memory repression to be verified fact, with a “venerable intellectual heritage” tracing back to Freud and Janet (p. 11). Critics of memory repression, on the other hand, were not so loftily described—Olafson et al. asserted that they were part of a “powerful backlash,” adding that it

remains to be seen whether the current backlash will succeed in resuppressing awareness of sexual abuse, again concealing vast aggregates of pain and rage ... and returning us to the shared negative hallucination that has obscured our vision in the past. (p. 19)

While embracing the psychoanalytic perspective along with a highly selective historical review as dispositive, Olafson et al. dismissed broader historical (and more accurate) perspectives that challenged their thinking as rationalizations for CSA.

Undersma et al., in keeping with Olafson et al., privileged contemporary morality and grievances based in feminist advocacy as the arbiters of *valid* science. They held that the “moral standard” (p. 711) is essential to scientific analysis of adult-minor sex. They claimed that we misused science by suggesting that the term “abuse” is not always appropriate in describing the underlying events. They called use of morally neutral language (e.g., adolescent-adult sex instead of CSA) “extra-scientific,” whose goal, they alleged, was to erode societal views regarding this behavior (p. 710). They criticized our treating boys’ frequent reports of positive reactions (37% at the time; 42% in retrospect) to sex with older persons as valid, arguing that we failed to consider that boys may refuse to recognize themselves as victims because of male socialization or indoctrination by their “abusers.” To illustrate the “backlash” against their profession, they cited a study on introductory psychology textbooks, which claimed bias because most of the textbooks (correctly so) did not give credence to recovered memories.

Undersma et al.’s critique illustrates well the problems discussed earlier in this chapter: conflating morality, politics, and science, at the expense of science; adhering in tribal fashion to the victim-offender dimension as the sole and sacred lens for understanding this phenomenon, at the expense of alternative interpretations and explanations. Their talk of “backlash” was political rhetoric intended to short-circuit legitimate discussion and debate. As for claiming that we were hurting their ability to “service victims of child maltreatment,” proper servicing critically depends on what is empirically true—“servicing” the McMartin preschool children, as their colleagues had done, based on fallacies and fantasies, was iatrogenic malpractice. Their selective historical review was political and ideological and itself a

rationalization, not the broader and more accurate historical perspective that they dismissed as rationalizing. Claiming the need for the “moral standard” for understanding CSA *scientifically* was an open invitation to *scientific* bias, as the masturbation and homosexuality episodes discussed previously illustrate so well (note: using the moral standard to understand the behavior strictly morally or legally is not a problem). Calling our recommendation to use morally neutral language “extrascientific” was itself extrascientific. Except when blinded by morally- and politically loaded topics, all of science recognizes the need for neutral language in its quest for objectivity. Claiming that boys’ frequent report of positive reactions to sex with adults is cognitive distortion, while assuming that all negative reports are genuine, is both a double standard and pseudoscientific, because it sets up unfalsifiability (i.e., all outcomes, negative *or* positive, are negative).

## ***Summary***

Two sets of therapists from professional organizations associated with SRA in day-care and recovered memories in therapy, respectively—the two major manifestations of the moral panic in the 1980s and 1990s—wrote critiques of our meta-analysis, and we responded. This exchange gave leading CSA experts the opportunity to defend their positions against a review article that critically and credibly called these positions into question. It also gave us a chance to respond as a second check on their claims and arguments. At stake was a sacred cow in the mental health field, which had had outsize impact on society and policy. Also at issue was whether psychology was simply a tool of morality and politics on this issue, as critics have charged it often has been on other issues (e.g., Foucault, 1978; Haidt, 2011; Kinsey et al., 1948; Szasz, 1990). In the end, these leading therapists failed to show that their positions were grounded in sound science. The evidence instead showed morality and politics in the background and foreground, speaking poorly for the psychology field, which had been deferring to these therapists and their colleagues, helping to enable the moral panic.

## **Empirical Update**

Since the meta-analysis, mainstream psychologists have generally stuck with the pre-meta-analysis view of pervasive trauma and harm. Hyde and DeLamater (2017) exemplified this problem. In their best-selling human sexuality textbook, they reviewed CSA, concluding that in “most cases childhood sexual abuse is psychologically damaging, and may lead to symptoms such as depression and PTSD” (p. 391). Their conclusions were biased, as later discussed. First, I provide an empirical update, based mainly on large-scale, generalizable samples, to show what conclusions are inferable.

## *Assumption of Trauma*

### **Clancy (2009)**

Clancy (2009) documented that CSA researchers and child advocates in the early 1980s constructed the CSA experience as traumatic by nature irrespective of context (i.e., the “trauma view”), not from systematic evidence, but as political advocacy to muster support for their cause and to make more plausible the related political claim of pervasive, intense long-term harm. In her own empirical investigation, recruiting participants who saw themselves as having been abused, she found that traumatic reaction to CSA at the time was the exception, not the rule.

### **Finnish Sample: Felson et al. (2019)**

In a recent large-scale study based on a nationally representative sample of Finnish junior and senior high school students (from three surveys: 1988, 2008, and 2013), Felson et al. (2019) examined both self-perceived abusive *and* non-abusive minor-adult sexual experiences. Coercion was uncommon (12% girls; 11% boys), as was self-perceived abuse (15% each gender). Negative reactions in retrospect (i.e., current negative feelings about the past event) were uncommon for boys (11%,  $n = 474$  incidents) and in the minority for girls (35%,  $n = 1621$  incidents). Felson et al. did not report rates of positive reactions, which a previous report using the 2013 survey showed to be sizable in the case of boys (71%) (Lahtinen et al., 2018). From this, Rind (2022) argued that Felson et al.’s omitting rates of positive reactions skewed understanding of these experiences, and so reexamined the results, providing the full range of reactions.

### **Finnish Sample: Rind (2022)**

This reexamination presented the results for all three Finnish surveys, focusing on just first experiences (i.e., cases)—which is the common method in this area of research—rather than multiple ones (i.e., incidents, as in Felson et al.). In terms of reactions at the time of the event in minor-adult sex, rates for boys ( $n = 306$  cases) were 78% positive and 14% negative; for girls ( $n = 1122$  cases) they were 35% positive and 51% negative. For reactions in retrospect (i.e., current feelings), rates for boys ( $n = 280$  cases) were 69% positive and 13% negative; for girls ( $n = 1047$ ) they were 37% positive and 39% negative. (Neutral reactions, not shown above, were the difference between 100% and the positive and negative percentages.) Most of these cases involved heterosexual interactions (girls = 99%; boys = 85%). The minors were mostly in the adolescent age range (12–14 = 49%; 15–17 = 39%); relatively few were children under 12 (12%). Few cases were incestuous (7%). Reports of coercion were uncommon (girls = 14%; boys = 11%). And reports by the minor of

having initiated the sex were substantial in the case of boys (46%), but uncommon for girls (14%). This large-scale generalizable profile differs sizably from that of typical small-scale clinical-forensic reports, which have dominated population inferences by professionals, but clearly unjustifiably.

To help interpret the minor-adult reaction results in the Finnish sample, reactions to minor-peer sex in the same sample were also examined. Boys with peers reacted at the time 77% positively and 2% negatively ( $n = 1514$ ), and in retrospect 67% positively and 3% negatively ( $n = 1510$ )—rates similar to those in boy-adult sex. Girls with peers reacted at the time 61% positively and 8% negatively ( $n = 1930$ ), and in retrospect 48% positively and 12% negatively ( $n = 1931$ )—rates more positive and less negative than girl-adult sex. Again, most cases were as adolescents (12–14 = 57%, 15–17 = 39%), with few involving children under 12 (4%), and were mostly heterosexual events (girls = 96%; boys = 97%).

Aside from reporting and comparing reaction rates, the study examined reactions as a function of context, showing that reactions, in *both* minor-peer and minor-adult sex, were similarly related to contextual factors. For example, high rates of positive reactions (i.e., >50%) were associated with having partners seen as friends, engaging in intercourse rather than less intimate sex, having frequent episodes with the same partner, and, in the case minor-adult sex where it was measured, having initiated the event. The study concluded by arguing that the “trauma view” (see discussion above on Clancy, 2009) is untenable in face of large-scale generalizable data, with among the largest number of cases with subjective reaction results in the empirical literature. It further concluded that the gender-equivalence view (i.e., boys and girls react the same to minor-adult sex) is untenable, as differences were consistently large in terms of effect size.

### Kinsey Sample

In the Kinsey interviews, participants were asked how they subjectively reacted to their first postpubertal sexual experience in terms of enjoyment (with “much” being the top scale value) and emotionally negative response (e.g., fear, shock, disgust). In a series of studies, I analyzed these reactions in relation to whether the event took place between a minor (under age 18) and peer-aged partner, a minor and an adult, or an adult and another adult (Rind & Welter, 2014; Rind, 2017a, 2019b).

**First postpubertal intercourse (coitus): Rind and Welter (2014)** Adolescent boys having first intercourse with women enjoyed it “much” in 41% of cases ( $n = 548$ ), as often as men having first intercourse with women (41%,  $n = 2546$ ), but less often than boys having it with girls (60%,  $n = 1105$ ). Adolescent boys aged 14 or under having first intercourse with women had nominally the highest rate of “much” enjoyment among all groups (63%,  $n = 116$ ). For females, rates of “much” enjoyment were substantially lower: girl-peer male (12%,  $n = 455$ ), girl-man (13%,  $n = 286$ ), and woman-man (18%,  $n = 2898$ ). The rate for girls aged 14 or under with men was 17% ( $n = 63$ ), nearly the same as women with men. Rates of having *any*

emotionally negative response were higher for boys with women (22%) than boys with peer-aged females or men with women (13% each), but half as frequent as reporting “much” enjoyment. Restricting cases to boys aged 14 or under with women, the emotionally negative rate dropped to 15%, on par with male peer-aged intercourse. For females, emotionally negative rates were 17% for girl-man intercourse, the same as woman-man intercourse and slightly lower than girl-boy intercourse (20%). The figure was 18% for girls 14 or under with men. In summary, based on large numbers of cases—quite large for this area of inquiry—and a diverse sampling (though not nationally representative), minor-adult sexual intercourse was clearly not characteristically a traumatic ordeal. Instead, it was experienced subjectively nearly the same as or little different from age-class-equal intercourse.

***First postpubertal male homosexual sex: Rind (2019b)*** As a follow-up, I examined reactions in the Kinsey male homosexual sample (i.e., males who had extensive same-sex sex from puberty onward, regardless of sexual orientation) to first postpubertal homosexual experience. Adolescent boys aged 14 or younger having their first homosexual experience with an adult man enjoyed their experience “much” in 70% of cases ( $n = 213$ ), as often men involved with other men (68%,  $n = 210$ ), somewhat less than boys with peer-aged males (83%,  $n = 750$ ), but somewhat more than boys aged 15–17 with men (61%,  $n = 137$ ). For emotionally negative reactions, the rate for boys aged 14 or under with men was relatively low (18%), about the same as men with men (14%), and somewhat higher than boys aged 15–17 with men (10%) or boys with peer-aged males (6%). As in the case of first postpubertal heterosexual intercourse, adolescent boys having their first postpubertal same-sex sex with a man reacted essentially on par with those having age-class-equal first same-sex sex. It should be noted that these results (with high rates of positive reactions and low rates of negative ones) cannot be assumed to generalize to first postpubertal same-sex sex involving only one or just a few interactions with the partner. In the Finnish nationally representative sample (see above), Rind (2022) found that boys having same-sex sex with men reacted positively in just 31% of cases ( $n = 39$ ), a figure on par with boys’ rate of positive reactions to sex with peer-aged males (29%,  $n = 51$ ). In terms of negative reactions, boy-man sex was much higher (51%) than boys involved with peer-aged males (14%). On further analysis, when boy-man sex was separated into cases of frequent (i.e., 11 or more times, 28% of cases) versus infrequent (i.e., 10 or fewer times, 72% of cases) sexual episodes, rates of positive reactions were quite high when frequent (78%)—fully consistent with findings in the Kinsey homosexual sample. When the sex was infrequent, the rate of positive reactions was low (13%). As Felson et al. (2019) noted in their discussion, male homosexuality still carries much stigma in our society despite general tolerance, which would be expected to weigh down positive response by boys (unless personal or situational factors such as homosexual interests or being involved with a friend obtain). In any case, the foregoing results from the Kinsey sample, also based on numbers of cases quite large for this area of research, fully contradict the “trauma view.”

***First postpubertal female homosexual sex: Rind (2017a)*** Finally, I used the Kinsey female homosexual sample to examine reactions. Adolescent girls having their first same-sex sex with a woman enjoyed it “much” in 85% of cases ( $n = 26$ ), on par with girls involved with peer-aged females (82%,  $n = 78$ ) and women involved with other women (79%,  $n = 92$ ). The same applied to emotionally negative reactions: girl-woman (0%), girls with peer-aged females (0%), and woman-woman (5%).

## Summary

The foregoing empirical findings (Clancy, 2009; Felson et al., 2019; Rind, 2017a, 2019a, 2022; Rind & Welter, 2014) did not simply differ from expectations under the politically constructed “trauma view,” they were nearly opposite. The Finnish and Kinsey findings were especially probative, given their unusually large number of cases with reaction data, far exceeding other research in this area, and their representativeness in the one sample and wide diversity in the other.

## *Assumption of Intense Long-Term Harm*

### **Canadian Nationally Representative Sample: Forced CSA**

Fuller-Thomson et al. (2019) used a Canadian nationally representative sample to examine the extent to which individuals having had CSA later achieved “complete mental health” (CMH) as adults. CMH was defined as “being happy or satisfied with life most days in the past month, having high levels of social and psychological well-being in the past month, and being free of mental illness in the past year.” In the study, CSA was restricted to forced sexual experiences as a child with an adult, and cases were excluded if physical abuse or parental domestic violence co-occurred in order to attempt to identify the independent association between CSA and CMH. Nearly two-thirds (65%) of those with forced CSA achieved CMH, a rate only somewhat lower than that found in the general population (77%)—computing the effect size yielded  $OR = 1.80$ , of small magnitude according to Salgado’s (2018) guidelines that small, medium, and large odds ratio effect sizes correspond to 1.44, 2.47, and 4.26, respectively. That is, the “effect,” if causal, was not intense as defined previously (i.e., a large effect size). Note that although certain factors were controlled for in the design (removing co-occurrence of physical abuse and parental domestic violence), other confounds could still have existed, preventing any confident causal conclusion. In the results as they were, if non-forced or willing CSA had been included, which the Finnish study reviewed previously showed is frequent in

the general population (Rind, 2022), the difference would likely have been even smaller (cf. Rind et al., 1998).<sup>2</sup>

### **Irish Nationally Representative Sample: First Sexual Intercourse**

Rind (2021) examined CSA-adjustment correlates in an Irish nationally representative sample, focusing on unwanted *and* wanted first sexual intercourse. Hyde and DeLamater (2017), in agreement with many CSA researchers, claimed that sexual intercourse is the most “severe” type of CSA experience with the most negative effects, and the Irish study put this claim to the test. Adjustment measures included health, relationships, satisfaction with most recent sexual partner, self-confidence, education and career achievement, and sexual functioning. Adjustment was compared in participants with first sexual intercourse as a minor with an adult versus participants whose first intercourse was as an adult with another adult. Minors involved with adults were not significantly less well adjusted than adults involved with other adults on most measures, effect size differences were mostly small, and mean adjustment responses indicated *good* rather than *poor* adjustment. The vast majority of cases involved postpubertal heterosexual coitus, so inferences applied mostly to heterosexual adolescent-adult sex. Notably, results discussed within the Rind (2022) analysis of the Finnish nationally representative student sample add complementary information regarding reactions to first sexual intercourse (again, most cases concerned heterosexual adolescent-adult sex, as in the Irish study). Girls having their first sexual intercourse with adults ( $n = 286$ ) reacted positively in 63% of cases and negatively in only 21%. Boys having their first sexual intercourse with adults ( $n = 156$ ) reacted positively in 76% of cases and negatively in only 10%. Together, the Irish nationally representative results (i.e., little difference in terms of adjustment) and the Finnish nationally representative results (i.e., mostly positive reactions along with infrequent negative reactions) show that oft-made claims that minor-adult sexual intercourse is the most severe form with greatest harm are highly exaggerated. They suggest bias because researchers in this field have often conflated “severity” in moral terms with severity in response.

### **US Nationally Representative Sample: First Postpubertal Male Homosexual Sex**

Using Laumann et al.’s (1994) US nationally representative sample, Rind (2018) analyzed adjustment correlates in relation to age at first postpubertal male homosexual sex and partner age. Adjustment measures (14 items) assessed health,

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<sup>2</sup>Despite the small effect size as computed statistically, one may still feel that a 12% difference between the forced CSA group (65%) and controls (77%) is important in practical terms. It may well be, if causal. But it has little or no bearing on sociolegal CSA, which is mostly not forced, as the generalizable Finnish sample showed. The point is that it is not valid to focus on worst cases to represent all cases in terms of reactions and effects. In CSA writings, this error has often been committed (see discussion below).

happiness, sexual functioning, and education and career achievement. Four groups for analysis were constructed. The first three involved participants with a first post-pubertal homosexual experience (minors with adults, minors with peers, and adults with other adults). The latter two groups acted as controls for the first. The fourth group contained participants from the general male sample, who had neither a pre-pubertal child-adult sexual contact nor an adolescent-adult homosexual experience. This fourth group acted as a general control for the minor-adult group. In the first analyses, the minor-adult group was compared with minor-peer and adult-adult groups. Minors with adults did not perform more poorly on any measure of adjustment compared to the other two groups. In fact, in comparison with the adult-adult group, they performed nominally (though not significantly) better on 10 of 14 measures. The mean effect size contrasting these two groups was small and in favor of the minor-adult group in terms of nominally better adjustment ( $r = -.06$ ). In comparing the minor-adult group with the general control group, the mean effect size for the 13 items evaluated was trivially small ( $r = .01$ , in favor of the control group). Here, the minor-adult group was nominally (but not significantly) better adjusted on 6 measures, while the control group was better adjusted on 7, only one of which was significant (i.e., sex not pleasurable last year). The adult-adult group performed nominally even more poorly on this measure, weakening interpreting the difference between the minor-adult and general control groups as being because it was minor-adult sex (as opposed to it being homosexual sex, for example).

### **Research on Men Who Have Sex with Men: Abusive Versus Non-Abusive Boy-Man Sex**

In a series of studies based on men who have sex with men (MSM), researchers followed Rind et al.'s (1998) recommendation to be more discriminating in labeling minor-adult sex abusive for the sake of predictive validity (i.e., Arreola et al., 2008; Dolezal & Carballo-Diéguez, 2002; Stanley et al., 2004). They argued that, in MSM samples, positive reactions to willing encounters often occur, unlike in samples focused on female victims, and so more caution was needed in using the abuse construct. In the studies, MSM participants were divided into several groups: controls (no boy-man sex), non-abused (i.e., had boy-man sex, but not abusive as self-perceived or researcher-defined), and abused (i.e., had abusive boy-man sex, as self-perceived or researcher-defined). Compared to controls, participants in the non-abusive boy-man groups were as well adjusted, whereas those in the abuse groups were somewhat less well adjusted.

### **Summary**

These results, from Canadian, Irish, and US nationally representative samples, along with results from MSM research, affirm that sociolegal CSA—the kind meant by law enforcement, politicians, the media, and the public—is not typically

“intensely” harmful (i.e., associated with large effects). The constituencies just cited, however, repeatedly claim or believe all such sociolegal CSA is intensely harmful. The source of the biased thinking is the mental health field (psychology, psychiatry), which locked onto the idea of extreme lasting harm amidst the politics of the late 1970s and early 1980s (Clancy, 2009; Jenkins, 1998), and has never revised its thinking since.

### *Assumption of Coercion*

Conceptually, minor-adult sex is widely seen as a form of abuse of power, wherein the adult imposes his or her will on an unwilling child. This framework traces back to rape of women by men, as studied in the early 1970s, and to father-daughter incest, as studied next. The incest model, however, does not generalize to all sociolegally defined CSA, as the MSM research has shown. The Finnish nationally representative results reviewed previously, mostly involving non-incest CSA, suggest that coercion and self-perceived abuse are uncharacteristic of CSA in the general population—in the sample, only 12% of incidents involved coercion and only 15% were self-perceived as abusive. Among boys, 46% *initiated* their contact with the adults. In adolescent-adult homosexual experiences in the Kinsey sample, reports of force were also uncommon (7% in male-male; 5% in female-female). In the Irish nationally representative sample, 86% of boys and 52% of girls were *willing* in minor-adult sexual intercourse, far exceeding rates of being forced (7% of boys; 22% of girls) (Rind, 2021). In the Laumann et al. (1994) US nationally representative sample, reports of force were also uncommon for boys involved with men (14%) (Rind, 2018).

The incest model, with immense power difference and exploitation by force as central to its narrative, has defined professional and lay understanding of *all* CSA for at least four decades (Angelides, 2019; Jenkins, 1998, 2006). In our meta-analysis (Rind et al., 1998, p. 23), we noted at the outset the problems in this understanding, conflating as it does such different events as forced father-daughter incest involving a very young prepubescent child, on the one hand, and a 15-year-old adolescent’s boy willing sex with an unrelated adult, on the other hand. In this conflation, the reactions and aftermath of the former are dubiously used to infer the nature of the latter, both of which equally are termed “CSA.” In the Finnish analysis, based on contextual variables (which included factors such as the relatedness between the minor and the adult, the minor’s age and level of willingness, and the partner’s gender and age), I analyzed via logistic regression models the likelihood that the minor would react positively to each of these two events. The latter was a 15-year-old boy’s willing sexual intercourse with an adult woman in her 20s, modeled on the 1971 film classic *Summer of ’42*. The likelihood of a positive reaction was 1% for the prepubertal forced incest and 99% for the adolescent boy-woman experience. Empirically and realistically, then, as opposed to morally and conceptually, the two could hardly be more different. Using the politically and morally

charged incest model to infer the nature of the latter case constitutes clear bias in a scientific sense.

In that study, I also revisited Sandfort's (1984) study examining mostly postpubertal Dutch boys' reactions to sexual relationships with men, which involved friendships, frequent sexual contacts, and willingness on the part of the boys. When the study came out, it was attacked by professionals such as Masters et al. (1985), who suggested the results were fraudulent and averred that the actual reactions were best understood through cases of incest, citing some incest research as authoritative. Kendall-Tackett et al. (1993) likewise dismissed Sandfort's findings as anomalous and irrelevant to the population of CSA events, assuming instead that their clinical samples best reflected this population. As noted above, their results were actually approximately 3–4 standard deviations discrepant from results in generalizable samples, making them anomalous and almost irrelevant for understanding the typical case of CSA in the general population. From the logistic regression model, entering the factors obtained in the cases Sandfort studied, the likelihood of a postpubertal boy reacting positively was 56% if the man was the initiator of the sex, but rose to 81% if the boy was the initiator (which he sometimes was). These likelihoods were probably underestimates, because other features of the relationships, which the boys perceived as beneficial, were not included as factors in the model. Not only the Finnish sample but also the MSM research just reviewed vindicate Sandfort's research and findings, and point to bias in the psychology field, with its fixation on the incest model, as well as its assumptions that the experience of the prepubescent child speaks for that of the adolescent, the experience of girls speaks for that of boys, and clinical-forensic samples speak for the general population. On any other topic not so deeply morally and politically invested, most psychologists would not make these conflation.

## *Summary*

The dire profile (i.e., trauma-harm view) of minor-adult sex in terms of dynamics and effects put forth during the 1980s and 1990s in the psychology field was shown to be hyperbolized in the Rind et al. (1998) meta-analysis, and key research from large and mostly generalizable samples since then has shown the same. This view, it is important to emphasize, was put forth in the 1980s by both advocates and professionals as universally true. Since then, researchers have moderated, talking instead in terms of "high risk" for harm, but nevertheless conveying that any event classifiable sociologically as CSA is likely to be a grave ordeal with major disorders possible as effects. For example, in their meta-analysis, Lindert et al. (2014) characterized CSA as "toxic stress," irrespective of the minor's age, gender, maturity, or context of the event. They held that, being such an ordeal by nature, it activates the minor's stress response system, inducing maladaptive physiological changes putting the minor at lifelong risk for adverse health outcomes, including cancer. Lloyd and Operario (2012), in their meta-analysis, held that CSA produces feelings of

anxiety, hostility, and suicidality, which compromise perceptions, decision-making, and behavior, thereby significantly elevating the risk of long-term adverse mental and physical outcomes. The methods used in both these meta-analyses were biased, as explained below. Here, the point is that the mental health and psychology fields, though moderated from 1980s thinking, have not moderated much.

Reviews of supposed effects of sociolegal CSA across studies, such as Hyde and DeLamater (2017), Lindert et al. (2014), and Lloyd and Operario (2012), tend to be confirmatory, selectively including research to support their conclusions, while ignoring other research, even of significantly higher quality, which is contradictory (Popper, 1961). These reviews are typically characterized by the following biases: (1) cherry-picking studies to be included; (2) focusing mainly on studies examining *unwanted* CSA, but then inferring without qualification to *all* sociolegal CSA; (3) ignoring or only minimally considering confounds (e.g., the frequent co-occurrence of physical and emotional neglect and abuse), but then making confident causal inferences regarding CSA; (4) assuming, but *not* verifying, that CSA is characteristically traumatic, as opposed to just unpleasant, or non-negative or even positive, thereby justifying causal assertions; and (5) exaggerating mostly small effect size differences as grave harm, or conveniently ignoring them. On other topics not so morally- and politically-negatively loaded, reviewers tend not to make these errors of proclamation related to external validity, internal validity, and precision.

As an illustration of the last point, consider Hyde and DeLamater's (2017) review of homosexuality, a behavior no longer negatively loaded among social science researchers and progressives but instead positively embraced. In their chapter on this topic, they defined terms (e.g., sexual orientation, homophobia, stereotypes), provided historical background for how homosexuality came to be formerly regarded as an illness, and criticized clinical studies as being confirmatory and circular by assuming homosexuality was a sickness and then seeking, and finding, the desired evidence. They discussed advances in research, beginning with heterosexual controls for homosexual patients, followed by the breakthrough of employing non-patient homosexuals in the former design (the latter design yielded normal adjustment for homosexuals). The final major advance was use of population studies, which has found poorer adjustment for homosexuals, however. But they pointed out that scientists debate how meaningful these differences are, and they advised readers to interpret such differences critically. They used a "critical thinking skill" box to guide readers' thinking. For example, do not interpret 9.1% homosexual versus 3.6% heterosexual suicide-attempt rates as multiples (where 3 times worse *dramatizes* the difference) but instead interpret in terms of absolute numbers (it is just a 6% difference, with 90% being healthy). In a second example, if a difference is small but significant, consider that it should not be considered of practical significance. In a third, if the difference is large, then consider third variables (e.g., genetics, causing homosexuality and depression, which therefore have a spurious relation). They provided cross-cultural perspective, noting other cultures where homosexual behavior was seen as "helpful" and "honorable" (although these examples were of pederasty).

Except for their misuse of pederasty to inform homosexuality as they meant it (man-man sex), Hyde and DeLamater did an excellent job in reviewing homosexuality vis-à-vis past attributions of illness, with full attention to scientific issues such as external validity, internal validity, and precision. When discussing CSA, included in a chapter on sexual coercion, however, they followed *none* of these avenues. They never defined CSA, or other vocabulary they employed, such as “survivors” and “predators,” terms that inflame and, even though widely used now in the field, belong in no scientific discussion, as they inject bias with morally- and politically loaded rhetoric. They employed samples unrepresentative of sociolegal CSA (e.g., with only female participants; with only unwanted sexual episodes), but generalized to all sociolegal CSA (e.g., to boys, as well; to non-coerced or willing episodes). They cited one population study (Laumann et al., 1994), but only to estimate prevalence rates of CSA—not to mention this study’s explicitly reported findings that contact prepubertal CSA was weakly or not related to poorer adjustment. They cited another population study (Najman et al., 2005) to argue that adult “survivors” are more likely to be sexually maladjusted, but ignored critical commentary that Najman et al.’s findings, even though restricted to *unwanted* cases, nevertheless represented *small* differences in terms of effect size, which could not be causally construed because of confounding with number of lifetime sexual partners (Rind & Tromovitch, 2007). Laumann et al. noted this same confounding in their analysis and so cautioned readers against assuming that the small differences they found between the CSA and control groups were causal. Rind and Tromovitch noted that, while Najman et al. “emphasized” that CSA participants were nearly twice as likely as controls to report sexual problems on one measure, these authors failed to qualify by adding that “a *substantial majority* of CSA participants reported few or no symptoms” (Rind & Tromovitch, 2007, p. 105, emphasis in the original). This issue parallels exactly Hyde & DeLamater’s point discussed above on interpreting results in homosexuality research in their “critical thinking skills” box—if one applies the valid reasoning therein to homosexuality, then one must also apply it to CSA, or else it is double-standard bias. Hyde and DeLamater failed to include the cross-cultural perspective on pederasty, which they included in the homosexuality chapter, and which would have been relevant here to interrogate the sweeping claims they were making. Finally, they delved into the recovered memory issue, and despite all the evidence against it from critical cognitive science research (see above), they concluded that it “seems likely that most...cases of recovered memory of child sexual abuse are true” (p. 392).

In short, for the morally and politically acceptable topic of homosexuality, Hyde and DeLamater adhered to the elements that comprise valid science, but for the morally and politically negatively charged topic of CSA, they followed none of these elements. Their unbalanced review of CSA is the kind of treatment that has helped to maintain the decades-old moral panic, preserving some of its worst elements such as belief in the scientifically discredited notion of recovered memories, deferring to clinicians on this issue, even while dismissing other clinicians when it comes to homosexuality. This inconsistency may be compatible with feminist ideology, in which recovered memories have served as a politically potent grievance

devise and embracing gay sexuality has served as a means of advocating equality in sexual relations on the one hand and challenging the heterosexually based “patriarchy” on the other (Jenkins, 1998, 2006). But that is politics. When it determines science, as here, it is bias.

## Moral Inference Versus Scientific Inference

At the outset of our meta-analysis, we cited John Money (1979), who, based on his long career in sex research, noted that the actual harmfulness that a sexual behavior might have could not be inferred from the behavior’s perceived wrongfulness. In closing our review, after having demonstrated that CSA was weakly correlated with poorer adjustment in general, uncorrelated under certain conditions, and often not causally related even when correlated, we offered as a caveat the contrapositive of Money’s observation: lack of harmfulness does not imply lack of wrongfulness. In other words, researchers could view CSA as immoral *and* see it as not especially harmful in many cases, *without* contradicting themselves or advocating the behavior. This description, in fact, applied more generally to the psychology field before victimologists and anti-CSA advocates in the late 1970s and early 1980s constructed the political-moral narrative that CSA is intrinsically traumatic and pervasively intensely harmful (Clancy, 2009; Jenkins, 1998).

It is clear from both experimental studies (e.g., Gray et al., 2014) and anthropological reviews (e.g., Douglas, 1966) that humans, by nature, are psychologically predisposed to linking sexual moral wrongs with empirical harms. But one culture’s moral wrongs on a given form of sexuality may be another culture’s moral virtues (including certain forms of adolescent-adult sex), with perceived or imagined empirical harms being replaced by individual and/or communal benefits (Ford & Beach, 1951; Whiting et al., 2009). This problem shows the weakness in moral inference with respect to objective reality, which is the purview of scientific inference (Rind, 2021). Adding to the problem, not only are people predisposed to linking sexual moral wrongs with empirical harms, but they are also predisposed to doing so *hyperbolically* when catchy, resonant cultural narratives in the context of social change or turbulence are introduced. Such happened in the past with masturbation and homosexual behavior, models that provide vital warnings for the *scientific* sexologist looking to study sexual behavior as it is rather than as it “ought” to be. The lesson for CSA is clear. The psychology field needs to move beyond the regnant moral-political narrative that has significantly biased scientific understanding of the diverse set of behaviors classified as CSA and return to strict science. Otherwise, its offerings will be pseudoscientific, the moral panic it substantially helped to fuel will continue, and iatrogenic harms to individuals and society will increasingly mount.

## Second Controversy: Pederasty

It was one thing to suggest that claims of pervasive, intense harm from behaviors labeled CSA were exaggerated. Many colleagues in the psychology field defended the meta-analysis, with arguments such as the following: it was well-done science; it showed children are resilient, which was good news; it was a matter of academic freedom. But it was quite another matter to speculate that certain of these behaviors—in particular, pederasty—when looked at across history, culture, and related species, might have an adaptive basis. In an invited article solicited by the *Journal of Homosexuality*, I examined this possibility. The response by psychologists now was mostly negative, from uncomfortable disbelief to personal attack. In my department at the university, a common reaction by colleagues was to laud the principle of academic freedom but to renounce the article as “beyond the pale,” as simple “advocacy” for abuse. These reactions, mostly based on not having read the article, ignored the evidence and arguments presented, focusing solely on the speculations or conclusions.

Before going into more detail about the article, it is important to emphasize the incorrectness of the following assumption, previously touched upon in this chapter: attributing function (evolutionary or cultural) to a behavior equates to endorsing it in our society. There are many behaviors to which such function can be attributed, but which are nevertheless undesirable or a misfit for our society. Attributing function is explanatory, not advocacy. For example, from his review of cross-species and cross-cultural data, Gat (2006) concluded that war traces to the beginnings of humans as a species, rather than being an agricultural invention. From the beginnings, he held, the evidence indicates that intergroup lethal conflict was both an ever-present threat, if on the defensive, and a continual opportunity for valuable resource acquisition, if on the offensive. These intense evolutionary pressures, he held, selected for warrior readiness, with facilitating behavioral adaptations (e.g., male group bonding, sacrificial behavior). In this work, Gat was attempting to improve over other scholarly attention to war, which did not sufficiently take evolution into account. But at the same time, he was *not* advocating it. Zeitzen (2008) reviewed the ethnographic record on polygamy, a highly condemned practice in our society today, showing that the majority of world’s cultures have accepted and practiced it in one form or another. She identified the functions it served in these cultures and discussed evolutionary theory for why it may have evolved. In this treatment, however, she was *not* advocating the practice for our society, just attempting to describe and explain it in scholarly fashion. As mentioned earlier, Whiting et al. (2009), in their extensive cross-cultural survey, documented that pubertal marriage was the basic form of marriage across time and place in simple and midlevel societies, which they explained as cultural adaptations with an evolutionary basis. Again, they were *not* advocating this practice for our society, but were instead helping to set the scholarly record straight in face of other researchers claiming that the practice was intrinsically problematic and undesirable. These three *non-advocatory* works expanded the perspective and evidence base on these topics, thereby advancing the

scientific dialectic, irrespective of moral-political expectations or demands to conclude or think otherwise. The same points obtained with my article dubbed “beyond the pale”—it invoked the broad perspective (e.g., historical, cross-cultural, cross-species, evolutionary) to attempt to better explain a behavior long accounted for only within a moral-political framework, which this chapter has amply shown can severely bias scientific understanding of sexual phenomena. Just as in the works of Gat, Zeitzen and Whiting et al., my article was descriptive and explanatory, not advocacy.

Pederasty has been a source of major scandal since 2002 (in the Catholic Church), and contrarily it has frequently been invoked in its historical and cross-cultural manifestations to argue for the normalcy of adult homosexuality (by many social scientists). These facts and contradictions suggest that the scientific study of pederasty would be useful to add clarity. The first of the preceding points played a role in the decision to write the article for the *Journal of Homosexuality* in 2005, which was censored. The second needs its own examination and that is discussed next.

### ***Textbook Bias Study***

Before the 1970s, pederasty was condemned in both professional and popular writings as a significant risk factor for producing androphilia in adulthood (i.e., predominant sexual attractions to other adult males), seen then as a severely negative outcome (e.g., Masters, 1962; Doty, 1963). After this time, in the context of major cultural changes (as noted previously: increasing focus on equality, self-determination, and informed consent, decreasing focus on the community, traditional values, and social function; Rind & Welter, 2016), androphilia and adult homosexual behavior became more tolerated and eventually acceptable in the main. Valuation of pederasty, by contrast, did not benefit from these cultural changes—it was not seen as equal or permissible based on the informed consent criterion. Its valuation instead significantly worsened as it was conceptually deracinated from the category of homosexuality and integrated into the newly emerging category of CSA, which projected onto all instances of minor-adult sex the same dire dynamics (e.g., abuse of power) and consequences (e.g., trauma, psychiatric problems), which victimologists and advocates had first attributed to rape of women and later to incest involving daughters (Jenkins, 1998, 2006; Rind, 1998). In the mainstream discourse that followed, pederasty was no longer held as wrong because it was thought to cause androphilia (no longer a perceived problem), but because it was now claimed to cause dire symptomatology such as clinical depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

Given this newly constructed moral and conceptual separation and incompatibility between pederasty and androphilia in progressive thinking, it would be highly inappropriate for left-leaning professionals or commentators to invoke pederasty to validate androphilia—and yet they frequently have and continue to. In examining human sexuality textbooks in the 1990s, I noticed this problem and formally studied

it in a content analysis (Rind, 1998). All textbooks in the study ( $n = 18$ ) emphasized the value of employing historical and cross-cultural perspective to inform understanding of sexual behaviors in our own society, particularly homosexual behavior. Hence, as a basis for evaluating the textbooks' use of perspective on male homosexual behavior, I first summarized findings from the leading historical and anthropological scholarly reviews (e.g., Adam, 1985; Ford & Beach, 1951; Greenberg, 1988). The reviews identified three main patterns across time and place, the two most frequent being transgenerational (i.e., mainly pederasty) and transgenderal (i.e., sexual relations between a masculine man playing the active role and an androphilic effeminate male playing the passive role). A less frequent pattern was egalitarian, mainly between adolescent boys, who gave up homosexual behavior on reaching adulthood. All major reviews emphasized that the modern gay pattern (i.e., sexual relations between two adult men, each durably androphilically oriented, but often male-identified) was *anomalous* in historical and cross-cultural perspective. Parenthetically, to clarify, in the review of homosexual behavior provided earlier in this chapter, the historical, cross-cultural, and cross-species references mainly involved pederasty, secondarily the transgenderal form, but rarely the gay form.

All textbooks conveyed approval of androphilia (i.e., specifically, the gay form) but disapprobation of pederasty, reflecting contemporary attitudes. Despite this, in their chapters on homosexuality, all invoked pederastic historical and cross-cultural examples (e.g., ancient Greeks, High Middle Ages, Siwans of Africa, Melanesian societies, Imperial China) to argue that past and continuing views of gay sexuality in our society as abnormal or unacceptable constitute a cultural prejudice. It would have been more appropriate to have invoked transgenderal cross-cultural examples for this purpose, but the textbooks almost never did. In their chapters on sexual coercion, where pederasty in *our* society was included, historical and cross-cultural perspective was ignored. Instead, pederasty was grouped in with pedophilia, incest, and rape of women and likened to them in dynamics and effects. This pattern of errors of commission and omission in use of historical and cross-cultural perspective was consistent and pervasive across textbooks, quantifiable as a bias of huge magnitude (effect size  $r = .80$ ). To convey the bias descriptively, I provided several illustrations. In one, Hyde and DeLamater (1997) provided perspective on gay sexuality in their homosexuality chapter by discussing a Melanesian society, in which boys approaching puberty were inseminated by adult men, a practice that was seen as a beneficial "child-rearing practice" in helping the boys mature. Hyde and DeLamater wrote that "we would surely term this behavior homosexual" and added that it was "fortunate that anthropologists were able to...document these interesting and meaningful practices before they disappear" (p. 397). In their later chapter on sexual coercion, such perspective was not provided when discussing this kind of behavior in our society, which was relabeled "child sexual abuse," no longer described as "interesting and meaningful," and claimed in "most cases" to cause psychological damage, including PTSD. In another example, in his chapter on homosexuality, Zgourides (1996) used Greek pederasty for perspective and then speculated that homophobia in our society stemmed from condemnation of homosexual acts, especially anal intercourse. To argue that Westerners' disgust at anal

intercourse was a cultural prejudice, he pointed out opposite sentiment in other cultures, favorably noting that the “Boys and men of the Siwan of Africa practice it, as do the boys and men of the Kiraki of New Guinea” (p. 131). In his chapter discussing pederasty in our society, he did not cite the Greeks, Siwans, or Kiraki for perspective, but instead wrote of pedophiles who “victimize” boys usually through anal intercourse, wherein the “harmful effects...on the victims are many” (p. 346).

This bias could be labeled hypocrisy—but that would assume that the authors knowingly committed their errors of commission and omission. It seems more likely that the bias was a form of blindness that emanated from moral force fields, as Haidt (2011) conceptualized, which operated according to his maxim “morality binds and blinds.” A half century ago, progressivism came to center on sacred values such as equality, consent, and sexual self-determination, organized within a vertical dimension from victim at the top to offender at the bottom. This value structure differentiated progressives from conservatives and became central to their group identity. Embracing gay sexuality on the one hand, consistent as it is with progressive sacred values, and defending it against conservative disapprobation on the other, seen as having victimized gays over eons of time, was a potent means of expressing and affirming this identity. As a correlate, rejecting pederasty more vociferously than before likewise expressed and affirmed this identity, as pederasty was seen as violating key progressive sacred values, as victimizing, and in need of deracination from homosexuality, lest gay valuation be negatively impacted. Under these conditions (moral force fields), biased information processing was potentiated, with the textbook bias study clearly documenting one glaring instance.

As one further point, because historical, cross-cultural, and cross-species discussions of same-sex sexual behavior in the primary sources have mostly used the term “homosexual” in their descriptions, whether the behavior involved immature with mature males (e.g., “ritualized homosexuality”) or mature with mature males, authors aiming to validate homosexuality (meaning the gay form) through use of perspective in citing these sources have been able to use pederastic examples without anything seeming out of order (e.g., as in Hyde & DeLamater, 1997, 2017, discussed previously). Framing is a potent means of influencing perceptions, not just in the target audience but for the influencing agent. As well, because the evidence (pederastic, mature-immature) is remote (other places, times, species), it may be easier to read into events described as “homosexual” and in support of homosexuality’s place in nature what the target or agent wishes to (i.e., “gay”).

### *Cross-Disciplinary Examples of this Bias*

Many other examples of the foregoing and related biases could be cited. Here are a few from assorted disciplines to illustrate. The historian Boswell (1980) attempted to reconcile Christianity and homosexuality, meaning the gay form, by pointing to pockets of church tolerance of male homosexuality in the High Middle Ages. Nearly all the massive evidence he cited, however, involved pederasty (the dominant form

of male homosexuality at the time), but which he anachronistically termed “gay” (Elliott, 2020). For example, he translated a second-century CE dialogue by Pseudo-Lucian,<sup>3</sup> in which he noted that he substituted the term “gay love” for “love between males” (Boswell, 1980, p. 153). The actual dialogue contained a debate between speakers on whether love of a woman or an *adolescent boy* (i.e., pederasty) was superior. Pederasty, or “gay love” as Boswell called it, won the debate, adding to Boswell’s overall thesis that homosexuality continued to find widespread social tolerance during the first millennium of Christianity. At the same time that he was extensively using pederasty to validate gay love, he was blaming pederasty for early Christian writers’ hostility to gay love, singling out the Jewish philosopher Philo as having deliberately conflated the two, which then heavily influenced the Christian writers to come (p. 143).

The evolutionary anthropologist Sommer (2006), co-editor of a volume on animal homosexual behavior (Sommer & Vasey, 2006), discussed how beliefs about whether animals engage in homosexual behavior have affected opinions on whether human homosexual behavior should be judged morally acceptable. He noted that it was argued by some in classical times that because animals did *not* engage in it, homosexual behavior in humans was therefore to be condoned (e.g., *irrational* animals merely engage in heterosexual intercourse, but *rational* humans have discovered homosexual intercourse). Relying on Boswell’s mistranslation of Pseudo-Lucian’s dialogue, Sommer declared that “Gay love clearly wins out” (p. 368)—when it was, as noted above, pederasty that “won out.” Shortly thereafter, Sommer noted that there are many aspects of animal behavior that humans would find difficult to morally condone. In his short list, he grouped together cannibalism, genocide, and sex with immature individuals (p. 370). In the foregoing treatment, in effect, he was using pederasty to validate gay love while at the same time reproving it. Moreover, given that a number of chapters in his co-edited volume dealt with positive animal pederasty (i.e., adolescent-adult same-sex sex in structure), one being female adolescent bonobos involved in *functional* sexual relations with adult females, another being adolescent male gorillas being involved in *friendly, non-agonistic* sexual relations with adult males, it is notable that he grouped immature-mature animal sex with such patently injurious and extreme behaviors as cannibalism and genocide.

The classicist Davidson (2007) attempted to “rescue” ancient Greece, a foundation culture of the modern West, from its association with pederasty by revising it as a gay culture. He argued that Greek men only began having sex with younger males after they turned 18, claiming that 18 was the age of puberty in ancient Greece. The classicist Hubbard (2009) debunked his thesis, noting the overwhelming consensus of Greek sources for puberty being at 14 and Davidson’s cherry-picking inappropriate anthropological data to back his claim. Notably, pederasty involves

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<sup>3</sup>Pseudo-Lucian, *Affairs of the heart*. Retrieved 11-16-21 at <https://people.well.com/user/aquarius/lucian-amores.htm>

pubescent males, so if the Greeks had begun puberty at 18, the practice would still have been pederasty, despite Davidson's equivocation.

Recently, several Oxford historians used an early nineteenth-century diary to argue that tolerance among the British populace toward homosexuality began earlier than had been thought. The diarist objected to an execution involving sodomy, arguing that some males are created by the Creator to have same-sex attractions, so their acts cannot constitute an "unnatural" crime. The historians held that this thinking anticipated current LGBT arguments on equality and gay marriage, a Princeton historian added that it showed the advancement of seeing homosexuality as a "natural, divinely ordained human quality" rather than as a "horrible perversion," and the BBC hailed the historians' discovery as "rewriting gay history" (Coughlan, 2020). The diary entry in question, however, concerned a 38-year-old surgeon hanged for sodomy with his boy servant, a centrally relevant detail glossed over in all these affirmations.<sup>4</sup>

Returning to the psychological sciences, over the last two decades a trend has been to attempt to account for homosexual behavior in evolutionary terms, ascribing adaptive function to it. Most of these attempts have been aimed at accounting for gay sexuality (man-man and woman-woman), but have been conducted in a biased manner, as I described in a review of this research (Rind, 2015a, b). In one work after another, the authors relied heavily on historical, cross-cultural, and cross-species evidence of the male transgenerational form to draw conclusions, explicitly or implicitly, about the gay form, while neglecting to entertain implications of the same data for the transgenerational form itself, including pederasty. This problem, I noted, constituted an evidence-type/sexuality-type mismatch, which shortchanged valid scientific understanding of both forms of homosexual behavior. It was common, for example, to hold that, in evolutionary history, homoeroticism facilitated bonding, which in turn fostered cooperative behavior on joint tasks, which had mutual survival benefits, all of which underlay the evolution of this behavioral complex as an adaptation. This hypothesizing, however, built on anthropological reports of how institutionalized male transgenerational homosexual behavior actually operated, reports that would have been appropriate for attempting to understand the transgenerational form vis-à-vis evolution, but not necessarily androphilia in general or the gay form in particular. To be sure, anthropological reports on and surveys of androphilia (i.e., the transgenderal form) have not pointed to cooperative behavior between partners, where each benefited directly, but instead have discussed other possible utilities directly relevant to the transgendered participant (e.g., shamanism, helping kin) but not his masculine partner (e.g., VanderLaan et al., 2013).

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<sup>4</sup>In the transcript of the court martial, the surgeon, James Taylor, was "accused of an abominable offence on Thomas Ashton, a boy of the Royal Marines, his servant." Retrieved 10-28-20 at <http://rictornorton.co.uk/eighteen/1810tayl.htm>

### ***Censored Article in Journal of Homosexuality (2005)***

Unlike most previous reviews, or more recent ones (e.g., Barron & Hare, 2020), attempting to understand androphilia in evolutionary terms, VanderLaan et al.'s (2013) review properly matched cross-cultural evidence with sexuality type. Citing Dixson's (2010) authoritative review of homosexual behavior in nonhuman primates, they specifically noted that transgenerational male homosexuality has different evolutionary origins than androphilia (i.e., with the former being a conserved trait from nonhuman primate ancestry, but the latter developing uniquely during human evolution). They therefore employed in their analyses cross-cultural evidence restricted to the androphilic form. The article I prepared for the *Journal of Homosexuality* in 2005 used parallel reasoning, focusing instead on the transgenerational form (again, mostly pederasty), while using only matching evidence (cross-cultural and cross-species). In this sense, the article was proper and logical, but also timely, as such an effort had not been yet attempted but was imminent, given the new fashion in evolutionary explanations for homosexual behavior.

The article began as an appendix to an article on Greek homosexuality prepared by the historian William Percy for a special issue of the *Journal of Homosexuality*, which was to be focused on homosexual behavior in the classical world. Percy, who had earlier published the book *Pedagogy and Pederasty in Archaic Greece* (Percy, 1996), asked me to write the appendix because he had read my two 1998 articles (meta-analysis of CSA; textbook bias study) and felt that I was in a position to add to his article by briefly drawing possible connections between the empirical, psychological data on pederasty in our culture and the evidence concerning ancient Greek pedagogic pederasty. Also contributing to his interest in seeing this research done was his being a Bostonian, watching the Catholic Church scandals involving mostly pederasty unfold. His thesis, as presented in his book, was that the "Greek miracle" owed its occurrence to certain unique aspects of Greek culture in combination with the effects of pedagogic pederasty, as practiced among the aristocracy. The Greek miracle consisted of the production of an astounding number of great thinkers and innovations in philosophy, science, mathematics, medicine, government, art, literature, and history over two centuries, to which pederasty substantially contributed, he contended, owing to the close bonds it fostered between adolescents and their older male partners, which inspired and facilitated the kind of intense mentoring needed for such a "miracle."

My appendix noted that a variety of non-clinical empirical studies (as opposed to clinical, forensic ones) provided evidence for mentoring benefits associated with pederasty, cross-cultural reviews had documented the occurrence of institutionalized pedagogic pederasty in a wide variety of other cultures (referred to as "mentorship societies" by anthropologists), and reviews of nonhuman primate male homosexual behavior had indicated that the immature-mature form was common in species most closely related to humans (Bagemihl, 1999; Vasey, 1995), whose expression shared some key attributes (e.g., bonding, cooperation) with the analogous human form (for the most thoroughgoing study illustrating the nonhuman

primate case, see Leca et al., 2014). From these observations, it was a small step to refashion previous evolutionary hypotheses on homosexual behavior (directed at explaining the gay form, but often invoking pederastic data) to hypothesize that pederasty was not merely a cultural adaptation in some societies (for pedagogy) but a biological one, too (technically, an exaptation, a repurposing of ancestral tendencies coopted in early humans in the context of warring and big-game hunting).

The two editors of the special issue, one being John DeCecco (the editor of the *Journal of Homosexuality*), felt that the appendix should be a stand-alone article and asked me to revise it. The special issue was set to go to print in the fall of 2005, but was interrupted when the publisher, Haworth Press, posted on the internet the abstracts of all the included articles, whereupon several right-wing groups, including NARTH, attacked the publisher, the journal, and my article in particular. As with the meta-analysis some years before, they attacked the new article as dangerous junk science, mocking the idea that pederasty could have anything to do with mentoring. Their attacks reached the mainstream press, putting the publisher under pressure. Next, left-wing editors and staff at other journals published by Haworth protested the special issue, targeting my article. With all this pressure, Haworth promptly pulled the special issue. But then, contributors to the special issue and other concerned academics counter-protested, demanding that Haworth uphold academic freedom. Haworth partially relented, agreeing to publish the special issue, but without my article. It later did, however, agree to publish another special issue with a revised version of my article accompanied by commentaries (see Hubbard & Verstraete, 2013, for more details).

The publisher's censoring of my article had nothing to do with science and everything to do with politics. By 2005, pederasty had exploded as arguably the third major flashpoint in the moral panic that had begun in the late 1970s (daycare abuse and recovered memories being the first two). The face of pederasty became the narratives that emerged from the Catholic Church priest scandal that broke out in 2002. These mainly pederastic events were problematic, as Elliott (2020) discussed, for their likeness to incest in their dynamics and effects (priests had special authority in the form of father figures). But, as discussed previously, the incest model poorly fits many types of non-incestuous CSA and even more poorly pederasty in other contexts (non-clinical, non-forensic, non-institutional) (Rind, 2013b). This incest-pederasty mismatch is evident in anthropological perspective, where pederasty has been integrated into numerous societies as normal, expected, and useful, whereas incest has been universally taboo as a disruptive force to family and communal relations (Douglas, 1966; Ford & Beach, 1951).<sup>5</sup> The moral-panic aspects of the priest scandal have included, among other things, media and political hyperbole regarding the ongoing extent of the problem (which actually dropped precipitously after 1984 to low levels ever since) as well as its severity by focusing

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<sup>5</sup>This incest-pederasty mismatch was also indicated empirically and statistically in the discussion of Sandfort's (1984) research—see above in the Empirical Update section.

on the worst cases but representing them as the typical case (John Jay College of Criminal Justice, 2004; Morris-Young, 2018).

On the one hand, the intensifying moral-political narratives surrounding pederasty made its scientific examination more timely. But on the other, they simultaneously subjected any such examination to possible hyperbolic response. Pederasty was in the crosshairs of two moral systems. It was associated with the devil on the political right (and had been since the beginnings of Christianity) and the oppressor on the political left (amplified by post sexual-revolution thinking). Whenever pederasty came into consideration, following Haidt's (2011) metaphor, the left and right's moral force fields became roused, impelling defense of the sacred and attack on the profane. In this context, facts, evidence, and logic were beside the point or simply irrelevant—all that mattered was that the object (i.e., pederasty) was anathema and could not be countenanced. This was the context and the dilemma for the publisher—a choice between academic freedom and safety. Haworth chose safety, no doubt keeping in mind the backlash that the APA received for its journal *Psychological Bulletin* having published our meta-analysis just a few years before.

It was an unwelcomed affair, this assault on yet another scientific publishing effort, which followed scientific protocols but was overwhelmed by the moral panic it set out to challenge. DeCecco repeatedly implored me to start working on a revision. Believing that moral panic is immoral, censorship is unethical, and both need countering, I proceeded. After innumerable hours of digging into the empirical, historical, cross-cultural, and cross-species literature, as well as delving into the finer details of evolutionary theory, I submitted the revised article in 2009, tenfold the length of the original piece. Commentators wrote their articles, I prepared my response, and the collection was submitted to the publisher, now Taylor and Francis, who had bought out Haworth. The new publisher rejected the collection upon arrival, saying that it was a matter of “judgment,” providing no actual reasons for its decision and refusing to do so upon request (Hubbard & Verstraete, 2013). The replacement editor of this collection, Hubbard, searched for a new publisher and found one, Left Coast Press, which requested that I considerably tighten the lengthy 2009 version. The final collection was then published under the title *Censoring Sex Research* (Hubbard & Verstraete, 2013).

The interested reader can refer to my chapter in that volume (Rind, 2013a), as well as to related articles (Rind, 2017b; Rind & Yuill, 2012), for my exposition on pederasty vis-à-vis evolution. For present purposes, what is important to reiterate is that such exposition, including both the censored 2005 and published 2013 versions, was amply justified by substantial and directly relevant scholarly evidence (empirical, historical, cross-cultural, cross-species) and prior works (hypothesizing on homosexual behavior, often pederastic in form but not named as such). It is not the case that functional evolutionary analysis may apply only to behaviors that are currently morally acceptable—here, androphilia, but not pederasty. In comparing the two, the broad-based perspective outlined previously indicates that pederasty, or pederastic-like behavior, predates androphilia in evolutionary history, is substantially more central than androphilia regarding inferences offered in the literature concerning homosexual behavior's genetic maintenance through a general bisexual

potential (e.g., Ford & Beach, 1951; Kirkpatrick, 2000), offers a clearer path with greater evidence to understanding possible evolutionary functions of homosexual behavior, and is also more central to a historical understanding of Western culture's tradition of antipathic reaction to homosexual behavior (Crompton, 2003; Rice, n.d.). Thus, to do as psychologists and related professionals have repeatedly done—to deracinate pederasty from the category of homosexuality, integrate it into the category of incest, and then validate androphilia as normal based on pederastic evidence—is a corruption of science and scholarship in service of morality and politics.

With these points in mind, it will be instructive to consider one of the commentaries in the *Censoring Sex Research* volume, which illustrates some of the problems just discussed. Two clinical psychologists, McAnulty and Wright (2013), considered just one section of my chapter, the part dealing with non-clinical reports of reactions by gay boys to sexual experiences with older males. This section followed a review of studies examining heterosexual boys' sexual experiences with women, experiences ( $n = 325$ ) that were reported as mostly positive (62%), rarely negative (14%), and mostly willing (87%).<sup>6</sup> This review established that the victimological model (trauma, coercion) based on incest could not be assumed to categorically fit all experiences of boys. More directly relevant to pederasty was the ensuing review, which examined the victimological model's fit to gay boy-man sex in non-clinical samples. Contradicting this model, the review found that such experiences ( $n = 717$ ) were 56% positive and 27% negative, with significantly higher rates of positive reactions and willingness when the boys were adolescents rather than children. To illustrate positive cases, I then presented six autobiographies or biographies concerning named figures, providing in their own words what the context of their early sex with men was and why they felt positive about their experience.

McAnulty and Wright (2013) seemed concerned to keep gay sexuality pure from pederasty for the politically based sake of the former. For example, they relied on the opinion of two gay advocates, with no science background, in attempt to undermine my review of gay boys' reactions. The advocates attacked two non-representative national surveys in the 1970s, which were included in my review, in which the researchers presented results on gay men's first sexual experience, often occurring as boys with men accompanied by predominately positive reactions. Both advocates feared that these results would be used by homophobes to threaten gay rights. One wrote on "how potentially damaging to the gay liberation cause is the data presented in the study," with its underage sex and promiscuous sex as adults. The other wrote that "I cannot feel that our cause is advanced by such seriously flawed research"—a critique that was itself flawed, because the research was actually adequately done and properly presented (Rind, 2013b). Unlike these advocates, I noted, who viewed research only through the lens of politics, the survey authors were interested in describing events as they actually were, explicitly rebuking the idea of sanitizing their surveys "to appease those would trade truth for comfort or

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<sup>6</sup>Note how well these figures, derived from convenience samples, match up with the results from the large-scale nationally representative Finnish sample (Rind, 2022) discussed above in the Empirical Update section.

political advantage,” as one of them put it. McAnulty and Wright offered no critique of these surveys based on commentaries by qualified authorities, and they ignored the other half-dozen studies in my review published mostly in peer-reviewed journals. In short, they cherry-picked studies to criticize, relied on political advocates for substance, and then generalized to all the studies in the review—this was an exercise in politics, not science.

Additionally, McAnulty and Wright attempted to dismiss the six biographies of positive remembrances as fake. They resorted to ad hominem attacks on some of the men, such as Harry Hay, one of the major founders of gay liberation. Throughout his life until his death, Hay cherished his coming-of-age sexual experience at age 14 with a 25-year-old sailor. But McAnulty and Wright dismissed his account, arguing that he supported NAMBLA (North American Man/Boy Love Association), so had no credibility. To argue that all the biographies were hoaxes, McAnulty and Wright discussed three “fame and fortune” hoaxes on completely different topics, which had recently been exposed. For example, a woman claimed to have survived the Holocaust beginning at age six in 1941 after being separated from her parents, first by being sheltered by a pack of wolves, later killing a Nazi soldier in self-defense, and finally safely finding her way back home in 1945. This woman made millions from her hoax. McAnulty and Wright claimed that the gay biographies of positive response were of the same kind.

Their argument was specious, to say the least, as I detailed. The woman’s case and the other two actual hoaxes were resonant with dominant cultural sentiments, whereas the gay men’s positive accounts of boy-man sex were heretical (Rind, 2013b). Most people are uplifted by tales of survival and redemption, found in the actual hoaxes, but repulsed or angered by anything that can be framed as pedophilia. I provided examples, from Jeremy Bentham to the present day, of writers who feared publishing positive or non-pathological accounts of pederasty, including gay boy-man sex. I cited other contributors in the volume who recounted how they and others they identified suffered consequences for talking about these relations outside the dominant discourse and who noted how the gay community had become increasingly self-censoring regarding positive accounts, very common in the gay experience, for political reasons. In the early 2000s, I published a detailed quantitative and qualitative study on 26 gay men’s accounts of their adolescent sexual experiences with men (77% positive; 15% negative) (Rind, 2001)—included in my review but ignored by McAnulty and Wright. Dr. Laura, who scandalized our meta-analysis, was all set to scandalize this new publication on her next broadcast, which created anxieties for my department and me. But that next day was September 11, 2001, and she lost her chance. In a more recent example, a rising star of the right wing, Milo Yiannopoulos, lost his job at Breitbart News and much of his status when progressive enemies brought to attention his earlier boastings of seducing men when he was 14 and his ongoing positive view of such relations. McAnulty and Wright’s “fame and fortune” argument for why one tells of positive gay boy-man sexual experiences was fantasy psychologizing.

McAnulty and Wright characterized my chapter with the phrase “blinded by science,” an allusion to attempting to confuse readers into accepting conclusions

through complex, but erroneous, streams of evidence. In response, I characterized their treatment as “blinded by politics and morality,” which, of course, has been a central theme of this chapter. Their attack *was* centrally political and moral, not logical and scientific, as shown in citing advocates instead of scientists and in use of twisted arguments. Like the critics of my meta-analysis, whom they favorably cited and sided with (specifically Dallam et al., 2001; Ondersma et al., 2001), they were arguably moved by moral force fields to defend and attack, perceiving sacred values and cows under threat (cf. Haidt, 2011).

## Concluding Remarks

Morality tends to corrupt social science and moral panic corrupts it absolutely.<sup>7</sup> That is a key lesson from this chapter. Morality, and the politics with which it is intertwined, can create blindness with respect to objective reality (Haidt, 2011). When sacred values within a moral system are at stake, Haidt continued, potent moral force fields will be roused, which in turn may well bias a social scientist’s method of inquiry and subsequent factual conclusions. In extreme cases, the moral force fields turn into moral panic, and then the bias is likely to be huge (Clancy, 2009; Jenkins, 1998).

### *Moral Panic Bias Produces Extremisms: Several Models Relevant for CSA*

Between the mid-eighteenth and early twentieth centuries, masturbation was enmeshed in moral panic. The seeds for panic were sown in the late medieval era, when influential theologians rendered the behavior infamous. But the moral panic was actualized much later, in the eighteenth century when certain physicians concocted mechanistic explanations for why masturbation was not only supposedly harmful, but *extremely* so, claimed to cause everything from acne to death. This history, detailed earlier in this chapter, was presented to illustrate how morality and politics can influence professionals to transform a given immoral behavior (by the standards of the day) into a demon, and once demonized, how this status can become durable owing to the authority of the profession, to which these professionals belong. In the case of masturbation, the moral panic, once created, led to extensive iatrogenic treatment and nocebogenic harm.

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<sup>7</sup>Lord Action, a historian and moralist, wrote in a letter to Bishop Mandell Creighton in 1887: “Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely.” Retrieved 4-6-22 at <https://www.phrases.org.uk/meanings/absolute-power-corrupts-absolutely.html>

It has been argued that the current CSA moral panic is masturbation redux (e.g., Malón, 2010). To sum up the earlier discussion in this chapter, most academic professionals offering an opinion on CSA before the 1980s viewed it as either not harmful in the long term or only mildly so (Jenkins, 1998). But “almost overnight,” as Jenkins put it, by the early 1980s, CSA was transformed into an experience claimed to be almost uniquely harmful. As with masturbation, the pronouncement fit in with the demands of the times, had no real science behind, and helped to initiate a durable moral panic. Drawing this parallel between the two panics has not been intended by observers such as Malón or me to suggest any kind of moral equivalence between masturbation and CSA. It is intended instead to help explain how the current CSA moral panic arose and, ultimately, what might be done about it within social science (see below).

In the case of homosexuality, the earlier discussion in this chapter was similarly presented to illustrate how a behavior constructed as deeply immoral could be turned into a severe pathology when professionals in social science, influenced by this moral thinking and answering to the politics of the day, reached their verdicts. As with masturbation, when the times changed and cultural values shifted, social science thinking on homosexuality changed, too. Homosexuality went from perversion and psychopathy to normal variation and healthy, the latter characterizations staunchly embraced in the social sciences, often beyond the science available to make such judgments. But homosexuality was also used in this chapter to illustrate what can happen when a positive prejudice is mixed with moral panic. As extensively documented in this chapter, many professionals in the social sciences have blindly used a behavior despised in our society, partly due to the moral panic, to burnish the status of a behavior they embrace. Before the moral panic and gay liberation, gay sexuality and pederasty were little differentiated—the latter was of concern because it was thought to cause the former (pederasty was *not* discussed in terms of causing PTSD and all the other symptoms now attributed to it). As gay liberation took hold, moral panic was emerging, and soon pederasty was within its purview, such that advocates of gay sexuality felt the need to deracinate pederasty. That social scientists keep returning to historical and cross-cultural pederasty to back gay sexuality in present-day society is therefore a paradox or an oxymoron. But as this chapter contends, it represents clear bias emanating from moral and political forces.

### ***Suggested Remedies for Bias in Sexology and the Social Sciences***

So, what to do about biases in the social sciences, with particular attention to sexology, the chief interest of this chapter? First, the type of bias dealt with here has been chiefly of the “hot” variety—motivated by ideologies, morals, values, politics, and emotions. But “cold biases” also contribute—errors in cognition related to

problems of inference such as the predisposition to overgeneralize from narrow perspectives and incomplete evidence. In sexology, the seminal works have offered guides on how to deal with hot and cold biases in evaluating sexual phenomena (e.g., Douglas, 1966; Ford & Beach, 1951; Kinsey et al., 1948): eschew morality and politics to counteract value-based bias and sample widely and diversely to counteract evidence-based bias. This approach is essential as a remedy against premature universalizing in claims-making, all too common on sex topics, and also on many other topics within psychology. The latter point was best articulated and demonstrated by Henrich et al. (2010), who showed in an extensive cross-cultural review that psychologists' universalizing has repeatedly been invalid across multiple domains of behavior, owing to reliance on highly biased samples from Western, educated, industrial, rich democracies (WEIRD), which are outliers among the full range of human societies, with the USA, the largest WEIRD source of data for this universalizing, being an outlier among WEIRD societies. Hence, the remedy to the biases in the psychology field (e.g., in terms of factual conclusion-making) surrounding the sexual topics discussed in this chapter should involve the following. First, acknowledging and holding in check morality and politics, whether traditional or progressive. And second, sampling not just beyond clinical samples to more generalizable ones (especially nationally representative), but beyond WEIRD samples, and even beyond *Homo sapiens* (especially to nonhuman primates most related to humans). It is not enough for psychologists, as they have often done, to cite perspective (e.g., historical, cross-cultural, cross-species) only in the form of lip service. They must take it seriously instead.

Another way to deal with potential bias owing to morals or politics is to foster the attitude within sexology and the social sciences more generally that there is no inherent conflict between recognizing or concluding that a behavior of concern, morally and politically condemned in the here and now, is nevertheless less problematic than believed, mostly unproblematic under certain circumstances, or even functional in other contexts. It should not be seen as a contradiction, for example, to attribute function to a behavior while at the same time not endorsing it or reproving it. Earlier, I discussed from social science the case of pubertal marriage, where the anthropologists Whiting et al. (2009) showed through good scholarship and science that pubertal marriage has been functional in most simple and midlevel societies (and therefore in most of human history), and yet they were not recommending it for modern, complex societies, for which it would be a misfit. Here, for the other audience (religiously oriented, conservative), I provide another example.

C. S. Lewis was one of the most highly regarded Christian writers of the twentieth century. In several chapters of his autobiography *Surprised by joy: The shape of my early life* (Lewis, 1955), he recounted his boyhood experience at age 13 at a British boarding school for the 1 year he was there. He recalled the hero worship that he, and many other boys of his age, felt for the much older teenage athletes, known as the Bloods. When "the New Boy...sees a Blood," he wrote, the effect was "the natural respect of the thirteen-year-old for the nineteen-year-old, the fan's feeling for a film-star ... the newcomer's awe in the presence of the Old Hand" (p. 86). He then noted that the Bloods were not indifferent to this hero-worship—they were

frequently erotically aroused by the boys and established liaisons with them. Lewis averred that he had no interest in pederasty but believed that had he stayed longer at the school, he likely would have turned into a “Normal Boy” (p. 89), who would have had these attractions while in the all-male environment, but have then given them up on graduation for marriage and exclusive heterosexuality, which was the common pattern (at his school, and in many British boarding schools at that time). He then spoke directly to the reader, who would be wondering, he imagined, why he, a renowned moral authority, offered “not one word on the heinousness” of this “very furnace of impure” love (p. 101). He explained that the boys and atmosphere at the school tended to be exceedingly cruel, with excessive amounts of competitiveness and backstabbing. Pederasty, by contrast,

however great an evil in itself, was, in that time and place, the only foothold or cranny left for certain good things. It was the only counterpoise to the social struggle; the one oasis (though green only with weeds and moist only with foetid water) in the burning desert of competitive ambition. In his unnatural love-affairs, and perhaps only there, the Blood went a little out of himself, forgot for a few hours that he was One of the Most Important People There Are. It softens the picture. A perversion was the only chink left through which something spontaneous and uncalculating could creep in. Plato was right after all. Eros, turned upside down, blackened, distorted, and filthy, still bore traces of his divinity. (p. 109)

In other words, he morally disapproved of pederasty as a Christian moral authority, but based on extensive *empirical* observation, rather than relying on moral inference, he was able to see function in it in that setting at that time. Moral disapproval and concluding function were not contradictory for him—nor should they be in the social sciences.

### ***Harming Children in the Name of “Child Protection”<sup>8</sup>***

In overviewing his experiences and observations at the school regarding the backstabbing on the one hand and pederasty on the other, C. S. Lewis (1955) concluded: “Cruelty is surely more evil than lust” (p. 109). Moral panics over sex have frequently inspired cruelty disproportionate to the sexual issue of concern. In the case of the CSA moral panic, this point is conveyed in the title of Dorothy Rabinowitz’s (2003) book (*No Crueler Tyrannies*) and then documented with case after case of injustice committed in the name of child protection over the course of the panic. As this chapter is about moral-political bias and its creation of moral panic with significant input by the psychology and related fields, it will be useful to provide a telling, concrete anecdote of such cruelty.

In 1989 a boy who just turned 14, Bobby Fijnje (originally from the Netherlands), was accused in Dade county, Florida, of satanic-sexual ritual abuse of 21 pre-school

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<sup>8</sup>This is the title of a book chapter describing the widespread pattern in the USA by the law and therapy, which the author argues too often abuses minors behaving sexually with other minors in the name of child protection (Heller, 2013).

children he had been babysitting, as detailed in *The Child Terror*, a PBS Frontline (1998) documentary. Prosecutors showed him no mercy, imprisoned him for nearly 2 years awaiting trial, and then tried him as an adult, where, if he had been convicted on any one of the seven counts against him, he would have been sentenced to a mandatory life sentence without possibility of parole in a maximum security prison. The media barrage demonizing him and attacking his family was unceasing, accusing the parents of being members of an international child porn ring, and claiming that Bobby led children in a ghastly ritual, cooking and devouring a baby.

Prosecutors built their case using the “Miami method,” an approach developed by Janet Reno, the state attorney in Dade county, who had built a reputation for being on a crusade against child abuse. In this method, the goal was to get multiple children to make accusations by repeatedly questioning each one until he or she made an accusation. These sessions would be videotaped (usually starting when the accusations first emerged) and then played in the courtroom, denying the defendant the opportunity to confront his accusers and cross-examine. The interrogations, performed by psychologists or other therapists, contained all the coercive techniques discussed previously in this chapter (e.g., Garven et al., 1998).

For Bobby’s case, psychologist Stephen Ceci was brought in for defense consultation—he had done groundbreaking work demonstrating how easy it was to implant false memories in very young children (e.g., Ceci & Bruck, 1993). The State was offering a plea deal—plead guilty, and Bobby would be sent to a psychiatric facility instead of a maximum security prison, but with no guarantee when he would be released (i.e., it could turn into lifetime confinement). Bobby’s mother, his chief counsel, and Ceci all advised him to take the plea, because, as a still relatively physically immature boy, they felt he would not survive prison. In an agonizing decision, in the end Bobby, now 15-years-old, said no, he would take his chances at trial.

When Bobby was originally interrogated, the session lasted 9 hours. He was interrogated without an attorney and, for most of the session, without his parents being present. Bobby was a diabetic. He was denied the kind of treatment he needed to keep his blood sugar normal (e.g., periodic snacks, medication), which experts later testified compromised his mental functioning. He broke down and confessed to certain accusations, desperate to get out of the interrogation room and see his parents, he later explained. The trial lasted 13 weeks and became Dade county’s most expensive criminal trial in its history, exceeding \$3 M in costs. Key moments in the defense were pointing out from the video evidence, which showed the questionings well *before* the accusations were made (unlike other cases using the Miami method), how unrelenting and coercive the State’s psychologist was in leading the children to eventually make accusations, along with Ceci’s testimony on the relevant science of memory implantation. The verdict was in, but Bobby had to wait two-and-a-half hours so that Reno could attend (presumably to claim another trophy). But, to the surprise of many observers, he was acquitted, based in part on the strength of the defense.

Defense witness psychologist David Raskin said afterward that Reno’s treatment of Bobby was the “most inhumane and despicable” case he had seen in his 20 years

of practice.<sup>9</sup> Frontline asked Bobby, now an adult, what he would say to Janet Reno, if he could. His answer was: “Why did you spend so much money trying to convict a 14-year-old kid? Why even try to place a kid who’s 14 in a maximum security prison? Why would you even think about doing something like that, if you’re a crusader for children?”

The jury later wrote a letter to Reno, suggesting Bobby might have done something, but not beyond a reasonable doubt. So the question arises here, even *if* guilty of something, why try a 14-year-old boy as an adult (his sexual acts were alleged to have occurred when he was 13) and treat him as a demon, when boys of that age in Florida (and throughout the USA) are seen as legally sexually incapable (i.e., in terms of informed consent)? The answer lies, in part, in the belief in almost unique harm from CSA, a belief constructed by the psychology industry in the early 1980s, which then occasioned moral panic and the kind of draconian treatment that Bobby was subjected to. Since that time, prosecuting 14-year-olds for sexual misconduct, leading to their being placed on the sex offender registry, with its many onerous effects, has become commonplace—14-year-old boys are the *most* common age-gender category charged and later registered in the USA. Over one-fourth of people labeled sex offenders are juveniles themselves when they acquire this label. The harm done to their lives is immense, but the politics of today still driven by the moral panic will not countenance discussion of this concern (Heller, 2013; Skenazy, 2016; Stillman, 2016).

Just a few years later, Reno was asked to be the nominee for US attorney general, having caught the attention of Hillary Clinton for the kind of take-no-prisoners prosecutions she directed and oversaw. Fijnje’s father wrote an impassioned letter to the Senate Judiciary Committee, imploring them to block her confirmation in view of her mistreatment of his son. But Reno became the attorney general. As Frontline noted, soon she had to make a decision on whether to allow federal agents to storm the compound of the religious sect the Branch Davidians in Waco, Texas. According to Frontline, she resisted giving the order, until manipulated by an agent into believing that the leader of the compound was having sex with teenage girls there. Twenty-five children burned to death in the conflagration that ensued.

### *Sow the Wind, Reap the Whirlwind*

Klein (2020) discussed the recent, growing phenomenon of QAnon, a right-wing conspiracy group that has borrowed from the left-wing moral panic. As he noted, various left-wing advocacy organizations focusing on CSA seized upon a conspiratorial mindset to justify their relevance and importance in child protection. Over the decades, they institutionalized various myths, known to be false in science and criminal justice statistics, to inflame the moral panic further to bolster their own

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<sup>9</sup>Retrieved 4-6-22 at <https://freerepublic.com/focus/news/734855/posts>

worth. Among these myths have been vast conspiracies of sex-trafficking by pedophiles. Klein continued, “Enter QAnon,” noting that this right-wing fringe group took the left-wing moral panic and ratcheted it up to bizarre and dangerous new heights, claiming that vast networks of pedophiles in the Democratic Party organized to topple President Trump. In 2016, they alleged that Hillary Clinton and prominent Democrats ran a child sex and sacrifice ring out of the basement of a pizza restaurant in Washington, D.C. It is perhaps fitting, then, that the satanic panic that Janet Reno significantly helped to fuel, which got Hillary Clinton’s attention and led to Reno’s rise to US attorney general, in the end came back to haunt Clinton at the hands of QAnon.

In a memo to left-wing child advocates, Klein (2020) noted: “sow the wind, reap the whirlwind.” In closing, he advised: “Save the children? Let’s save the old-fashion belief in fact.” This memo could be extended to the psychology field, which bears significant responsibility for creating and maintaining the moral panic. It did so by lending its scientific authority, when the science was too often entangled with morality and politics. A return to strict science is needed.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup>In an op-ed on the general trend toward wokeness in the sciences, with all its biasing effects as well as erosion of credibility across sizeable segments of the population, psychologist Christopher Ferguson (2022) concluded similarly: “Scientific institutions need to do the hard work of rejecting moral grandstanding and returning to data-based objectivity. And they need to begin immediately.”

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# Chapter 31

## Russian and Soviet Psychology in the Changing Political Environments



Heinz D. Knoell and Jerwen Jou

In this chapter, we present the decisions made by the Soviet Union's Communist Party congresses and Central Committee meetings concerning the task goals of psychological research in different subfields of psychology (e.g., *Human Experimental Psychology*, *Social Psychology*, *Personality Psychology*). We relate the political conditions of a given period to the numbers of psychological papers published in different areas of psychology in *Voprosy Psichologii* ("Questions of Psychology"), the only Russian psychology journal prior to 1977. The nature and types of the papers reflected the vicissitudes of Soviet and Russian psychology during the later half of the twentieth century when it emerged from pedagogy in 1955, as it became a subfield of pedagogy by a decree of the Communist Party in 1937.

In the following sections, we give a short sketch of a history of the Russian Empire, the Soviet Union, and the Russian Federation. Then we investigate the Communist Party's role in the development of the Soviet Union's and Russian Federation's psychology from 1955 to 2000. We present our findings on the party's influence on psychology in the post-Stalin era, based on our bibliometric research. Finally, we draw some conclusions and provide an outline of our future research.

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## **A Short Sketch of the History of the Russian Empire, the Soviet Union, and the Russian Federation: The Sociopolitical Influences on Russian and Soviet Science and Psychology**

To provide a better understanding of the social and political environment during the different eras of Russia (until 1917), the Soviet Union (1917–1991), and the Russian Federation (1991–today) investigated in our research, we offer short sketches of the relevant political leaders, namely, Tsars, leaders of the Communist Party, and presidents of the Russian Federation.

This description can only be sketchy, as we have to condense the many persons to those, whom we consider essential in order to grasp the essence of what happened over time. If one has the desire to dive more deeply into Russian and Soviet history, we recommend reading the book “A Concise History of Russia” (Bushkovitch, 2012).

As the historian W. Taubman said “Three issues – relating to political labels, records of meetings of the ruling Communist party Politburo, and transliteration of Russian language – deserve special attention” in the historical research on Soviet Union (Taubman, 2017, p. XI). This statement of W. Taubman reveals the problems every researcher is confronted with while doing historical research on topics related to Soviet times in Russia. It is also true for our research on Soviet and Russian psychology. If one delves into the literature dealing with this area, one finds three different versions of the development and application of psychology in Russia and the Soviet Union – depending on the sources on information one uses. The first source is the literature written in Soviet times by authors raised in Soviet Union and stayed there (e.g., Davydov, 1982; Rubinshtein, 1971). In this source, Russian and Soviet Psychology was narrated as a continuing development directed by the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. The second source is the literature written by Western authors raised in the Western countries (mainly in the USA, UK, and Germany) in the times of the Cold War after the Second World War (e.g., Bauer, 1959; Graham, 1972; Kussmann, 1974; McLeish, 1975; Thielen, 1984). Most of them spent some time in the USSR and had access to local information available during their research. They describe the history of Russian and Soviet Psychology as a chain of trials and errors, of promotion and repression of psychologists and psychology as a whole, and of many sudden turning points in Soviet Union’s development over times. The third source of literature is from authors who were raised in the USSR and had access to the archives of the Communist Party and the administrative bodies of the Soviet Union from the years 1986 up to now (e.g. Bratus, 1998; Kozulin, 1984; Kremontsov, 1997; Petrowsky, 2000). The authors of this third group describe the development of psychological science in a way similar to how the second group did it. However, the ones who remained living in Russia (Bratus and Petrowsky) drew a softer image relative to that of the Western authors of the political influences of the Communist Party, the fate of psychologists and the psychological science as a whole in the changing political environment. This is mainly true for the first repressions against psychologists (1929–1931) and the next waves of repressions against

psychology in Stalinist times (1936–1953). As the narrative of the first group differed in many respects from the ones of the latter two groups, we relied mainly on the reports presented by the latter two groups. We did this assuming that the censorship of the Communist Party forced the alteration of historical facts, as was the case of the events during the “October Revolution” in 1917 and of Stalin’s role in the revolutionary process in Russia and the Soviet Union.

In order to understand this problem better, we take the report of psychotherapy by the two sides as an example. How different was it described by Soviet and East-German authors versus by their US and West-German counterparts? This was how East-German psychiatrists said of the Soviet care of the psychologically sick people: “Psychiatric care in the USSR has been developed to a certain perfection for a very long time” (Eichhorn & Stern, 1977, page 578). And Lauterbach (1976, page 225) concluded “Clinical psychologists in the Soviet Union (SU) call themselves ‘Pathopsychologists’. They mainly deal with diagnostic questions and prepare expert opinions for various purposes. ... In contrast to our clinical psychologists, however, they are not involved in psychotherapeutic tasks”.

After the opening of the archives of the Soviet Union following the “Glasnost (i.e., openness)” efforts of Gorbachev, it was revealed that the Western view (the latter two groups mentioned above) of the situation was closer to the truth compared to the Eastern views (first group of authors from above). This is confirmed by our bibliometric research as discussed in the following sections of this chapter.

### *Tsarist Times*

The Russian empire was founded in 1547 by Ivan the Terrible (Massie, 2013), who called himself “Grand Prince of Moscow.” His descendants eventually called themselves “Tsar,” which is the Russian word, meaning “Emperor” in English, or “Kaiser” in German, or Caesar in Latin. The Tsar was the absolute ruler of his country and Moscow was considered the “Third Rome” after Constantinople (now Istanbul in Turkey) in the East Roman Empire and Rome in Italy, the capital of the Roman Empire (later the West Roman Empire). Rome is also the capital of the Roman Catholic Church. Constantinople was the capital of the Greek-Orthodox Church, and Moscow was and is now the capital of the Russian Orthodox Church.

The Russian Empire stretched from the Baltic Sea to the Pacific Ocean, covering one-sixth of the Earth’s land. Innovations were brought into the country by Tsars, such as Peter I (1672–1725), who wanted Russia to develop into a European State. He founded the new capital, St. Petersburg, which was called the “Window to Europe” or “Venice of the North,” because of its large number of channels, which were built to drain the swamp area where the capital was founded. This new capital at the Baltic Sea was designed by European architects and has a port for his navy and for trade with European countries.

The last Tsar was Nicholas II (1868–1918), who was inaugurated in 1894 after the death of his father Alexander III. His grandfather Alexander II (1866–1881) had

started some political reforms, after several revolts, beginning with the “Decabrist” uprising of army officers in 1825. Alexander II was murdered by a bomb blast and his son Alexander III tried to reverse the political reforms of his father, which installed more political participation by the people. Like his predecessors and the Emperors of Austria and Germany, he was convinced that he was put in his position by God and God will guide them to make the right decisions (Dickinger, 2001; Hamann, 2010, 2016; Massie, 2013; von Rauch & Geierhos, 1990). According to their opinion, people’s participation in politics was not considered by God.

In the beginning of the twentieth century, the majority of the Russian population was still former rural serfs, who had received no education at all. More than 90% of the population was living in rural areas, where the Mir (village-council) supervised them and their activities. According to McLeish (McLeish, 1975), the Tsar’s secretary of enlightenment said that knowledge was of worth only if it was applied like salt. In other words, it should be given only in small amounts according to the urgent needs of the population. For the majority of the people, education would bring more harm than benefit.

This was the background in the Russian empire, when Nicholas’ II succeeded to the throne. The middle class (bourgeoisie) continued to be dissatisfied with the Tsar and his power. There was a mass demonstration in St. Petersburg in front of the Tsar’s palace in 1905, over the severe food shortage caused by the Russia’s war with Japan, in which Russia was defeated. This mass demonstration was dissolved by the army, shooting and killing many demonstrators. This “bloody Sunday” was the start of several revolutionary uprisings, which culminated in the Bolshevik Communist so-called “October Revolution” on November 7th 1917 (at that time the old Julian Calendar was used in Russia, which was behind the now-Gregorian Calendar: Gregorian November 7th was October 25th in Julian Calendar). For more details about October Revolution, see Altrichter (2013), Khlevniuk (2015), Lewin (2016), Sebestyen (2017), and Tucker (1974).

### **What Were the Conditions Like for Psychology in This Era?**

Russian psychology and physiology, which were closely connected to philosophy, evolved in the second half of the nineteenth century. At these times, life in cities was under the tight supervision of the tsarist secret service and consequently all publications had to pass the state censorship. The Tsar’s censorship was not only applied to political publications of every kind but also to science and all other research. During this era, psychologists and physiologists like Chelpanov, Sechenov, Bechterev, and Pavlov published their first works in physiology, which addressed in part also the emerging subject of psychology. Sechenov wrote in 1863 “Reflexes of the Brain.” There he expressed his opinion of the unity of the body and the soul, which was not in accord with the Orthodox Church’s ideology of an immortal soul and a mortal body. Therefore, the publication was halted by the Tsarist censorship, which was also under control of the Orthodox church (Kussmann, 1974).

During this time, many Russians had close connections to European scientists, and some of them studied at the laboratories of Wundt and Fechner in Germany, and graduated from there. One example was Bekhterev, who attended the third international psychological conference in Munich, where he had intensive discussions with his German colleague Theodor Lipps (1851–1914) (Fritsche, 1980).

Because of the repression on scientific and psychological research, most of the researchers and university staff were hoping for more freedom by replacing the Tsar's rule with democracy. So, they welcomed the Tsar's abdication in March 1917 (the so-called February Revolution) and hoped that freedom would emerge after the Bolshevik revolution (the so-called October Revolution) in November 1917 (Bratus, 1998; Bauer, 1959).

### ***From Bolshevik October Revolution in 1917 to 1929***

According to Sebestyen (2017), the Bolshevik Communist Party's victory in the October Revolution (see above) was a surprise. The victory was not based on Lenin's plans but rather due to the weakness of the bourgeois (i.e., middle-class) government, which was installed by the Duma (Russian parliament) after the Tsar's abdication in February 1917. The Communists had no plan to rule and the only established structures were those of the party. The main ruling body was the Central Committee, which had six members (including Stalin) and was informally headed by Vladimir I. Lenin (1870–1924). A second committee was the seven-member Politbureau, whose task was to coordinate the political actions of the Party. Besides Lenin, Joseph V. Stalin (1878–1953) and Leo D. Trotsky (1879–1940) were two leading revolutionists. And there were the Party Conventions, which were party's general assembly (Lewin, 2016; von Rauch & Geierhos, 1990).

Lenin was born as Vladimir I. Uljanov, the son of a high school teacher, who was awarded the title of a hereditary count for his efforts. He became a revolutionist after the execution of his elder brother Alexander, who was involved in an assassination attempt at Tsar (Sebestyen, 2017; Shub, 1962). He spent much of his lifetime in Siberia (the vast eastern part of the Russian empire), in Finland, Switzerland, and Germany. He was a believer in the theories of Marx and Engels. His life was dedicated to the world-wide socialist revolution, which was expected to happen in the industrial countries such as England and Germany.

In April 1917, he returned to Russia's capital St. Petersburg in order to promote the socialist revolution, despite the fact that Russia was not industrialized at that time like other European countries. He took advantage of the dissatisfaction of the majority of the population with Russia's involvement in World War I (Lewin, 2016; Sebestyen, 2017; von Rauch & Geierhos, 1990).

At that time, the ruling body of Russia became the Soviets, i.e., councils of industrial workers, soldiers, and rural workers. They elected the government, called "Council of Peoples Commissioners." Lenin became president of this council; Trotsky, Secretary of the State; and Stalin, Secretary of the Russian Nationalities

(Russia was and is a multinational country). There was also a Central Executive Committee of Soviets, which represented the legislative branch, the party congresses. Its head was also the president of the country.

Soon the new government started to abolish the private properties of lands and distributed the farmland to the rural workers. Private production and trade were prohibited. Eventually, Russia ended the involvement in World War I and signed a treaty which gave lands to previous enemy countries like Poland and Germany.

The communist party established censorship, tighter than before, to suppress the counter revolutionary ideas. The new secret police had the permission to do everything for securing Communist power including assassination and torture of real or assumed political enemies. The targeted people included every citizen of the country, believed to be not in favor of the Communist government (Altrichter, 2013; Sebestyen, 2017; von Rauch & Geierhos, 1990). In June 1918, the Tsar, his wife, their five children, and their servants were executed and their corpses thrown into an old mine shaft.

Leo D. Trotsky (1879–1940) established the “red army,” whose aim was to eliminate all enemies of the Communists in the country. There was a 3-year communists versus royalists civil war. This civil war was won in 1921 by the Communists by means of employing terror and cruelty. The adversaries were royalists, the white guards (which were supported by the US and European countries), and members of the other political parties (Sebestyen, 2017; von Rauch & Geierhos, 1990).

The civil war left whole country in chaos. About 5 million people died due to famine. Orphans assembled into criminal gangs, and attending school was elective. In every aspect of public life was a lack of discipline.

In order to improve economy and to supply the population with goods, Lenin installed the New Economic Policy (NEP), which permitted private production and trade in smaller scales again. This improved the living conditions of the population.

Another effort was put into the alphabetization of the population, which was a very slow process. The main goal of this was the indoctrination of the people with the Bolshevik ideology and giving them the Bolshevik view of history.

Lenin had his first stroke in 1922. He was paralyzed on one side of his body and died in January 1924. His body was embalmed and exhibited in a new mausoleum at the Kremlin’s wall (Kremlin is the old fortress of Moscow).

No successor was appointed by Lenin and the country (now called Soviet Union) was ruled by the Central Committee of the Communist Party (with Stalin as the First Secretary) and the Council of People’s Commissioners (government). Gradually Stalin achieved more power, and in 1929, he became the de facto head of the Communist Party and the dictator of the country (Khlevniuk, 2015; Tucker, 1974, 1990; von Rauch & Geierhos, 1990). In 1928, he presented the first 5-year plan for the industrial and agricultural development of the country.

### **What Were the Conditions Like for Psychology in This Era?**

The Communists believed in the power of science and supported it by securing the scientists not only the resources for research but also food, housing, and other materials. New schools of thoughts in psychology were established, new psychological journals started to be published, Soviet scientists became active in international conferences, and many new related publications were also printed (Bratus, 1998; Petrowsky, 2000). Ironically, although the newspaper, journal, and book censorship employed by the Communist party was much stronger than at Tsarist times, it didn't apply to scientific publications. The psychologists and physiologists from the Tsar's era enjoyed their freedom. According to Bratus (1998), the number of published psychological books in Soviet Union peaked in 1929 at 600.

During this period, Kornilov established his Reactology school, and Vygotsky, Luria, and Leontiev established the cultural historical school of psychology (Bauer, 1959). In addition, there were more practical efforts to test people for the purpose of assigning them to the suited school career in children's education (pedology), or the best suited persons to the open positions in army, administration, academia, and industry (psychotechnics). From the beginning of the Communist rule, one lofty goal for psychology was the creation of the new type of men and their fairer assignment to positions according to their abilities, not according to their social class as was the case in the Tsarist times (Davydov, 1982).

According to Hyman (2017) there was an international attitude in the Soviet Union in the 1920s and early 1930s. As she said, "The ideological and intellectual climate in the aftermath of the Revolution was cosmopolitan" (p 639). At that time, the Soviet psychologists had tight connections to their Western colleagues and were fluent in foreign languages, e.g., "Vygotsky's writings were densely filled with references to Western psychologists (such as Adler, Bühler, Claparède, Freud, James, Janet, Köhler, Koffka, Lewin, Piaget, Stern and Werner)" (p 632).

There were some cases of repression until 1929. Many scholars emigrated to Western countries such as UK, USA, France, and Germany. Those who did not emigrate or were assumed to be not in favor of the new rulers were imprisoned or executed.

One example is Chelpanov, the director of the Moscow Institute of Psychology, was replaced by his disciple Kornilov (Kozulin, 1984), who claimed that Chelpanov's theories were not based on dialectical materialism. Another case was the murder of Bekhterev, who was found killed by poison in his Moscow hotel 2 days after he met with Stalin and diagnosed Stalin with a severe Paranoia in 1927 (Kessselring, 2011).

### ***First Wave of Repressions Against Psychologists in 1929***

Jospeh V. Stalin (1878–1953) was born in a poor family as Joseph V. Jugashvili in Gori, a small village in the Caucasus mountains of Georgia. His father was often drunk, violent, and absent from home. He followed his mother's desire for him to

become a priest of the Russian Orthodox church. In the environment of the clerical school, he became acquainted with revolutionists and from then on became active in the revolutionary underground (Altrichter, 2013; Khlevniuk, 2015; Lewin, 2016; Tucker, 1974, 1990; Zubok, 2009). There he started to call himself “Stalin,” which was intended to be seen hard and enduring like steel.

Several times he was imprisoned and sent into an exile in Siberia, but other than that, he stayed mainly in the Russian empire. He supported Lenin, and in an opportunistic manner, was looking for his opportunities to be promoted within the Bolshevik system. As Zubok (2009) said, Stalin was “Always an opportunist of power, he succeeded at home by allying with some of his rivals against others and then destroying them all (Position 830)”.

This was the means by which he attained, step by step starting in 1929, the dictator’s power in the Soviet Union. From 1929 to 1932, he initiated political purges against everyone in the Communist Party that was not favoring his power or that learned about his weaknesses.

He reversed the NEP (New Economic Policy), which Lenin had started to remedy the economical shortcomings of the centralized planned economy. Those who had profited from doing businesses were now branded as enemies of the people and sent to forced labor camps or executed. He also ordered the farmers to form government-controlled cooperatives. This led to new famine waves claiming the lives of about another 10 million victims. He fought the famine by forcing the farmers to carry out excessive grain deliveries. Those who resisted were either sent to forced labor camps or executed. Ironically, at that time, the Soviet Union was a big grain exporter, as the country would have had no money for purchasing the machinery needed for the newly established industrial plants (von Rauch & Geierhos, 1990).

Using the workforce of the forced labor camps, Stalin started to industrialize the country with electrical power plants, steel factories, new canals for cargo ships, railways, and new mines of coal and metals (Khlevniuk, 2015; Tucker, 1990; Zubok, 2009).

### **What Were the Conditions Like for Psychology in This Era?**

The first wave of political purges affected also many psychologists. The main goal of the purges was “to defeat the remains of bourgeois theories and to destroy them, which reflect directly the counterrevolutionary elements against the socialistic installation of the country” (Bratus, 1998, p. 6). One of the victims was Vygotsky, who was accused of harboring elements of “bourgeois influence” and “perversion of Marxism” in his theories (McLeish, 1975, p. 121). He was removed from his position at the Moscow Institute of Psychology. In 1931, there was a discussion of Kornilov’s “Reactology,” in which Kornilov was accused of using “mechanistic concepts,” committing “severe ideological errors,” and making “compromises between subjectivism and objectivism.” As a result, Kornilov was dismissed as director of the Moscow Institute of Psychology (Krementsov, 1997, p. 27). Similarly,

some schools of psychotherapy, for example, psychoanalytical therapy, were banned as “idealistic” and “subjectivistic” (These were created to have a reason for prosecution).

One of the victims was Sabina Spielrein (1885–1942). She was a medical doctor, who received her degree at the University of Zurich (Switzerland) and became one of the leading psychotherapists and psychoanalysts in Switzerland, Austria, and Germany. In 1923, she returned to Russia and worked as a psychoanalyst in her home city Rostov on the river Don (Covington & Wharton, 2015; Richebaecher, 2008). In 1929, psychoanalysis was prohibited, as explained above, and she started to work in pedology, i.e., mainly testing children. However, as described in the next paragraph, in 1937, pedology was banned in the Soviet Union, and she switched to work as a medical doctor. In 1942, during World War II, Rostov on Don was conquered by German troops, and Sabina Spielrein, whose parents were Jewish, were executed together with 27,000 other mostly Jewish victims (Covington & Wharton, 2015; Richebaecher, 2008).

There were many more psychologist victims. However, it is not easy to distinguish persecutions specifically for psychological ideas and thoughts from general political purges which often led to victims sent to forced labor camps, prisons, or even death penalty.

Despite the repression, a highlight of the international cooperation in psychology was the first international psychological conference held in the Soviet Union in September 1931 in Moscow. The theme of this conference was “Psychotechnic,” a subject which was later banned in 1936 (Volkov et al., 1988) as described in the next paragraph.

## *Second Wave of Repressions Against Psychology in 1936*

From 1929 to 1936, Stalin had stabilized his power and started to eliminate those who could rival him or had knowledge of his weak points. He started to improve relationships with foreign countries which culminated in the Treaty of Non-aggression with Nazi-Germany.

### **What Were the Conditions Like for Psychology in This Era?**

In July 1936, a decree from the Central Committee of the CPSU (Communist Party of the Soviet Union) condemned those educational psychologists who had been engaged in pedological studies and testing. Zalkind and Vygotsky (who died in 1934), as well as Kolbanovsky and Blonsky, were put on a blacklist (Petrowsky, 2000). Given that almost all work in educational psychology in the 1920s was called “pedology,” one may imagine the consequences of this decree. This decree affected also the so-called “psychotecnic,” which was testing professionals. All forms of intelligence testing and other applied studies fell victim to the witch-hunt and were

subsequently forbidden (Kozulin, 1984). According to Petrovsky (2000, p. 22), psychology was now “castrated.” In the university textbooks during these years, the authors tried to prevent future teachers from learning anything related to “child,” “pedagogical,” and “school” psychology. The Russian psychologists got only reduced knowledge about psychology during this period. As a result, in 1936, all laboratories for pedology and psychotecnic and industrial psychology were closed down and all the work in these areas ceased.

The application of the so-called pedology-decree was not limited to the areas mentioned above (Keiler, 1988). It was also applied to psychological areas not connected with pedology. It caused the complete dissolving of the institutionalized psychology: the Soviet Society of Psychologists was closed down, all psychology journals stopped publication, there were no conferences on psychology anymore, and finally no public discussions on psychological matters were permitted.

Thus, the new kind of Soviet psychology was the main winner of the fight in 1936 (Yasnitsky, 2016). From now on, psychology was a part of pedagogy with the main goal of creation of the new man. This was followed by a series of other important achievements that included the publication of a range of officially endorsed textbooks in psychology in 1938–1941, the establishment of the Institutes of Psychology in Soviet Georgia (under the auspices of the Academy of Sciences of GSSR in 1941) and in Soviet Ukraine (in 1945), the granting of important and the most prestigious national scientific awards to psychologists (e.g., the award of the Stalin Prize to S. L. Rubinstein in 1941), and the first appointments of psychologists to the top of the social scientific hierarchy, the Academy of Sciences of the USSR (Rubinstein and Kravkov as “Corresponding Members” in the 1940s). Finally, the culminating event arrived: In 1946, the “castrated” Soviet psychology was introduced in public school curricula as a mandatory subject to be taught all over the Soviet Union. This event logically concluded the ten-year period that can be legitimately referred to as the Golden Age of Soviet Psychology from 1936 to 1946 (Petrowsky, 2000).

### ***Pavlovization of Psychology: 1948–1953***

But new trouble for psychology was not far away. At the end of July 1948, VASKhNIL (Всесоюзная Академия СельскоХозяйственных Наук имени В. И. Ленина, in English translation: V. I. Lenin All-Union Academy of Agricultural Sciences) held a meeting, “On the Situation in Biological Science” (Volkov et al., 1988). The main speaker was Trofim Denisovich Lysenko, the head of the academy. It marked the beginning of a new setback not only for biological sciences but also for science as a whole (Krementsov, 1997). From now on, a clear distinction was made between the “bourgeois Western science” and the “progressive socialistic science.” It started with that meeting, where the genetic theories of Mendel and Morgan were replaced by the theories of Lamarck and Michurin, who, unlike Mendel and Morgan, believed in inheritability of acquired traits. Darwin’s theory of natural

selection was branded as bourgeois (i.e., non-communist, middle-class, capitalistic) as well. This meeting was followed by a series of other meetings, held by all scientific, educational, and medical institutions throughout the country. “Stalin’s sentence uttered in 1948 at the Politburo sitting in June – ‘The Central Committee can have its own position on scientific questions’ – signified a serious change in the posture of the party leadership toward science and the scientific community; the scientific community would no longer be granted authority and autonomy in scientific matters” (Krementsov, 1997, p. 182).

In February 1949, Pravda published an article, “About One Unpatriotic Group of Theater Critics,” which opened the campaign against “cosmopolitanism” (Krementsov, 1997). From then on, only references made to Russian – or at least Soviet – authors and papers were permitted in scientific papers. After the 100th birthday celebrations for Ivan Pavlov in September 1949 came the next stage of repression of psychologists. From that time on, psychology had to be based on “conditioned reflexes.” For example, thinking had to be explained as “higher nervous activity,” one of Pavlov’s ideas, and speech was now the “second signaling system” which could be used as a stimulus for “conditioned reflexes” (Rueting, 2002; Todes, 2015; Tucker, 1990).

In June 1950, Pravda published Stalin’s article on “Marxism and Questions of Linguistics,” in which he stated that Russian culture and Russian language were superior to all other languages of the world. In order to “pavlovize” psychology completely, the Academy of Pedagogical Sciences held a meeting in March 1952 “on the situation in psychology and its reorganization on the basis of I. P. Pavlov’s doctrine” (Krementsov, 1997) to promote Pavlovian-based psychology.

One of the victims of these repressions was Sergej L. Rubinstein (1889–1969). “In 1949 the journal *Soviet Pedagogics* – in an editorial, ‘Raising High the Banner of Soviet Patriotism in Education’, and a paper ‘To Purge Soviet Psychology of Nationless Cosmopolitanism’ by P. Plotnikov – accused Rubinstein of ‘worshiping bourgeois (i.e. non-communist) science’ and ‘insulting Russian and Soviet psychology’” (Kozulin, 1984, p. 25). As in other cases, the accusations were made up because of his Jewish ancestry.

In the next issue of *Soviet Pedagogics*, Leonid Zankov claimed that Rubinstein had deliberately suppressed studies by Russian authors and advocated the decadent views of bourgeois psychology. Zankov maintained that there was no need for critical reviews of such authors as Piaget, for “it is well-known that the ‘theory’ of Piaget is a militant attempt to depict child intelligence in an absolutely distorted form” (Kozulin, 1984, p. 25). As a result of this campaign, Rubinstein lost all his administrative positions, and continued only as a research fellow at the Institute of Philosophy. Another victim was Alexander Luria, who was removed from all of his positions because of “Anti-Pavlovism” (Krementsov, 1997).

### ***Khrushchev Era: 1953–1966***

Khrushchev (1894–1971) succeeded Stalin as First Secretary of the Communist Party after Stalin’s death in March 1953. He did not do much to change the atmosphere right away, but over time the political environment gradually improved. Psychology and science were not on top of his agenda. Pressure on psychologists was relieved step by step: A new psychological journal, *Voprosy Psichologii*, was launched in 1955, with six issues per year. The first issues had approximately 130 pages and were published by the Academy of Pedagogical Sciences (psychology was still considered a part of pedagogy). In addition, the “Society of Soviet Psychologists” was refounded in December 1956 (Volkov et al., 1988). It was originally founded in 1885 as “Moscow Psychological Society,” but the society ended its activity in 1922 (Poole, 2002).

Khrushchev had completed no more than 4 years of elementary school (perhaps only 4 years); over the following years, he studied at several engineering schools. He never graduated because of his political activities in these schools (Taubman, 2003). According to Zubok, he was “strikingly under-educated and erratic” (Zubok, 2009, p. 167) and had no interest in academic matters at all. His only requirement for psychologists was to build stronger links between psychological theories and the industrial and agricultural practical work in schools and higher education. Khrushchev’s approach mainly affected educational psychology and human factors engineering. His era also saw a revival of statistics and research methods.

He was open to scientific cooperation with the Western countries, and from 1956 on, Soviet psychologists resumed attending international conferences. According to Hyman (2017), there rose in Western psychologists the interest in the works of the cultural-historical writings of Vygotsky, Luria, and Leont’ev (see above). Their publications were translated into English and later became subjects of Western psychological research.

### ***Brezhnev Era: 1966–1985***

In 1966, Leonid I. Brezhnev (1906–1982) became the First Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. Compared to his predecessor, he was relatively well educated (Schattenberg, 2017). He attended not only elementary school but also *Gymnasium* (a German-style university-preparatory high school), where he received a tuition and fee waiver. From 1923 to 1927, he was a student at a technical college, where he graduated as an engineer (Schattenberg, 2017).

In Brezhnev’s era, world politics continued between political thaw and the Cold War. His main aims were to consolidate the Soviet Union and to improve living and housing standards. In this respect, he continued the work of his predecessor, although he was much more moderate and did not come up with new ideas. The

Brezhnev era was also characterized by networks of power juggling and bribery. The last years of his era were characterized by stagnancy and a slackening of party control over the sciences. As in the Khrushchev era, psychologists did not experience repression, although the control by the Communist Party and state administrators over academia was generally still very tight. Positions in psychology were filled mainly according to party-line loyalty and not according to professional qualification. As in the Stalin era, there was a tight connection between the holders of an academic position and their sponsors in the Communist Party and in public administration (Krementsov, 1997).

In the time he was in power, international cooperation of psychologists was intensified, starting with the 18th international psychological conference, held in August 1966 in Moscow (Volkov et al., 1988). There were many more international conferences convened in other areas at the Soviet universities.

After his death in 1982, Brezhnev was succeeded by Andropov, who died in 1984, followed by one year of Chernenko, who died in 1985. They did not change anything.

### ***Gorbachev Era: 1985–1991***

In March 1985, Mikhail Gorbachev (born in 1931) became the new First Secretary of the Communist Party and thereby the new leader of the Soviet Union. He was a descendent of a peasant family, who benefitted from farm collectivization, and he was well educated. He attended the local high school and graduated there. Because of his and his father's efforts in harvesting in his home province in the north Caucasus in 1948, he had been awarded with the "Red Banner of Labor" order and his father with the "Lenin Order," which helped him in his future career. He studied law at one of the most recognized universities of the USSR, the Moscow Lomonosov State University. Over the years, he attained several positions in the Communist Party organization and finally became a member of its governing Politburo (Taubman, 2017).

Soon after he took office, it became clear that he was a reformer, introducing the buzzwords *perestroika* ("reconstruction") and *glasnost* ("openness") in an effort to overcome the rigid and inefficient structures within the party and the state administration. This also affected research and science in a positive way. The dependence of academic research and teaching from politics weakened fast, and international cooperation between scientists increased considerably, and became common from then on.

Although Gorbachev wanted his reforms to save the Soviet system, he unintentionally helped dissolve the Soviet Union.

### ***Yeltsin Era: 1991–2000***

After Gorbachev's resignation in late 1991, the main leader was Russian President Boris Yeltsin (1931–2007). His ancestors were independent farmers, self-employed blacksmiths, and carpenters, and they had suffered from the so-called “dekulakization,” that is, the persecution of independent farmers and craftsmen (Colton, 2008).

As a well-educated civil engineer, he was promoted within the Communist Party organization for his extraordinarily successful efforts in housing construction in the Sverdlovsk district and later in Moscow during the Gorbachev period.

As president of the Russian Federation, he tried in December 1991 to keep the Russian leadership in the territory of the Soviet Union by founding the Commonwealth of Independent States, which never achieved the power of the former Soviet Union.

He tried to change the socialistic economic system into a market economy (Taubman, 2017). This change had disastrous consequences for the economy and the population. High inflation and unemployment rates and the breakdown of many governmental structures followed. Science and research suffered from financial problems. Now the scholars were free to choose their research subject and teach according to their own opinion: there was now real freedom for science.

### ***Putin Era: Since 2000***

In January 2000, Yeltsin was succeeded by Vladimir Putin (born in 1952), who consolidated governmental power and brought an economic recovery for the country (Zubok, 2009). He was the third son of an industrial workers couple who lost their first two sons in infancy (Myers, 2015). His parents were strong believers in communism, as were his grandparents. His paternal grandfather was the personal cook of Lenin's widow N. K. Krupskaya.

He realized his juvenile dreams of becoming a member of the secret service: first in the KGB (in Russian: Комитет Государственной Безопасности (КГБ)) of the Soviet Union and then in the Russian secret service FSB (in Russian: Федеральная служба безопасности Российской Федерации (ФСБ)). When jobs in the FSB were cut, he first became a member of staff to the President of St. Petersburg University, who later became the Lord Major of this city. Putin then became his important secretary of foreign affairs and later deputy Lord Major of St. Petersburg. Eventually, in 1996, he was appointed to a governmental position in Moscow and in August 1999 became the prime minister of the Russian Federation. When Yeltsin resigned on New Year's Eve of 2000, Putin became the interim president of the Russian Federation according to the constitution. In March 2000, he was elected president by an overwhelming majority of votes.

Along with economic recovery, the sciences, including psychology, had improved conditions for research and teaching, too. Every major university now has a faculty

or department of psychology. There is freedom of research and teaching, as in Western countries. However, the resources are very small compared to Western research institutions and universities – a fact that Western observers quickly realize when they visit their colleagues at Russian institutions.

## **Impact of the Tasks Set By the Communist Party on Psychological Research in the Post-Stalin Era (1955–2000)**

In this section, we review the impact of Communist Party decisions on the tasks of psychological research (see also Knoell & Jou, 2018). First, we present our research approach. Then we explain the meaning of the data in the graphs, and finally, we examine published content of the journal *Voprosy Psichologii* (Questions of Psychology) over times and their relationship to decisions of party conventions.

### ***Research Approach***

Until Stalin's death, political influence on science and especially psychology in the Soviet Union was obvious as we explained above. This changed after his death in 1953, when Khrushchev seized power. Decisions about the direction of psychological research were now discussed in meetings of the Communist Party and in decrees of the Communist Party's Central Committee. From the 20th party convention in 1956 to the 27th convention in 1986, all but one (the 22nd) party convention made decisions concerning the tasks of psychology in the Soviet Union (Apollonov & Slutzky, 1981; Bodalev, 1981; *Voprosy psichologii*, 1966, 1976a, b, 1981; Feldstein, 1976; Lomov, 1976; Melnikov, 1978; Parygin, 1981; Smirnov, 1959; *Voprosy psichologii*, 1956, 1971, 1981). The Central Committee also issued decrees concerning the tasks for psychology in November 1958 (*Voprosy Psichologii*, 1958) and June 1963 (*Voprosy psichologii*, 1963).

These decisions and decrees were published as articles in the journal *Voprosy Psichologii* – Questions of Psychology – emphasizing different aspects of the role of psychology. We cross-checked the articles published in this journal with the Soviet Academy of Sciences' "Chronicle of Science and Technology" (Volkov et al., 1988) and the "Resolutions and Decisions of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union" (Hodnett, 1974; Schwartz, 1982), making sure that no decision or decree was missing. In the following paragraphs, we examine these decisions and their impact on the publications in *Voprosy Psichologii* (Knoell & Jou, 2018).

To find the Communist Party's decisions as these relate to the tasks of psychology, we translated those articles in *Voprosy Psichologii*, which report Communist Party decisions, from Russian into English and also classified their contents according to the APA content classification scheme (Tuleya, 2007).

To find reflections of these party decisions in the articles published in *Voprosy Psichologii*, we translated the titles of all articles from 1955 to 2000 (total of 7049 articles) into English and tabulated them, with articles classified into categories according to the APA content classification scheme. We also added the number of pages for each article in a table featuring all article titles. This table served as the database for the R-scripts (Field, Miles, & Field, 2012) we used to calculate the statistics and draw the graphs. The frequencies of the content categories in the period from 1955 to 2000 are shown in Fig. 31.1.

We used the APA content classification because this classification scheme is often used for bibliometric studies. Its main advantage is its cross-cultural applicability, which makes it feasible to compare bibliometric results of multiple states or countries such as the USA and Germany (Krampen & Perrez, 2015).

Finally, we calculated a 1-year moving average (Shumway & Stoffer, 2017), with each point in the graph representing the preceding year’s arithmetical mean of each content class (Y-axis) over time (X-axis). In the next paragraphs we present a graph for each category to serve as a basis for a qualitative time series analysis.

One issue concerning our data is the fact that the years after 1977 saw a trend of new psychological journals being launched, and this trend has since increased. At present, it is hard to count them, as many institutions publish their own journals, and this is not controlled by the government. Today there may be 30 or more journals. So, from 1977 onward, we did not capture 100% of the scientific articles in the field of Soviet and Russian psychology. In addition, there were other non-psychology disciplines in which psychologists published and still publish their findings and

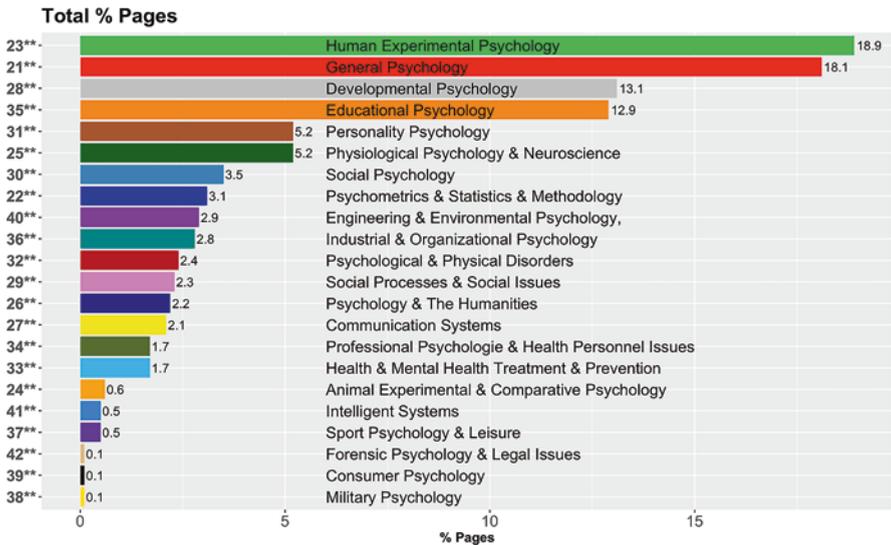


Fig. 31.1 Percentage (x-axis) of published APA content classes (y-axis) in *Voprosy Psichologii* from 1955 to 2000 in order of their frequency

theories, including pedagogy, physiology, philosophy, psychiatry, biology, and more, which are not covered in our research.

To sum up, we did not capture all articles in the field of Soviet and Russian psychology, but we included 100% of the contributions in *Voprosy Psichologii* (7049 in total), which was the most relevant Soviet psychology journal and the only one from 1955 to 1976.

As in previous eras, the Communist Party and its First Secretary decided on the tasks of the sciences and how they should improve socialist society, i.e., the way of life in Socialist and Communist countries. In the following paragraphs, we examine some of these tasks for psychology, which were published as articles in *Voprosy Psichologii*, and their effect on the academic output of this journal. Each of the Communist Party's decisions pertained one to several APA content classes, which is reflected over the times in the following graphs.

### ***How to Read the Following Graphs***

Each graph in the following paragraphs represents the one-year moving average (Shumway & Stoffer, 2017) of the percentage of pages a specific subfield of psychology (APA content class) occupied. This means that each point in the graph represents the preceding year's arithmetical mean of the percentage of published pages allocated to the subfield (Y-axis) over time (X-axis). We created one graph for each subfield to serve as a basis for a qualitative time series analysis.

The blue vertical bars show the time of the Communist Party Central Committee meeting that made a positive decision concerning this content class.

The solid purple lines show relatively strong positive decisions of a given Communist Party Congress, which was explained in the journal article with one page or more. The purple dashed lines are indicators of relatively weak positive decisions (allocated less than one page in the respective article) at the given Communist Party Congress.

The gray bars indicate the changes of the party's First Secretary or Russian President.

Some qualifying conditions are to be noted:

First, it must be pointed out that our experiences with translating the article titles indicated that there was a great quality gap between those articles dealing theoretically with the party's goals and aiming to confirm the ideas of Marx, Engels, and Lenin on the one hand and those reporting experimentally collected data or statistics on the other. The first kind of the articles could be published shortly before the party congresses or shortly after. Kremontsov (1997) pointed out the existence of a strong relation between researchers and their "sponsors" in the Communist Party. So many authors knew in advance which tasks would be on the agenda in an upcoming Communist Party Congress.

The second type of articles was typically published some years after the first type of articles, as data collection and interpretation needed more time than just collecting citations from the works of Marx, Engels, and Lenin.

Second, of course, all data were, to a certain degree, confounded by other events in the Soviet Union taking place at the time other than party congresses or Central Committee meetings.

Third, to provide a statistical proof of a time series caused by Communist Party decisions would have required a much larger number of party decisions and, in addition, a much longer time span.

Fourth, there were random chance factors as in every investigation, which had no systematic relationship to the events under investigation.

Based on these limitations, we present the percentages of pages in *Voprosy Psichologii* as the “one-year moving average” (some times also called “running mean”) taken up for publishing papers in a particular subfield of psychology (defined according to the APA psychology content classification) as a function of year. This is a way of presentation taken from the Time Series Analysis. We add information about the political leader and important decisions in Communist Party meetings. We tried to find a link between the political milieu and the fluctuation of the percentage of pages used for publishing papers in a specific branch of psychology over the time period covered in this study.

### *Creation of the New Soviet Man*

One of the very early tasks of the Bolshevik Communist Party was the creation of a new kind of human being, one who would act like a “cog in the wheel” (Gerovitch, 2007). As Yasnitsky (2016) said, “... one of the key tasks of the post-revolutionary era was utopian ‘remolding of man,’ the creation of a new type of people, who will master their nature and uncover the yet unknown potential of human beings. These ideas were grounded in the pervasive post-revolutionary belief in the possibility of virtually unlimited personal growth and an active, creative attitude to the world” (p. 5). Petrovsky (1967) characterized the tasks of education and psychology like this: “School, education, upbringing of a new man – this is an area which was coined by the intensive search for new methods and practices of pedagogical and psychological work. From the first months of the revolution on, Soviet psychologists were active in the pedagogical search” (citation according to Davydov, 1982, p. 21).

Yasnitsky (2016) says: “The role psychology was to play in this social transformation was very special and highly important. Psychology was to find the means for the normative remolding of the ‘old man’ of the capitalist past and educating the ‘new man’ of Communism. These methods would be subsequently implemented in large-scale social projects and would lead to the creation of the improved and advanced people of the future. ... Therefore, it was not abstract, theoretical interest,

but the urgent demands of social practice that determined the rapid development of applied psycho-neurological disciplines grounded in the actual concrete tasks of the establishment of a new society” (Yasnitsky, 2016, p. 6). According to Gao (2019), the same goals were pursued in the other Communist countries like China.

In the early years after the revolution, there was the belief that only the new socialist society would automatically create new humans, with the pressure of capitalist society disappearing. As we know now, this was not the case, and it was Stalin who reestablished law and order from 1929. There were also attempts to produce “new humans” by controlled breeding in the 1920s (Mocek, 2002), but those attempts failed.

From the October revolution onward, there was also a belief that the person best suited for a position in the party, the administration, and the army should get the job. This was different from the selection by class criterion adopted in Tsarist times, which favored nobilities. According to the new selection criterion, the supposedly best way to recruit personnel was by using tests. So from 1920, multiple tests were developed, and many people were hired for administering those tests. However, the massive use of tests by inadequately trained people led to unsatisfactory results. In addition, as Stalin learned, the people he wanted to see in leading positions—descendants of rural and industrial workers—were not the ones who typically obtained the highest scores; it was rather the descendants of middle-class parents and land owners who usually scored high in the tests.

This led to the pedology decree in 1936, in which all tests and statistical interpretation of facts and scientific results were abandoned. Now the main selection criterion for party, administration, and government positions was ancestry again, but in a reverse way compared to Tsarist times. The parents of a candidate had to be rural or industrial workers. Psychology became a kind of neglected child of pedagogics (London, 1952).

Now that statistics were banned, the new criterion for the accuracy of research was its agreement with the ideas and writings of Marx, Engels, and Lenin. This was the so-called required “partisanship of science,” one of the traditional principles of dialectic materialism (McLeish, 1975).

From 1948, all psychology had to be based on the principle of conditioned reflexes (according to Pavlov), and education had to follow this approach.

However, from 1955, psychology gradually returned to the methods of the 1920s and hence the theories of psychologists such as Vygotsky, Rubinstein, and Luria were now in fashion again. Nevertheless, the aim of creating the “new human” remained a very important goal of psychology and education. Even Gorbachev believed it was not the socialist system that was to blame for the economic problems the Soviet Union was facing but the people who still were not of the type the system needed (Taubman, 2017).

According to the “Moral Code of the Builder of Communism,” a model Soviet citizen was expected to be an active member of society and to take “an uncompromising attitude’ toward any injustice or insincerity. At the same time, an exemplary citizen was supposed to have ‘a strong sense of social duty.’” (Decisions of the 22nd Party Congress of the CPSU, cited according to Gerovitch (2007, p. 155))

This main goal affected the APA content classes (see Fig. 31.1) – *Personality Psychology*, *Developmental Psychology*, *Social Psychology*, and *Educational Psychology*.

Figure 31.2 shows the one-year moving average of the page percentage in all the issues from 1955 until the end of 2000 in *Personality Psychology*. For better interpretation of the graphs, refer to the following explaining notes:

The blue vertical bar represents the Central Committee meeting in June 1963; solid purple bars denote the party congresses with strong tasks in February 1976, 1981, and 1986; and dashed purple bars represent party congresses with minor emphasis on *Personality Psychology* in 1956, 1958, 1966, and 1970.

We can notice a high start with nearly 15% of the published pages, which could be due to the scientific conference in July 1955, dedicated to the “Theory of Set” (Uznadze, 1966). An additional effect might be due to the minor decision of the Communist Party Congress in February 1956. Until 1961, there was a decline of this class’ publication page percentage. After the 1959 Party Congress, there was a minor peak in 1961. At the Central Committee meeting in 1963, there was a minor peak, too. From 1966 onward, there was a steady increase which peaked near the Party Congress meeting in 1970. Until 1986, it appeared that every Party Congress had an additional impact on *Personality Psychology*. In the following years, there were no more party decisions and the variations were due to other factors. As mentioned, there were other events influencing the effects of page percentages in a content class. In addition, there were random factors that did not show any systematic effects. To address all the factors in detail would be beyond the scope of this chapter.

Figure 31.3 displays the moving average in *Developmental Psychology*. Again, it appears that there was a connection between the graph’s peaks and the party’s

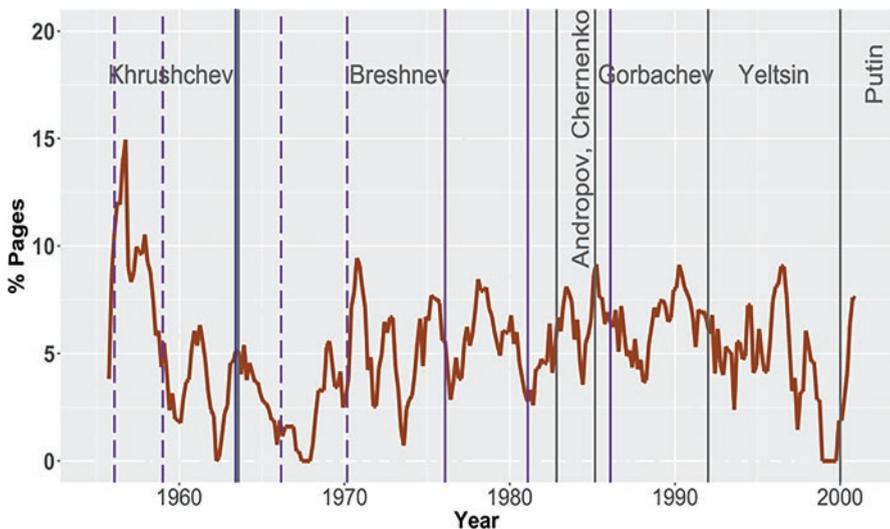
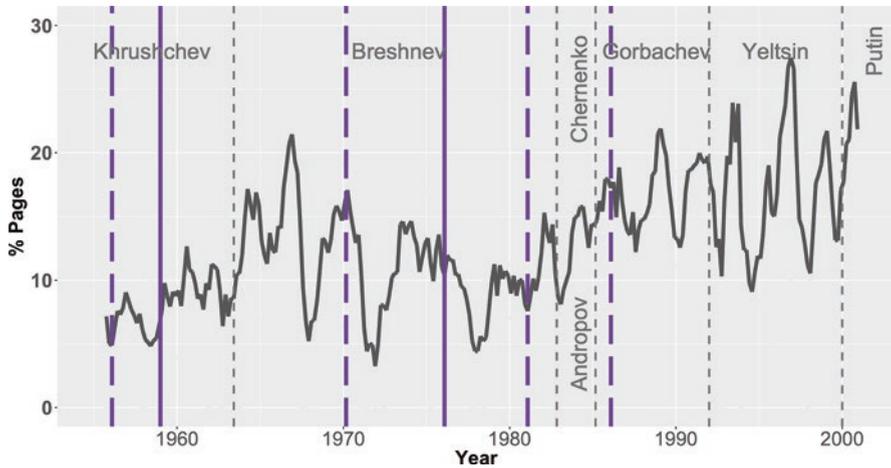


Fig. 31.2 *Personality Psychology*



**Fig. 31.3** *Developmental Psychology*

decisions. The 1959 Party Congress made an emphatic decision on the tasks of *Developmental Psychology*. Together with the preceding Party Congress in 1956 (with minor decisions), there was a steady increase of publication percentages in this area of psychology until 1967. There was a minor peak at the Party Congress in 1970. After the 1976 Party Congress meeting, there was a steady increase again, which continued even after the End of Soviet Union in 1991.

It is remarkable to notice that the peaks of *Personality Psychology* coincided with the minima of developmental psychology and vice versa. This indicates the high priority of the “molding of the new personality” for the Communist Party.

*Social Psychology* gives a slightly different picture: Prior to the Central Committee meeting in 1963, social psychology did not exist in the Soviet Union. Instead, the theories of Marx, Engels, and Lenin provided the right answers for this field. At the Central Committee meeting in 1963 (it was the time of de-Stalinization), the party learned from research in Western countries, especially from the USA, of the benefits of social psychology, which indeed began to emerge in the Soviet Union at this point (see Fig. 31.4).

The results for *Educational Psychology* (Fig. 31.5) are much more complicated. There were multiple requirements for educational psychology, mainly related to adapting the curriculum to the new party demands. We can see a high level of this content class in the 1950s, when there was a high demand for closer links between theory and practice, and a renewed increase in the 1970s until the end of the Soviet Union, when the government sought to improve the quality of school education, especially in science, for the first time. From 1985 onward, *perestroika* was a topic in school education. The demand for the creation of the new human seemed to be a minor part of the development in this content class.

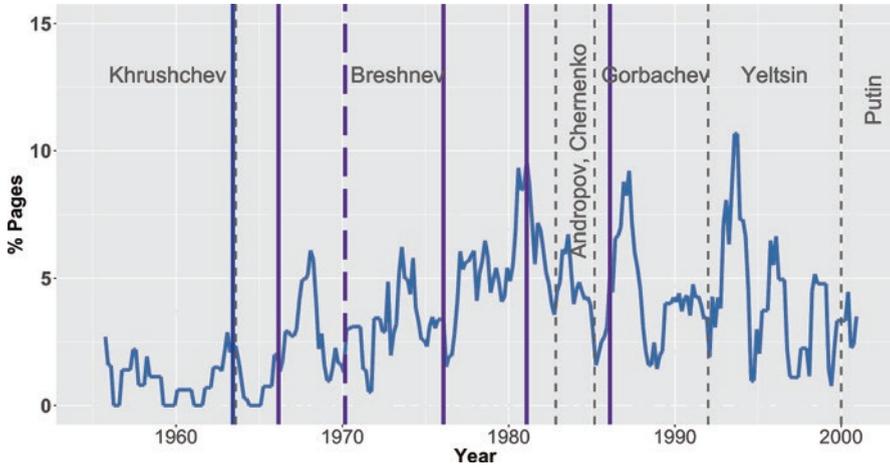


Fig. 31.4 *Social Psychology*

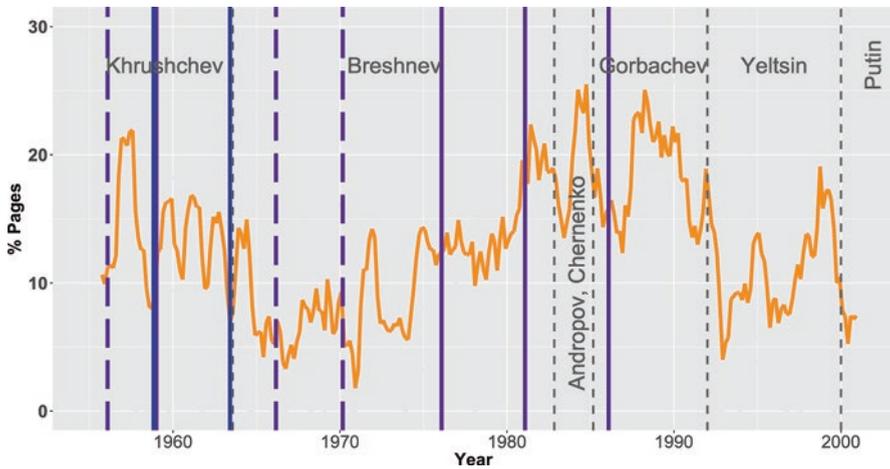
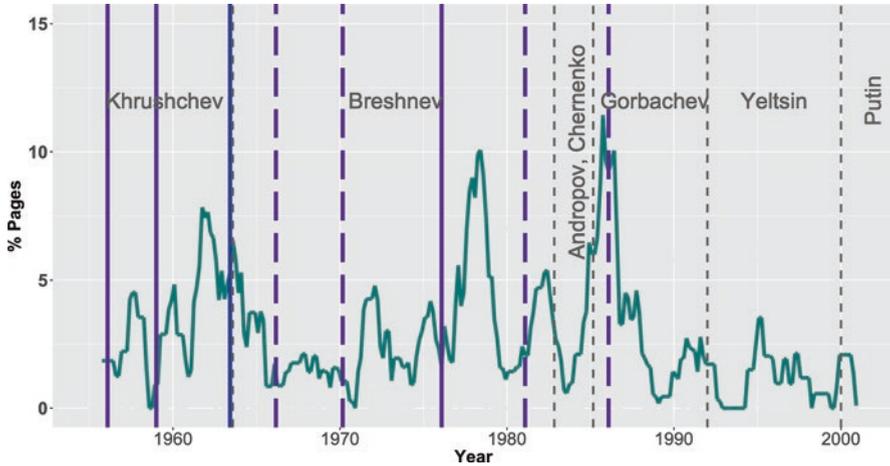


Fig. 31.5 *Educational Psychology*

### ***Improvement in Quality, Output, and Organization in Industrial and Agricultural Production***

There was a second task of the Soviet Communist Party which appeared in nearly all reports of the party congresses and the CC meetings in 1958 and 1963 which was improving the quality of agricultural food processing and industrial production, increasing the output of production, and improving their distribution. Of course, these goals were closely connected to the creation of the “new socialistic human,” but they also affected the areas of industrial and organizational psychology as well as human factors engineering (main part of *Engineering & Environmental*



**Fig. 31.6** *Industrial & Organizational Psychology*

*Psychology*). These reports of the party decisions indicated the problems in these areas and the need for improvement, but a Communist way by which to achieve the goals was not specified.

Figure 31.6 shows the development of *Industrial & Organizational Psychology* from 1955 to 2000 and the Communist Party's decisions concerning this field. The publication peaks seem to be related to the party's decisions. There are two trends in matching party decisions with the relatively early publications in this field: First, the tight connection of the researcher's sponsors in the Communist Party, which gave them the chance to publish the desired papers shortly after the decisions or even in time. Second, there were articles dealing theoretically with the party's aims, confirming findings related to the publications of Marx, Engels, and Lenin (instead of reports of experimentally collected data).

Likewise, in *Engineering & Environmental Psychology* (Fig. 31.7), the peaks of the published articles in this area appear close to the time of the party's decisions. However, there was a remarkable decrease in publications after 1975, which nearly coincided with the peaks in the related area, *Industrial & Organizational Psychology*. Perhaps the focus on human factors engineering had shifted to management, personnel selection, and training.

### ***Diagnosis and Treatment of Psychological and Physical Disorders***

The diagnosis of *Psychological and Physical Disorders* was addressed at several Communist Party Congresses, although treatment was not a major issue at these meetings. Psychic disorders were mainly treated by sending patients to forced labor

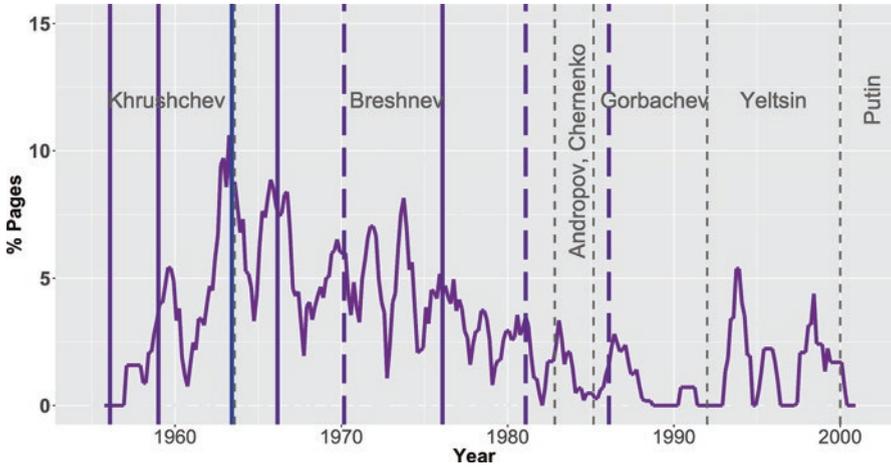


Fig. 31.7 *Engineering & Environmental Psychology*

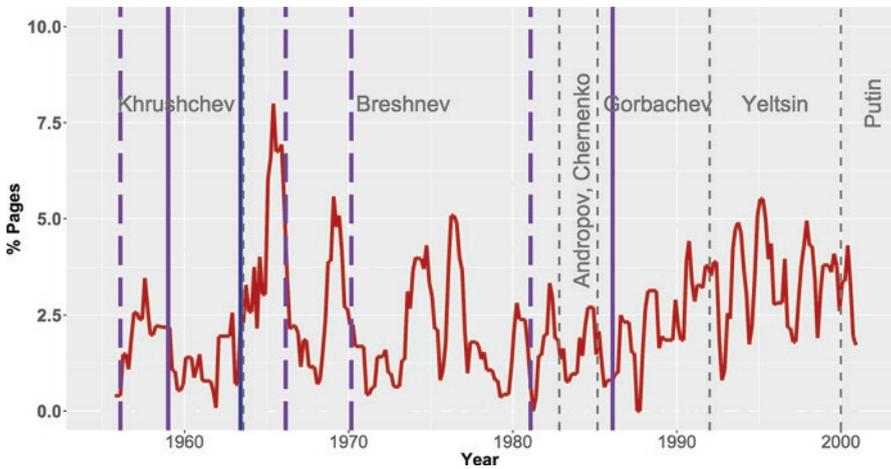


Fig. 31.8 *Psychological and Physical Disorders*

camp, where they had to do hard work in the company of criminal delinquents and dissidents.

As stated before, the psychologists’ tasks consisted mainly of diagnostic issues and expert opinions (Lauterbach, 1976). The treatment was the task of the psychiatrists, who were closely connected with the jurisdiction.

This situation changed a little bit for the better in the late 1970s, when Brezhnev’s power weakened and the Communist Party started to care more for the welfare of their members than for political aims (Schattenberg, 2017).

There were several party decisions on the diagnosis of *Psychological and Physical Disorders* (see Fig. 31.8). Publications in this area peaked after a Central

Committee Meeting in 1963. *Health & Mental Health Treatment & Prevention* (Fig. 31.9) shows a different picture: The Communist Party Congress in 1959 made a decision to improve this area, but it had nearly no effect on the publications, which stayed close to zero until the mid-1970s.

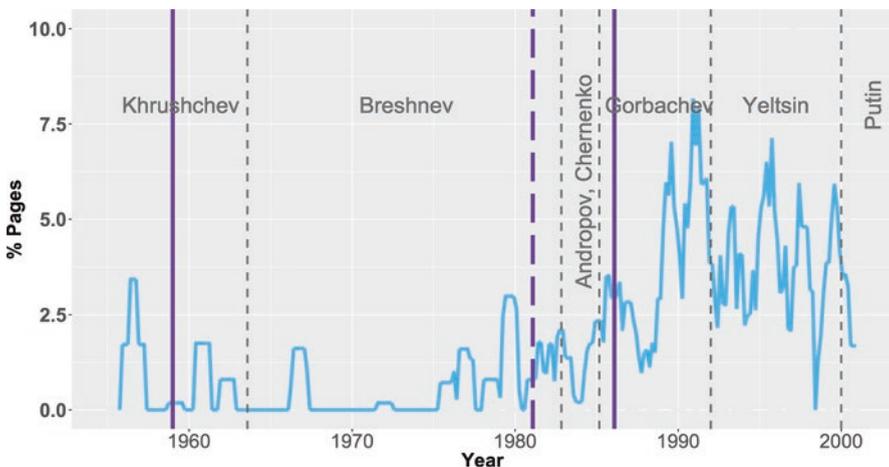
When party control weakened in the mid-1970s, the percentage of Treatment & Prevention articles increased, presumably reflecting the increase in the recognition of the interests of psychologists and the needs of psychologically sick people for treatment. As we can see in some other categories, from 1975, the contents of the journal more closely resembled those of Western psychological journals according to the experience of the authors.

### ***Other Goals Set by the Communist Party***

Some decisions of the Communist Party Congresses concerned several other areas of psychology, such as *Psychometrics & Statistics & Methodology*, *Human Experimental Psychology*, *Communication Systems*, and *Sports Psychology*.

Since 1937, the use of all statistics and tests in psychology and education had been banned in the Soviet Union. The criteria for assessing theories and research findings were strictly based on their consistency with the principles in the publications of Marx, Engels, and Lenin. This was called the required “partisanship of science,” that is, the priority of Marxist-Leninist theories in science. As Stalin said in 1948, the Party had its own position in scientific questions, and this position was true by definition (Krementsov, 1997).

The attitudes toward statistics and research methods in psychology changed after Stalin’s death. Thus, the 21st Communist Party Congress in 1959 made a decision



**Fig. 31.9** *Health & Mental Health Treatment & Prevention*

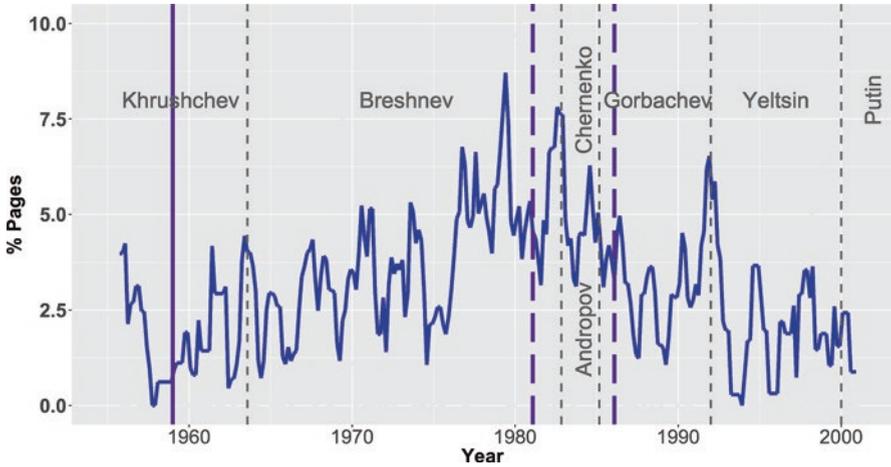


Fig. 31.10 *Statistics and Research Methods*

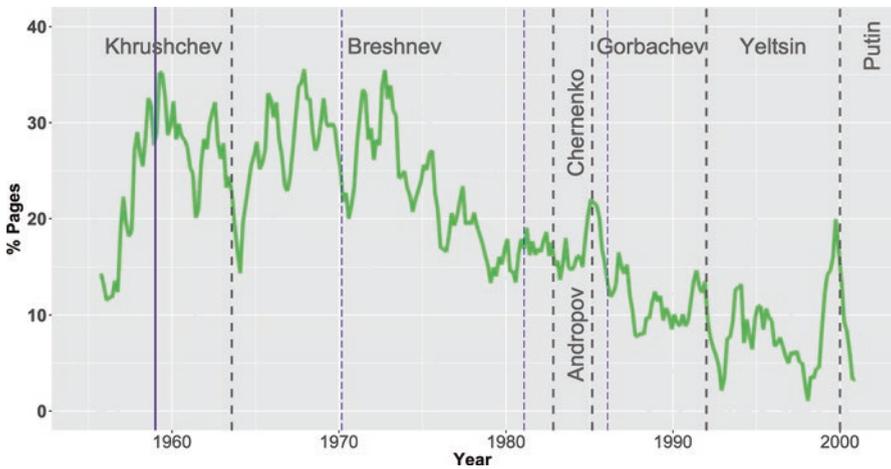


Fig. 31.11 *Human Experimental Psychology*

to improve the application of statistics and research methods. Figure 31.11 shows a steady increase in publications in this content class, which decreased after 1985 during *perestroika* and in the founding years of the Russian Federation due to changing priorities in psychology (Fig. 31.10).

*Human Experimental Psychology* was a traditionally strong area in Soviet psychology, partly due to the pavlovization of psychology since 1948. In 1959, there was a decision to further strengthen this area. Figure 31.12 illustrates the positive effect. However, from the mid-1970s onward, it became weaker due to the decline of behaviorist psychology and the rise of cognitive psychology.

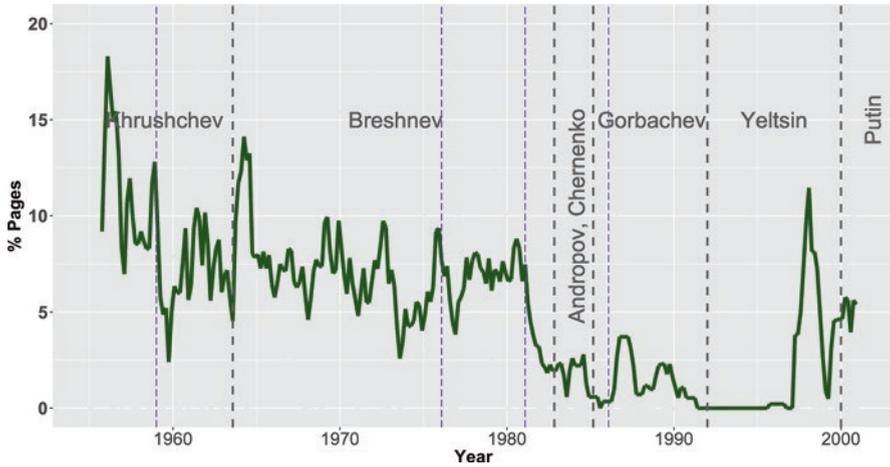


Fig. 31.12 *Physiological Psychology & Neuroscience*

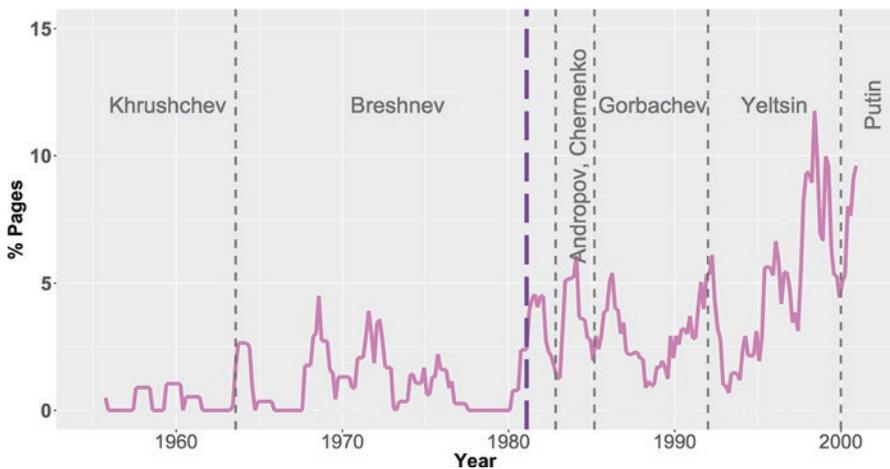
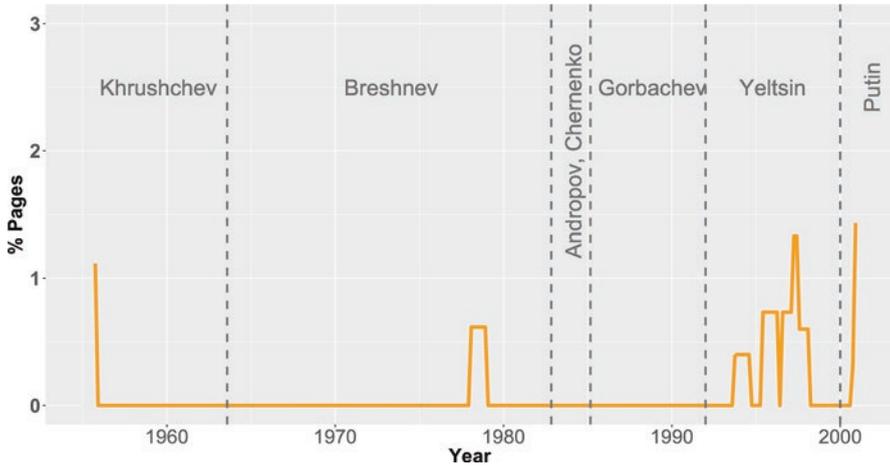


Fig. 31.13 *Social Processes and Social Issues*

The same was true for *Physiological Psychology & Neuroscience*, as shown in Fig. 31.12, because this area was also very strongly influenced by the pavlovization of psychology.

The development of publications of content class Social Processes & Social Issues (Fig. 31.13) is particularly interesting. Although there was only a minor decision to improve research in this area in 1981, the percentage of related articles began to grow, covering topics such as family violence, gender issues, and abuse of drugs and alcohol even before this decision of the 26th Party Congress. This was one more indicator of the growing freedom of science and the decreasing influence of the Communist Party. In *Sports Psychology* (see Fig. 31.15) and *Communication*



**Fig. 31.14** *Consumer Psychology*

*Systems* (see Fig. 31.16), we see no relationship between Party Congress decisions and the percentage of publications. These decisions were made after 1975 and might also be an indicator of weakened party influence on science.

### ***Changes Not Based on Communist Party Decisions***

Some content categories showed a development after the beginning of *perestroika* and even stronger growth after the end of the Soviet Union and the birth of the Russian Federation. Among them were *Consumer Psychology* (see Fig. 31.14), *Environmental Issues & Attitudes* (see Fig. 31.15), and *Special & Remedial Education* (see Fig. 31.16). The percentages of papers in these areas were still low with a maximum of 5% of the journal issue's pages, but it is remarkable that they started to occur at all. Again, it is a strong indicator that freedom to pursue topics in science generates research questions that are relevant to society.

## **Discussion**

Our bibliometric research indicates a general interrelation between the percentage of publications in a specific APA content class and the Communist Party's decisions at the Central Committee meetings and the party congresses. From the late 1970s onward, Russian psychologists worked more and more on topics relevant to society, to the people of the Soviet Union, and to those who needed psychological treatment.

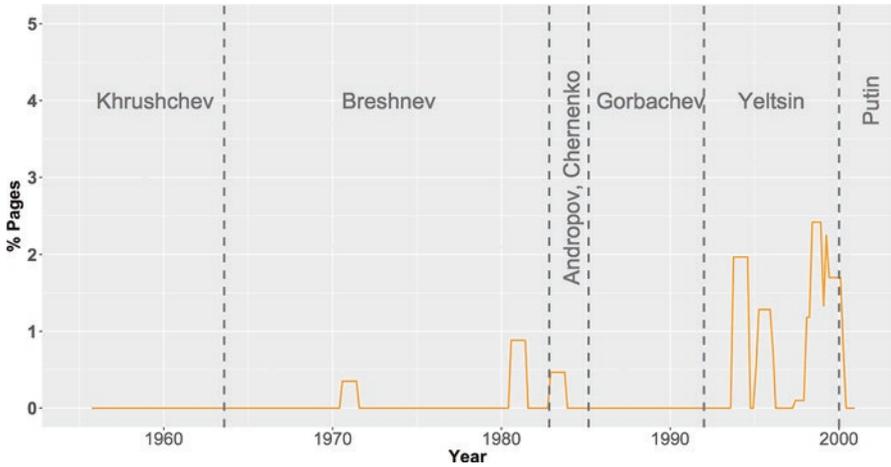


Fig. 31.15 Environmental Issues & Attitudes

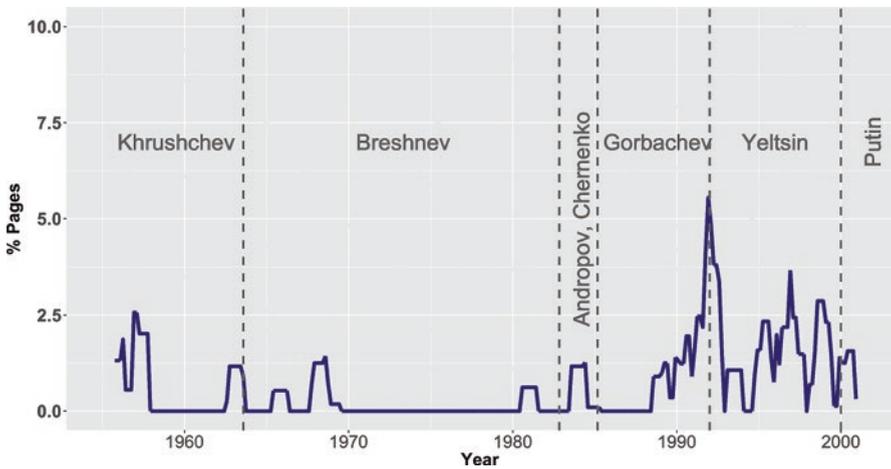


Fig. 31.16 Special & Remedial Education

It is very interesting to recognize that with the beginning of *perestroika*, and especially after the foundation of the Russian Federation, new areas of interest evolved for psychologists, which had been neglected before: *Health & Mental Health Treatment & Prevention*, *Social Processes & Social Issues*, *Special & Remedial Education*, *Consumer Psychology*, and *Environmental Issues & Attitudes*. This development shows that freedom of scientific research led to the discovery of problems in society and the desire to find solutions for these problems.

## Conclusions and Further Study

Psychology and psychologists in the post-Stalin era enjoyed relatively more freedom than in the eras before, except for the first years following the Bolshevik October revolution in 1917. Nevertheless, psychological research and practice continued to be supervised and controlled by the Communist Party and Communist Party members, who acted as “sponsors” for the psychological institutes and their staff, during most of the period surveyed in this study (Krementsov, 1997).

To obtain a more complete picture of the changes in psychological research topics in the post-Stalin era of the Soviet Union, we plan to include more journals in the areas of psychology, pedagogy, physiology, and philosophy in our future investigations. Since many of these journal articles will hardly fit into the APA content classes system, we plan to perform a “text-mining” analysis for the article titles. We believe that the rise and fall of expression frequencies (e.g., “new man” or “personality”) or in name frequencies (e.g., “Pavlov” or “Vygotsky”) across the publication titles will give us hints about the preferred trends over time in Soviet and Russian psychology research.

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**Part V**  
**Solutions to the Problem of Bias**

# Chapter 32

## Adversarial Collaboration: The Next Science Reform



Cory J. Clark and Philip E. Tetlock

The social and behavioral sciences have taken a substantial reputational hit over the past decade. Some highly publicized findings have failed to replicate—and those that do replicate often do so with much smaller effect sizes (Camerer et al., 2018; Nosek et al., 2021). Plus some highly touted “science-based” interventions have failed to produce promised positive social change—even when massive efforts are dedicated to making them work (Singal, 2021).

Thoughtful observers have proposed various reasons for these failures, including the hyper-competitive scramble for academic jobs, grants, and prestige and lax oversight by epistemic gatekeepers of questionable research practices (Clark et al., 2021 b; John et al., 2012; Ritchie, 2020; Simmons et al., 2011; Simonsohn et al., 2014). Rather than retread this well-trodden ground, we focus here on an additional contributing factor, the growing ideological homogeneity of the social sciences, which makes it easier for politically convenient empirical claims to escape scrutiny and makes dissent increasingly difficult (Duarte et al., 2015; Redding, 2001; Tetlock, 1994). Scientists are humans, and if they are not held accountable to the classic CUDOS norms of communal data-sharing, universalism, disinterestedness, and organized skepticism (Merton, 1942/1973)—the default norms of the mid-twentieth century—we should expect them to slip into the same cognitive-motivational biases as ordinary mortals (Lerner & Tetlock, 1999). Indeed, we hypothesize that the growing ideological homogeneity has facilitated the expansion of the range of taboo topics such as race, gender, intelligence, and behavioral genetics that have the potential to undercut discrimination-and-exploitation narratives for group differences in valued outcomes (Clark et al., 2021a; Kaufmann, 2021). Scientists cross these boundaries at their personal and professional peril. These

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pressures inevitably distort the published literature by pumping up false-positive findings congenial with left-leaning preferences (Clark & Winegard, 2020).

To be sure, open science practices (e.g., preregistration of analyses, making data-files publicly available, replication efforts) have been a constructive countervailing CUDOS force: improving the quality of research by minimizing scholars' abilities to adjust research plans after data collection to achieve desired results. However, open science practices *do not* minimize researcher degrees of freedom in the hypothesis-generation and operationalization stages of the research process: which hypotheses do investigators deem worthy of testing and which methodological design do they adopt in testing them? When scholars are free to create methods and materials carefully crafted to confirm preferred hypotheses and discredit dissonant ideas, the statistical screening tests of Open Science are unlikely to detect such practices. This is a much harder problem to crack because virtually everyone who does research treasures their freedom to make these creative decisions. In this chapter, we do not propose to encroach on researcher autonomy. But we do want to open the black box and explore the forms that researcher discretion takes in particular controversies. And we see "adversarial collaboration," as proposed by Kahneman (2011), as a respectful and rigorous means of achieving that goal: a means of making it harder for consciously or unconsciously biased methodological decisions from going unnoticed and unchallenged (Clark et al., 2022).

Adversarial collaborations ask a lot of scholars (1) to articulate and address the steelman version of their opponent's argument (i.e., summarize the other side's perspective so well that the other side feels fairly characterized, not caricatured); (2) to design methods that both sides agree, before data collection, have the potential to change their minds to some degree (a Bayesian form of preregistration that requires specifying likelihood ratios for data patterns that each side expects either to occur or not occur); (3) to agree on a neutral data collector; (4) to publish results regardless of their outcomes (i.e., the file drawer is not an option). Because adversarial collaborations restrict scholars' flexibility to design methods favoring their pet hypotheses, adversarial collaborations are likely to advance debates faster and generate more reliable knowledge than traditional approaches. Of course, there will be resistance, but it is worth identifying which scholars are and are not open to the scrutiny of adversarial collaborators. For we see normalizing adversarial collaborations as the most promising path toward increasing accountability among social scientists and restoring our collective credibility (Brown, 2018).

This chapter will lay out our two-tiered hypothesis: (a) the ideological homogeneity of the social sciences has entrenched certain scientific orthodoxies and taboos and (b) these orthodoxies and taboos have protected weak ideas from rigorous scrutiny and contributed to the replication crisis. We also explain how open science practices, although a big step in the right direction, leave many researcher degrees of freedom on the table that can bias methodological decisions and research conclusions. We argue that adversarial collaborations are the next necessary science reform for addressing lingering weaknesses in social scientific norms and can further minimize false positives, expedite scientific corrections, stimulate progress for

stalelated scientific debates, and ultimately improve the quality of social scientific outputs. We close by describing a new research initiative at University of Pennsylvania called the Adversarial Collaboration Project, which supports adversarial collaborations on policy-relevant social scientific disputes. This project is currently engaging a couple dozen scholars on debates surrounding liberal bias in science, motivated reasoning, rigidity-of-the-right perspectives, and the implicit association test, among other budding research questions. Although some scholars may resist this approach, we explain why it is in the best interest of scholarship (and the scholars themselves) to engage rather than resist. Our collective credibility depends on it.

## Interference from Orthodoxy: Past and Present

Humans have become better at avoiding calamities such as war, famine, disease, and other collective ills by systematically testing ideas about causes and solutions (Pinker, 2018; Tong & von Hippel, 2020). Occasionally—sometimes frequently—scientists and scholars have prematurely closed on explanations, causes, and corresponding solutions (Inbar, 2020) or resisted other causes and corresponding solutions that resulted in decades or centuries of inefficiency (wasted time, effort, and resources), unnecessary harm, and delayed benefits (Akerlof & Michailat, 2018; Stevens et al., 2020). In many such cases, the persistence of false explanations and resistance to new and better ones can be traced to cultural, religious, and political pressures—certain explanations are not in step with the *Zeitgeist*, and thus were forcefully rebuked by those in positions of power.

Only in 1992, for example, did the Catholic Church finally admit Galileo was right about heliocentrism (Finocchiaro, 2005). Of greater significance to psychology, numerous national and US state governments and universities banned *On the Origin of Species* (Darwin, 1859/1909) for political or religious reasons (Acuña-Partal, 2016; Bald & Karolides, 2014; Brown, 1944; Green & Karolides, 2014). Although many evolutionary theories are now widely accepted among scientists, everyday people still resist certain evolutionary explanations. For example, political conservatives deny evolved gender differences because they are relatively skeptical of evolution, and political liberals deny evolved gender differences because they are relatively skeptical of DNA-grounded gender differences (Lewandowsky et al., 2020). There is even some evidence that social scientists continue to resist certain evolutionary theories for political reasons (e.g., Buss & von Hippel, 2018; von Hippel & Buss, 2017).

Centuries and millennia ago, scholars could be killed, exiled, arrested, or otherwise persecuted for challenging orthodoxies. Modern scholars (at least in democracies) are therefore comparably lucky to live in an era when the most severe consequences for violating popular opinion are social disapproval, a loss of status, and—in rare cases—the loss of one's job. Nonetheless, these consequences, while

mild in comparison to the past, are severe enough to deter many scholars from pursuing data, information, and arguments that might support taboo conclusions in the social sciences. For example, Kaufmann (2021) found that 10% to 70% of academics reported self-censoring in their teaching or avoiding publishing research because of possible consequences to their careers. Reports of self-censorship in teaching and research were higher among academics in the social sciences and humanities than among those in STEM, in the United States and Canada than in the United Kingdom, and as academics decreasingly identified to the left politically.

In an ongoing study, many of our own peers (i.e., fellow social scientists) reported self-censoring their views on certain taboo topics and avoiding certain research areas—even those in which they expressed a relatively high degree of certainty that the mainstream narratives were incorrect—out of fear for social scrutiny, ostracization, and/or harm to their careers (Clark et al., 2021a). Thus, the current sanctions in our own discipline are sufficient to deter scholars from pursuing truth, or at least what they perceive to be the truth.

The taboos appear to be widely known to scholars. When asked to name the most taboo topics in the social sciences, most social scientists interviewed pointed to the potential biological realities of group differences (evolved genetic differences) that might explain group disparities in important outcomes (e.g., educational and career outcomes, involvement in the criminal justice system, mental health outcomes), and particularly for outcomes in which traditionally marginalized groups might appear in a less-than-flattering light. (No taboos were reported surrounding explanations for the relative representation or performance of white men in the same domains.) Some interviewees even asserted that discrimination and oppression are the *only* tolerated causal explanations within the social sciences for the under-representation of traditionally marginalized groups (an argument also forwarded by Honeycutt and Jussim (2020)), whereas any conclusions that could be seen as attributing responsibility to the groups for performance or representation are off-limits. But many also asserted, with high confidence, that discrimination and oppression are *not* the only causes of group disparities (Clark et al., 2021a).

This broad narrative captures the most powerful orthodoxy in early twenty-first-century social science. It might even be more correct than incorrect. But many scholars feel freedom only to affirm it, not to challenge it, despite believing it might be empirically inaccurate in at least some contexts. When well-meaning scholars are afraid of testing a subset of causal explanations (at least those that have yet to be shown empirically preposterous), this can create systematic biases in the literature, increasing risks of false positives for preferred causal explanations. Thus, the existence of orthodoxy within a particular discipline can create inefficiency in the scientific process. Scholars must spend a lot of time overturning false positives rather than focusing on identifying true positives. And in the meantime, scholars base new hypotheses on false premises, further slowing the discovery of truth.

## Is This Orthodoxy Tied to the Liberal Homogeneity of the Social Sciences?

There is reason to believe this orthodoxy is linked to the left-leaning ideological homogeneity of the social sciences (for data, see Buss and von Hippel (2018), Duarte et al. (2015), Inbar and Lammers (2012), Kaufmann (2021), Langbert (2018), and Redding (2001)). Recent work has found that liberals prefer biological group equality for socially valued characteristics (Winegard et al., 2018) and are averse to data that portray higher status groups more favorably than lower status groups on valued traits (e.g., Clark et al., 2020; Stewart-Williams et al., 2020; von Hippel & Buss, 2017). These preferences may reflect liberals' otherwise admirable aversion to inequality (Jost et al., 2008) and empathy for lower status groups (e.g., Hasson et al., 2018; Jeffries et al., 2012; Lucas & Kteily, 2018) and may explain why liberals tend to demonstrate biases when evaluating information with significance to groups of varying status. For example, liberals more favorably evaluate research on female-favoring sex differences than male-favoring sex differences and more positively judge research on Black-favoring race differences than White-favoring race differences (Clark et al., 2020; Stewart-Williams et al., 2020; von Hippel & Buss, 2017; Winegard et al., 2018) and demonstrate pro-women and pro-minority biases in numerous other contexts (e.g., Axt et al., 2016; Dupree & Fiske, 2019; Kteily et al., 2019; Pursur & Harper, 2020; Unzueta et al., 2014).

There is little reason to believe social scientists are immune to such biases (Clark et al., 2021b; Clark & Winegard, 2020; Duarte et al., 2015; Haidt, 2020; Redding, 2001; Ritchie, 2020; Tetlock, 2020; Winegard & Clark, 2020; although see also Lai, 2020; Van Bavel et al., 2020). Scientists are human after all, and tendencies to interact with information in ways that confirm desired beliefs and that conform to one's social group's beliefs are likely a natural, evolved feature of human psychology to which *all* people are vulnerable (e.g., Clark et al., 2019; Ditto et al., 2019a, b; Everett et al., 2021).

There is also evidence that liberal academics are not all that different from *hoi polloi* who populate lab studies. For example, peer reviewers tended to evaluate research more favorably when findings supported rather than challenged their prior beliefs, theoretical orientations, and political views (Abramowitz et al., 1975; Koehler, 1993; Mahoney, 1977); ethics committees were more likely to reject proposals to examine discrimination against white men than proposals to examine discrimination against women and minorities (consistent with liberal biases described above (Ceci et al., 1985)); and some scholars even openly acknowledge that they would discriminate against conservative research and conservative scholars (Honeycutt & Freberg, 2017; Inbar & Lammers, 2012; Kaufmann, 2021; Peters et al., 2020). They don't see such discrimination as a vice; they see being discriminating as a virtue (Tetlock, 2012). Such findings also shed light on why conservatives are described more negatively than liberals in social scientific research (Eitan et al., 2018) and why more liberal ideology among academics predicts working in

more prestigious institutions, controlling for scholarly impact and productivity (Rothman et al., 2005).

Particularly relevant to this liberal orthodoxy, social psychologists are also more accepting of evolved group differences that favor women and ethnic minorities than evolved group differences that disfavor women and ethnic minorities (von Hippel & Buss, 2017). Clark and colleagues (2021a) found a strong relationship ( $r \sim 0.6$ ) between scholars' beliefs in the empirical accuracy of taboo conclusions and self-censorship on those taboo topics. In other words, scholars who believed certain taboo conclusions were likely empirically correct were less willing to discuss their beliefs publicly than scholars who believed those taboo conclusions were empirically incorrect. This may create a false perceived consensus surrounding taboo conclusions because only one side of the belief spectrum is publicly visible. This can create an illusion of a scientific consensus that "Taboo Conclusion X is empirically wrong" where there is no consensus at all. It appears liberal social scientists have created a moral community that incentivizes and rewards scholars and scholarship that support the prevailing orthodoxy and—at least to a degree—intimidates scholars who might challenge the orthodoxy and creates barriers to such scholars' success.

More research is needed to understand the scope of this potential problem (Tetlock, 2020), but our default assumption should be that human psychology among scientists resembles human psychology among everyday people, absent evidence of strong institutional checks and balances. Truth-oriented scholars should thus be alert to the possibility (even likelihood) that their own preferences and commitments influence the empirical conclusions they draw, their evaluations of peers' empirical conclusions, and the hospitality of the environment they create for other scholars. And truth-oriented scholars should be open to new methodological strategies for taming these tendencies in themselves.

## **Is This Orthodoxy to Blame—in Part—for the Replication Crisis?**

We doubt it a coincidence that many of the big disappointments to come out of the social sciences support liberal orthodoxies either in their causal explanations or in their purported solutions. Consider, for example, implicit bias (e.g., Greenwald & Banaji, 1995), stereotype threat (e.g., Steele & Aronson, 1995; Spencer et al., 1999), growth mindset (e.g., Dweck, 2008; Dweck & Leggett, 1988), and power posing (e.g., Carney et al., 2010; Cuddy et al., 2015). All four of these findings were accompanied by environmental explanations that implied the malleability of group disparities in education and career outcomes if we aimed policy interventions at the target construct. All four became research paradigms of their own, inspiring thousands of new academic papers. All four of these findings have been widely

celebrated within the academy and beyond. And some have directly or indirectly influenced public and organizational policy, such as multi-million-dollar education interventions, police trainings, hiring practices, class-action lawsuits against organizations, and a multi-billion-dollar industry in diversity and inclusion trainings (Mitchell & Tetlock, 2021).

One other thing that all these research programs have in common is that meta-analyses, replications, and the Open Science movement have thus far found them to be of little relevance in the real world. All four effects have replication records that range from wobbly to very wobbly (e.g., Bahník & Vranka, 2017; Blanton et al., 2015; Flore & Wicherts, 2015; Forscher et al., 2019; Jonas et al., 2017; Jussim et al., 2020; Oswald et al., 2013, 2015; Rienzo et al., 2015; Shewach et al., 2019; Simmons & Simonsohn, 2017; Singal, 2021; Sisk et al., 2018; Stoet & Geary, 2012). And to our knowledge, not one of them has yet produced any substantial and verifiable long-term impact—and not for lack of trying. Many scholars and organizations have spent *a lot* of time and resources trying to use them for that purpose. For some of these findings, the writing has been on the wall for several years, yet many scholars still have not pulled back. For example, a Google Scholar search for “stereotype threat” from 2020 to present (April, 2021) returned ~6000 results, and a similar search for “implicit bias” returned ~10,000 results. A plausible hypothesis is that scholars have resisted abandoning these paradigms because they affirm a hard-core egalitarian worldview premise: the malleability of group differences.

It remains conjecture to what degree ideological bias has contributed to the replication crisis—as opposed to other usual suspects: careerism, lack of gatekeeper oversight, and professional incentives for quantity over quality/reliability of published work. But we would wager the contribution is considerably greater than 0%, and perhaps as large as 50% within subfields relevant to egalitarian worldviews, such as race, gender, and value-charged portrayals of ideological groups (e.g., Duarte et al., 2015). This is a proposition we are currently testing in an adversarial collaboration with Jarret Crawford and Jay Van Bavel exploring effect sizes, heterogeneity, publication bias, and citation bias in meta-analyses of meta-analyses, so we hope to provide better data on this possibility soon.

When an ideologically lopsided field routinely explores ideologically charged topics, bias should hardly count as surprising—and there are numerous signs that biases exist (e.g., self-reported discrimination against conservative perspectives and scholars). It therefore seems reasonable to consider supplementary methods for promoting CUDOS norms, especially the “D” and the “OS” (Disinterested and Organized Skepticism”). And even if we are wrong about how much of the replication crisis can be attributed to the ideological homogeneity and collective intimidation, scholarship would be better off if we could resolve scientific disagreements more quickly and efficiently than current methods.

## The Limits of Open Science Practices

Recent estimates suggest that ~64% of psychology studies replicate with effect sizes ~68% as large as the original studies (Camerer et al., 2018; Nosek et al., 2021). And affirmative citations for published findings that fail to replicate are slow to decline in the years following failures to replicate, suggesting “considerable perpetuation of belief in the credibility of the original findings despite contradictory replication results” (Nosek et al., 2021, p. 53). Whether scholars are unaware of or unconvinced by failed replications or just ignore them when convenient for their research narratives, replication efforts alone appear slow to advance the field (although slow self-correction is much better than zero self-correction).

Moreover, for many ongoing disputes in the social sciences, proponents of competing empirical positions launch studies and papers at one another from their respective corners, each anchored in a community of co-believers. The list is long. Are political conservatives more prone to motivated cognition than liberals on average? Is perceived harm a fundamental component of all moral judgment? Is human reasoning designed to pursue truth first and foremost? Are stereotypes a self-fulfilling prophecy or a mere reflection of empirical reality? To what extent are police racially biased? To what extent are STEM fields gender biased? What do IQ tests measure? Is religion morally advantageous? Are the social sciences politically biased? Did women evolve different psychological characteristics than men? How does ovulation influence female behavior? What is the relationship between biological sex and gender? All this makes it difficult for third-party observers to sort out which sides can best account for the full body of data. When separate research teams, each with its own standards of evidence and proof, stake out distinctive positions, we have a recipe for ambiguity for scholars trying to discern the most promising theories on which to base their own hypotheses.

Often, these disagreements surface in commentaries and responses where scholars mischaracterize each other’s views, target only their opponent’s weakest arguments as though removing a few bricks demolishes the castle, or make false assumptions about what their opponent might have predicted in a given situation or how they might seek to explain some new findings. Although the spirit of these exchanges (encouraging disagreeing scholars to engage publicly with one another) is laudable, the approach is inefficient. Scholars are rarely forced to articulate their opponent’s positions *accurately* and are *never* obligated to collect or publish data that might challenge their own views.

Open science practices have been useful for reducing scholars’ ability to rig their analyses but cannot address some of the biggest problems in science. Scholars still have a lot of and strong incentives—to select study materials and procedures likely to confirm their favored hypotheses—and strong disincentives to expose their hypotheses to the most rigorous tests. Consequently, the dice have often been loaded before pre-registration, with methodological designs biased in favor of particular conclusions. For example, measures of modern racism (e.g., Kinder & Sears, 1981) confound attitudes toward Black people with elements of political conservatism,

such as support for meritocracies and valuing hard work (Sniderman & Tetlock, 1986). Scholars then used the symbolic racism scale to make claims about political conservatives and politically conservative policies being motivated *by* racism, when they had operationalized racism in part *as* political conservatism (Wright et al., 2021). Consequently, symbolic racism better predicts *political bias* than *racial bias*, and to the extent that it does predict racial bias, those who score *low* on symbolic racism show larger racial discrepancies in favor of Black people over White people than those who score high on symbolic racism show in favor of White people over Black people (Wright et al., 2021). It seems likely that scholars had gotten away with this style of scholarship for many years because other editors and reviewers, who share their liberal worldview, were open to painting unflattering, even misleading, portraits of conservatives.

Similarly, open-science methods do nothing to prevent tendentious narratives from being applied to real, replicable data patterns. For example, the abstract of a recent paper summarized the findings as “high system-justifiers found jokes targeting low-status groups (e.g., women, poor people, racial/ethnic minorities) to be funnier than low system-justifiers did” (Baltiansky et al., 2020), portraying “high system-justifiers” (i.e., political conservatives) as callous toward low-status groups. But the abstract obscures the fact that it was low system-justifiers (i.e., political liberals) who treated jokes as less funny when they targeted low-status groups than when they targeted high-status groups, whereas high system-justifiers treated jokes about high- and low-status groups equally (Pursur & Harper, 2020). Put differently, low system-justifiers found jokes targeting low-status groups particularly *unfunny*. This could be framed as admirable protection of low-status groups on the part of liberals or as condescension (in line with similar findings [e.g., Dupree & Fiske, 2019]).

Perhaps tendentious narratives shape science most frequently in correlational research that highlights a preferred causal story. For example, an article reporting correlational data was titled “National differences in gender–science stereotypes predict national sex differences in science and math achievement,” placing “stereotypes” in the predictor position and “sex differences” in the outcome position (Nosek et al., 2009), thus emphasizing the possibility that the stereotypes *caused* the sex differences. However, these data were correlational and so merely reported an *association* (of course, the reverse causal order [patterns cause stereotypes] has strong scientific advocates; Jussim et al., 2016). And numerous studies stress the causal significance of parenting and childhood environment without considering genetic confounds (i.e., unstable parents who create unstable environments for their children also create children who share their genes and associated personality characteristics).

Replications and open science practices can help us clarify which methods produce which results and which variables reliably relate to which other variables, but they cannot help us understand whether the interpretations of those relationships are wildly misleading. If a variable labeled X by scholars is actually measuring Y, or a scholar claims that X likely causes Y when in fact Z causes both X and Y, awareness of replicable relationships among these variables does little to actually solve

puzzles. Indeed, the discovery of real data patterns, when coupled with false narratives, can often do more harm than good because it likely increases confidence in false beliefs.

Although open science norms work well for checking statistical malpractice (e.g., analyzing data multiple ways in search of statistical significance and related questionable research practices), these norms are not up to the task of correcting the forms of political mischief of interest here: questionable operationalizations of independent variables and dependent variables and causal assumptions in correlational data. Open science practices alone do not constrain researcher degrees of freedom in study *design* and data *interpretation*, even though they do constrain researcher degrees of freedom in *analytic approach*, which risks creating illusions of scientific progress in politicized domains that can produce high-reliability, low-validity products (e.g., reliance on tendentiously labeled individual difference constructs, like symbolic racism, symbolic sexism, and system justification). Faster correction is critical not only to reduce wasted time and resources, but to restore our scientific credibility.

## Expediting the Correction Process with Adversarial Collaboration

How can we correct ourselves more efficiently—and create a sounder science that does not mislead our colleagues and research funders and that checks expenditures on fashionable but low-value (even net negative value) interventions? Adversarial collaboration is a promising solution.

In adversarial collaboration, two or more disagreeing scholars work *together* to resolve their scientific disputes, first identifying sources of genuine empirical disagreement, and then designing mutually agreed upon methods to test competing hypotheses. As originally conceived by Nobel Laureate, Daniel Kahneman, adversarial collaborations call on scholars to (1) make good faith efforts to articulate each other's positions so that each side feels fairly characterized, not caricatured, (2) work together to design studies that they agree, *ex ante*, have the potential to change their minds, and (3) jointly publish the results, regardless of who wins, loses, or draws (Mellers et al., 2001; Tetlock & Mellers, 2011; Tetlock & Mitchell, 2009). Adversarial collaborations have more power to advance debates and generate reliable knowledge than traditional approaches because the parties have limited ability to rig methods to favor preferred hypotheses and must commit to publishing outputs before seeing the results. Thus adversarial collaborations are a crucial supplement to other open sciences practices. Whereas other open science practices protect *analyses* from questionable research practices, adversarial collaborations protect research *methods* from questionable research practices.

**Fairer Tests** Each adversarial collaborator is a check on the other to confirm that hypotheses are falsifiable, tests are fair, and interpretations of data are appropriately

circumspect. Done properly, adversarial collaborations are a powerful antidote to straw manning insofar as they require scholars to articulate their opponent's perspective in a way their opponent agrees with (the Ideological Turing Test). Rather than Scholar A claiming that "Scholar B would predict X, but I predict Y" and then conducting six studies showing Y, and Scholar B coming back and saying, "I would not have predicted X," conversations about the predictions flowing from different theories happen *before* data collection, allowing science to target real scientific claims rather than made-up ones. And scholars are required to engage with the *best* arguments from their adversaries rather than only the worst.

**Better Incentives** Adversarial collaborations also increase epistemic accountability among scholars because their statements, theories, and hypotheses will be put to better-thought-through tests, which will incentivize scholars to advance the most defensible, not the most sensational, versions of their arguments. Hypothesizing within the confines of an adversarial collaboration should incentivize accuracy among scholars, whereas current methods often reward flash and hyperbole. Moreover, participation in adversarial collaborations signals to other scholars that one is a truth-seeking scientist rather than an advocate. Acknowledging and commending scholars' willingness to participate in adversarial collaborations can encourage scholars to develop truth-seeking identities (whereas rewarding scholars for their discovery of desirable or *WORLD CHANGING!* findings encourages them to develop identities as advocates (Clark et al., 2021b)).

**Reducing Ambiguity** Traditionally, two or more disagreeing parties forcefully defend their position despite contradictory evidence from intellectual opponents, creating ambiguity in the literature and confusion among the broader academic community. In an adversarial collaboration, disagreeing scholars jointly publish results, forwarding one clearer (if more moderate and nuanced) state of the art, which should help other scientists have more accurate beliefs about empirical reality, enabling them to forward better hypotheses themselves.

**Accelerating Natural Selection of Science Based on Quality** Adversarial collaborations create more competition of ideas, which will accelerate the natural selection of science based on *quality* of outputs rather than the expediency or trendiness of those outputs. Bad ideas will be more likely to lose and die faster, and good ideas will rise to the top quicker and with greater clarity. This may help scholars avoid long detours down research dead ends.

## How to Collaborate with Adversaries

In one of the first adversarial collaborations, Mellers et al. (2001, p. 270) make excellent suggestions for successful participation in adversarial collaborations:

1. “When tempted to write a critique or to run an experimental refutation of a recent publication, consider the possibility of proposing joint research under an agreed protocol. We call the scholars engaged in such an effort participants. If theoretical differences are deep or if there are large differences in experimental routines between the laboratories, consider the possibility of asking a trusted colleague (*trusted and agreed upon by all adversarial collaborators*; italicized part added by present authors) to coordinate the effort, referee disagreements, and collect the data. We call that person an arbiter.
2. Agree on the details of an initial study, designed to subject the opposing claims to an informative empirical test. The participants should seek to identify results that would change their mind, at least to some extent, and should explicitly anticipate their interpretations of outcomes that would be inconsistent with their theoretical expectations. These predictions should be recorded by the arbiter to prevent future disagreements about remembered interpretations.
3. If there are disagreements about unpublished data, a replication that is agreed to by both participants should be included in the initial study.
4. Accept in advance that the initial study will be inconclusive. Allow each side to propose an additional experiment to exploit the fount of hindsight wisdom that commonly becomes available when disliked results are obtained. Additional studies should be planned jointly, with the arbiter resolving disagreements as they occur.
5. Agree in advance to produce an article with all participants as authors. The arbiter can take responsibility for several parts of the article: an introduction to the debate, the report of experimental results, and a statement of agreed-upon conclusions. If significant disagreements remain, the participants should write individual discussions. The length of these discussions should be determined in advance and monitored by the arbiter. An author who has more to say than the arbiter allows should indicate this fact in a footnote and provide readers with a way to obtain the added material.
6. The data should be under the control of the arbiter, who should be free to publish with only one of the original participants if the other refuses to cooperate. Naturally, the circumstances of such an event should be part of the report.
7. All experimentation and writing should be done quickly, within deadlines agreed to in advance. Delay is likely to breed discord.
8. The arbiter should have the casting vote in selecting a venue for publication, and editors should be informed that requests for major revisions are likely to create impossible problems for the participants in the exercise.”

We believe these guidelines are useful, but Mellers et al.’ (2001) adversarial collaboration covered a low-political-charge topic—the conjunction fallacy (i.e., concluding that specific conditions within a broad category could be more probable than the broad category alone; Hertwig & Gigerenzer, 1999 vs. Kahneman & Tversky, 1996). Adversarial collaboration is likely to be easier (although still not easy) within subfields that carry minimal political charge and avoid bitterly divisive issues. Areas characterized by contentious political disputes would likely benefit

most from adversarial collaborations, precisely *because* they involve contentious disputes, but adversarial collaborations would also be especially difficult to execute in these domains. For research questions related to scholars' personal moral and political beliefs, scholars may be particularly uninterested in participating in adversarial collaborations that could disconfirm those beliefs, and if they overcame that aversion and participated anyway, they may be particularly unwilling to accept any resulting evidence that challenges their prior beliefs (e.g., Clark et al., 2015; Tetlock et al., 2000). Below, we provide a few additional suggestions, particularly for adversarial collaborations involving ideologically charged controversies.

1. An initial discussion should identify a clearly defined disagreement. Both sides should be able to articulate their own perspective in concrete terms as well as the perspective of their adversary and the disagreement in terms all parties agree with. This discussion should leave all parties feeling understood, not caricatured.
2. Consider the temperaments of potential adversaries. We suspect that some scholars will be able to participate in adversarial collaborations more successfully than others (e.g., successful adversarial collaboration may be associated with higher intellectual humility (Bowes et al., 2020, 2021), open-mindedness, and agreeableness, and with lower dogmatism, neuroticism, narcissism, and ideological extremism (van Prooijen & Krouwel, 2019; Zmigrod et al., 2020)). For many scientific disputes, different "sides" are supported by numerous scholars, and so it may be useful to select an adversary among them who seems capable of carrying out an adversarial collaboration successfully.
3. Strive for achievable, incremental progress. Not all facets of disagreements have to be addressed in just one or two studies.
4. Be flexible with your collaborator. There is rarely one way to answer a question, so if there is resistance to one approach, simply move on to a new one. If one study goes awry (i.e., one or more collaborators are not convinced by the findings), figure out why and fix the ambiguities for the next study.
5. Take advantage of preregistration. Preregistering an adversarial collaboration can help lock both scholars into a research plan, which will minimize scholars' ability to renege if unfavorable results are found.
6. You might find that the disagreement is not as wide or as clearly defined as the published literature makes it seem. This is still progress—clarifying the nature and size of the disagreement could be a contribution to the literature.

To our knowledge, there is virtually no research on adversarial collaboration, including how it is best approached. We hope adversarial collaborations will increase in popularity so that we and other scholars can study the process itself and provide better information on how to optimize adversarial collaborations to increase the ratio of reliable to unreliable scholarship in the social and behavioral sciences. Although we believe certain procedures will increase the odds of success, there may be some topics for which disagreements are so heated and entrenched, that adversarial collaborations will be impossible. Even willingness to entertain certain hypotheses can lead to *ad hominem* attacks and other moral accusations in certain

domains, which generally are unlikely to help resolve empirical disagreements. There may be a sweet-spot zone for adversarial collaborations, where disagreeing scholars who typically would avoid collaborating can work together to resolve genuine scientific disagreements. But it may not be feasible for all disputes, particularly for those in which scholars in different camps have come to hate their opponents and distrust their motives.

## Why Participate in Adversarial Collaborations?

**Good for Science** Although there is little research *on* adversarial collaborations, there are theoretical reasons to believe such an approach would facilitate higher quality science. For example, research on the *wisdom of crowds* finds that groups often make better, more accurate judgments than individuals—even expert individuals (Hastie & Kameda, 2005; Satopaa et al. 2021; Surowiecki, 2004; van Gelder et al., 2020). Whereas individuals may have preferences (e.g., political and moral views), goals (e.g., to support one’s hypothesis), priors (e.g., that one’s hypothesis is correct), or proclivities (e.g., credulity) that can bias individual judgments, groups are more likely to include a variety of preferences, goals, priors, and proclivities that may *cancel out systematic bias* in group judgments. Crowds contain a wider range of relevant information and expertise. Science demonstrates an appreciation of this concept already by promoting discussion and debate at conferences and commentaries and replies in academic journals, but science has done little to promote the existence of diverse perspectives *within* individual projects and papers. And although scientists frequently collaborate with numerous other scholars, we suspect scholars generally choose to collaborate with scholars most similar to themselves in their theoretical orientations (a perfect recipe for *groupthink*, where cohesive groups seek to maintain social harmony at the expense of good judgment (Janis, 1991)) rather than with scholars who might provide different perspectives and knowledge.

Many scholars have embraced open science procedures for restricting researcher degrees of freedom to make *ex post* adjustments in analytic strategy (e.g., including only those participants who took longer than 5 minutes to complete the study) that boost their chances to achieve hypothesized effects (Simmons et al., 2011). For example, preregistrations require scholars to commit to a specific sample size and analytic strategy and to specify all independent and dependent variables central to their hypothesis or research question. This minimizes researcher degrees of freedom particularly in the data analysis stage: researchers must conduct their analysis the way they said they would. However, there are currently no procedures in place to minimize researcher degrees of freedom in the study design stage (i.e., selection of methods and materials). Adversarial collaborations directly address this problem because adversarial collaborators must agree on fair methods and procedures prior to data collection, minimizing the extent to which scholars can select procedures most likely to confirm their favored hypotheses. Although seriously flawed or biased

methods might get called out in the review process, most modestly adequate scientific papers can find a home somewhere, and so trying to correct flawed methods after results have been written may not prevent biased science from leaking into the literature (nor is it particularly efficient to identify flaws afterward). In general, having an adversarial collaborator participate in the research process restricts scholars' degrees of freedom at nearly all stages of the research process (from articulating a fair research question, selecting materials and procedures, analyzing the data, and writing up the findings), which should lead adversarial collaborations to produce more accurate and less biased research conclusions than traditional approaches.

Adversarial collaborations may also promote tolerance of genuine academic freedom while weeding out scholarship with an agenda. One legitimate concern of many scholars is that certain scholars pursue taboo research and conclusions for nefarious motives. Undoubtedly some scholars have acted recklessly with little concern for scientific validity. However, not *all* scholars who study taboo-tainted topics have an axe to grind. Adversarial collaborations may help separate the wheat from the chaff because willingness to participate indicates a scholar is likely not a hell-bent advocate but rather interested in following the data wherever it may lead (even if it leads somewhere that challenges mainstream narratives).

Making adversarial collaborations a norm in the sciences will also increase accountability among scholars, which can minimize biases (Lerner & Tetlock, 1999). Just as a scholar who *p*-hacks results (i.e., selectively reports data and analyses to achieve significance) risks other scholars failing to replicate their findings, scholars who rig their methods and narratives may be called upon to participate in adversarial collaborations. A scholar selling snake oil would either participate and likely have their favored findings challenged or decline to participate altogether. If adversarial collaborations became a norm in the sciences, failures to participate in adversarial collaborations could be red flags for identifying low-credibility scholars, similar to how failures to participate in other open science practices may be red flags for *p*-hacking. Moreover, adversarial collaborations are akin to reputational bets, which incentivize scholars to forward claims they have the most confidence in rather than exaggerated, sensational claims (which are often incentivized with traditional methods), because exaggerated claims are likely to lose in an adversarial collaboration. For precisely this reason, the mere process of having scholars articulate their views in an adversarial collaboration can lead to more moderate and nuanced claims. We have noticed that this happens in our own adversarial collaborations—perspectives start to merge even before the data collection begins.

**Good for Scientists** One barrier to normalizing adversarial collaborations in science is the scientist. Why would scholars make their own research more difficult by working with a finicky adversary who is likely to challenge certain research decisions when one could work alone or with more acquiescent collaborators? This is indeed a challenge, and some scholars will resist collaborating with adversaries for this reason—similar to why many scholars still resist open science practices. Scholars are rewarded for publishing their work in top tier journals and garnering many citations of their work, and unless journals start rewarding adversarial collaborations in

the publishing process as they do other open science practices (which we think they should), adversarial collaborations seem to be more of a barrier than a catalyst to high impact publications.

Nonetheless, there are self-interested reasons for scholars to participate in adversarial collaborations. First, there will be reputational benefits. Participating in adversarial collaborations signals to other scholars that one is an intellectually humble and prosocial scientist interested first and foremost in the pursuit of truth, rather than a dogmatic and deceptive scientist interested in seeking status. In the same way scientists are viewed favorably for participation in open science practices, scholars who participate in adversarial collaborations are likely to be viewed favorably.

Second, although adversarial collaborations could prove more time consuming or challenging than traditional projects (at least until people get the hang of it), we suspect the resultant science will be of higher *quality*, which will be more likely to withstand the test of time, garner more citations (because the truth is more useful for other scholars' hypothesizing), and benefit a scientist's prestige more in the long run. And although adversarial collaborations could slow the research process down in some ways (e.g., in designing methods), it might be more time efficient in the long run, as adversarial collaborators are likely to identify study weaknesses *before* the review process, correcting fatal flaws before they happen, which could expedite the process between initial submission and publication and save wasted effort on flawed papers that are difficult to publish.

Moreover, in the era of open science and replication, if a particular finding or theory is incorrect, it is likely that some scholar will *eventually* discover this—the theory will either fail to conceptually replicate or fail to make accurate predictions and cease to be useful to other scholars. It would be better for one's reputation to be the person to put one's theory to the most rigorous tests and potentially falsify it than to wait for someone else to do it and get the credit.

Participating in adversarial collaborations is an investment in one's long-term scientific contribution and reputation as well as an investment in maintaining the integrity of one's discipline. Scholars who balk run the risk of appearing to pursue short-term status (at the expense of long-term status) while possibly contributing to the demise of the discipline in which they are seeking status. When the social sciences lose esteem, so do social scientists. Scholars interested in adding long-term value to the world should thus be interested in participating in adversarial collaborations, despite the temporary discomfort.

Moreover, if adversarial collaborations were normalized (i.e., scholars were *expected* to resolve their scientific disagreements by working with disagreeing scholars), this could fundamentally alter the way scholars conceive of their mission. Rather than a competitive environment where Scholar A tries to prove Scholar B is wrong, scholarship could be cooperative, with scholars challenging one another and working together to come closer to the truth as part of a team effort. This may sound idealistic—and maybe it is—but if scientific institutions incentivized such an approach, it may be possible.

**Incentivizing Better Science** The disincentives for participating in open science practices (e.g., restricting one's ability to confirm one's hypothesis with statistically significant results) have been counteracted by other disincentives for *not* participating in open science practices (e.g., greater difficulty at the review stage and the embarrassment of others failing to replicate one's findings). Although plenty of scholars still resist open science practices, we consider the open science movement to be a monumental success. Many scholars have voluntarily restricted their own researcher degrees of freedom to obtain badges and other recognitions for being active participants in the open science movement, which theoretically should improve the quality of research outputs in the social sciences. Adversarial collaborations call on scholars to do the same thing: set aside their researcher degrees of freedom in order to conduct better science. Not only could this have reputational benefits for individual scholars, but also it is crucial for redeeming the reputation of the social sciences broadly, and thus scientific institutions (and institutions that rely on science) should be interested in incentivizing adversarial collaborations.

As part of the process of incentivizing adversarial collaborations, we would like to see reviewers and editors treat such efforts favorably in their publishing decisions. Adversarial collaborations could be featured as target articles in top journals and as keynote addresses at prestigious conferences. Scholars who participate in adversarial collaborations should be viewed favorably in hiring and promotion decisions. And funding organizations could support or even insist upon research questions being addressed within the context of adversarial collaborations. Insofar as funding organizations have less interest in advancing the careers of the scholars they fund and more interest in actually solving societal problems, funding organizations should be particularly interested in supporting adversarial collaborations for addressing their research questions.

Simultaneously, traditional approaches for resolving scientific disputes could be disincentivized. Rather than permitting and encouraging scholars to write papers and commentaries back and forth to little progress, reviewers, editors, and third-party observers could request adversarial collaborations for resolving ongoing disputes. Scholars who *participate* in scientific debates (challenging others' ideas and theories independently or exclusively with their collaboration ingroup) but *do not* participate in adversarial collaborations are perhaps worthy of some suspicion. Such scholars and research programs should not be rewarded with commentaries and easy publications in special issues and should not receive accolades. Refusal to participate in adversarial collaborations indicates some awareness that one's own theories do not stand up to more rigorous tests and itself may be a questionable research practice.

Adversarial collaborations likely require encouragement and support because the existing institutions and norms of the social sciences deter the open-mindedness and willingness to disprove one's theory that are necessary in adversarial collaborations. In that connection, we have just started the Adversarial Collaboration Project at University of Pennsylvania, a research initiative that supports adversarial collaborations among disagreeing scholars on policy-relevant social scientific disputes. For

example, we are exploring political bias in psychological research, whether the IAT predicts discriminatory behavior beyond explicit measures, the relationship between political ideology and cognitive rigidity, systematic self-censorship among social scientists, and the primary function of thought. Thus far, the majority of scholars we have invited to participate have graciously agreed and nearly all have expressed support for adversarial collaborations as a promising strategy for improving the quality of research outputs and making scientific progress. Moreover, all projects so far have proceeded cordially and productively, and initial conversations between intellectual adversaries have tended to reveal that disagreements are smaller and more nuanced than previously thought (based on readings of each other's work). We believe many scholars will find this to be the case and that their intellectual adversaries are not as scary or intimidating (or extreme and rigid) as they might suppose (although there will be exceptions). Through this initiative, we hope to discover best practices for conducting adversarial collaborations and to normalize such practices in order to improve the accuracy and efficiency of the social sciences and their reputation outside academia.

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# Chapter 33

## Debiasing Psychology: What Is to Be Done?



Richard E. Redding

Nikolai Chernyshevsky's novel, "What Is to Be Done?" (1863), which later influenced the course of the Russian revolution, offered a leftist vision of revolutionary reform by intellectuals in Russian society as the means to achieve a better society. The discipline of psychology likewise requires revolutionary reform to achieve an inclusive psychology that welcomes all ideological perspectives rather than being captured by a leftist or progressive ideology, which harms the science and profession, the clients that we serve, and our public credibility. (Just as it would be harmful if psychology were captured by a conservative or any other ideology.) In this chapter, I proffer some answers to the question, "What Is to Be done?" about ideological and political bias in psychology.

I begin by explaining why sociopolitical diversity among psychologists is beneficial for teaching, research, clinical practice, and policy work, and the necessity of having a critical mass of sociopolitically diverse (SPD) (i.e., those having other than liberal or progressive political views - particularly centrists, conservatives, and libertarians) faculty and students in psychology graduate programs. Psychology will always have a liberal or progressive political bias so long as it is, as numerous studies show, overwhelmingly dominated by those with a strong left-of-center bent (Redding, 2023, this volume). Reforming the science and profession of psychology to be less politically biased requires that we have greater sociopolitical viewpoint diversity in our ranks.

This chapter focuses on ways to attract SPD people into the field of psychology and nurture their professional development. SPD applicants for faculty positions face discrimination in faculty hiring and continued discrimination throughout their academic careers, so ways to recruit and support SPD faculty are discussed.

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Likewise, SPD students face obstacles in preparing for graduate study and gaining admission to graduate programs. Such obstacles include discrimination and systemic disincentives for them to do so, but ways to mentor and recruit SPD graduate students are discussed as well as ways to ensure that the graduate school environment is welcoming and inclusive of their sociopolitical values. Next, I discuss inclusive criteria and pedagogy for educating students about diverse perspectives along with heterodox educational programs and conferences. I also discuss new professional organizations that promote viewpoint diversity in the field and support support SPD scholars and practitioners, new heterodox journals and needed reforms in the journal peer-review and editing systems, and ways to promote ideological diversity and transparency in research. I conclude by discussing best practices and ethical norms for preventing sociopolitical bias against SPD clients and communities in clinical practice and applied psychological work.

## **Sociopolitical Diversity Benefits the Science and Profession of Psychology**

The American Psychological Association (APA), related associations such as the American Counseling Association, and the nation's graduate programs in psychology have for several decades made strong efforts to diversify the profession in terms of race, ethnicity, gender, and sexual orientation. Indeed, in 2009, the APA made diversity "a guiding principle" for the graduate programs it accredits (Bailey, 2020, p. 60), and graduate students are more racially and ethnically diverse than ever before, with 35% being minorities (Bailey, 2020, p. 60). Yet, the discipline is not sociopolitically diverse – it is exactly the opposite.

Writing about "Diversifying the Psychology Pipeline," the APA's Chief Executive Officer insists that "[e]very one of us must aid the effort to create a more diverse profession and discipline," and he notes that "*[o]ur science improves when we have researchers with diverse perspectives, and our practice is more effective when those delivering services reflect the groups and organizations we are serving*" (Evans, 2021, p. 10, emphasis added). "To not have a discipline that reflects the diversity of the people that we serve, it really does a disservice to our profession" (Huff, 2021a, b, p. 47, quoting professor Kevin Cokley). Cokley was referring to racial diversity, but the same is true with respect to sociopolitical diversity (see Redding, 2020). Because "[i]t is liberals who are privileged in psychology . . . it is liberals who must take the lead" in restructuring the discipline to be more welcoming of SPD people and ideas (Everett, 2015, p. 25).

Unfortunately, however, a commitment to greater sociopolitical diversity may be a tough sell to many psychologists, particularly when it comes to certain communities and ideas. For example, given the deeply-felt belief held by a good number of psychologists that conservatives/libertarians and conservative/libertarian ideas are inferior, morally and intellectually (see Funder, 2015; Redding, 2023). Indeed,

probably the greatest obstacle to achieving greater sociopolitical diversity in psychology is the (self-serving and somewhat tautological) belief by many psychologists that psychology is liberal or progressive because liberal ideas are the correct ones and an accompanying certain self-righteousness. However, *psychology is liberal because most psychologists are liberal (if most were conservative, no doubt the field would instead tilt to the right)*. Ironically, the most highly educated tend to be those most prone to engage in confirmation biases to bolster their political views (Honeycutt & Jussim, 2023). Psychologists may also believe that most psychologists are liberal simply because the traits they associate with being a good psychologist (e.g., open minded, scientifically minded, caring, egalitarian) are orthogonal to the values, personality traits, and cognitive style characteristics that they associate with political conservatives, or libertarians, or even centrists (at least relative to liberals) (Redding, 2023, this volume), although recent research challenges those assumptions about conservatives (see Costello, 2023, this volume; Ditto et al., 2018).

But the best way to persuade (mostly liberal or progressive) psychologists to diversify psychology is to frame the ways in which sociopolitical diversity will improve psychological science, increase psychology's credibility with the public and policymakers, and improve our ability to serve diverse clients and communities (see Redding & Cobb, 2023). Indeed, in the last several decades, a compelling literature (e.g., Crawford & Jussim, 2018; Duarte et al., 2015; Frisby, 2018; Inbar & Lammers, 2012; Redding, 2001, 2012, 2013, 2020; Tetlock, 1994) has documented the ways in which psychology has been captured by liberal or progressive politics, and how that biases, skews, or even corrupts the research, teaching, and policy work that psychologists do, how it politicizes clinical and applied work in ways that ill-serve not just conservative or centrist clients and communities but even progressive constituencies, and how it damages psychology's credibility with the public. The book in which this chapter appears (Frisby, 2023) is the latest and most comprehensive contribution to this literature, with 33 chapters discussing bias in the subdisciplines of psychology and various aspects of the science and profession, including its associations.

Diversifying and broadening psychology so that it is more inclusive of sociopolitically diverse people and ideas – in research, teaching, policy work, and practice – must necessarily begin with diversifying who is in the field, which is anything but diverse when it comes to sociopolitical views. Numerous surveys show that about 90–95% of psychologists are liberal, progressive, or socialist/Marxist, and in academia the imbalance is even greater, with professors and graduate students on the left outnumbering those on the right by about 15 to 1 (Redding, 2023, this volume). *Diversifying psychology must start with psychology faculties*, since it is the professors who, by far, have the greatest influence on the science and profession. They do most of the basic and applied research in the field, teach the future psychologists, who then go on to become researchers or practitioners, and are the ones most active in the legal and policy advocacy efforts of organizations like the APA and in their development of professional practice guidelines, ethical codes, and accreditation standards.

In addition, the lack of diversity among psychology faculties is largely responsible for the toxic environment in many psychology departments for SPD students and ideas, which deters SPD students from pursuing graduate study and academic careers in psychology. In fact, a “critical mass” of SPD faculty and students is the *sine quo non* for recruiting and retaining them (a chicken and egg problem, to be sure) and for having a welcoming and inclusive environment where they do not feel alienated or isolated (see Everett, 2015; Niemann & Maruyama, 2005) and can feel comfortable expressing their sociopolitical ideas without fear of social and professional marginalization (see Everett, 2015; Inbar & Lammers, 2015).

Moreover, a critical mass of minority viewpoints is necessary for cross-ideological collaborations (see Clark & Tetlock, 2023, this volume) as well as ideological diversity in research, given that it is human nature to conduct research from one’s own ideological perspective. Indeed, professors’ political views influence their choice of research topic and perspective, and it is human nature to frame research agendas and interpret findings in ways that confirm your political beliefs and/or disconfirm opposing beliefs (Honeycutt & Jussim, 2023, this volume; Redding, 2012). It is not an exaggeration to say that *psychology is mostly liberal because most psychologists are liberal*. Students and faculty “belong[ing] to cohesive communities (i.e., those with strongly shared moral beliefs) are more likely to view those beliefs as objectively grounded and less likely to tolerate divergence” (Wright, 2015, p. 44) and to engage in scientific groupthink (see Redding, 2012, 2013). On the other hand, when there is a critical mass of researchers investigating issues from alternative perspectives, then it becomes respectable and acceptable to do so (Alexander, 2019). Without a critical mass of SPD faculty and students in a department, we are unlikely to achieve a more politically and intellectually inclusive research program and an academic climate that attracts rather than deters SPD people from entering the academy, who will continue to feel too isolated to manifest their sociopolitical identity in research, academic life, or professional activities.

But what does “diversity” mean in practice? As psychology professor Robert Sellers, also the Chief Diversity Officer at the University of Michigan says, “*diversity* is where everyone is invited to the party, *equity* means that everyone gets to contribute to the playlist, and *inclusion* means that everyone has the opportunity to dance” (Sellers, 2020, emphasis added). This means that SPD students are recruited and admitted to graduate school and SPD candidates hired for faculty positions, that SPD students and faculty feel free to express their identities, values, and interests in psychology departments, and that SPD students and faculty are welcomed and included in departmental and university life. Each is discussed in turn below.

## **Diversity Starts with the Faculty: Hiring and Supporting SPD Professors**

Recruiting and hiring SPD faculty begin with advertising for the open faculty position. Advertisements, when highlighting the institution’s commitment to diversity and nondiscrimination in hiring, should also include political orientation and

viewpoint diversity within the definition of diversity and in the nondiscrimination statement. But apparently only a handful of institutions do so (Stevens & Mashek, 2017). Many institutions require applicants to submit a diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) statement, describing their commitment to diversity, how they have contributed to diversity in the past, and the ways they would do so if they became a faculty member at the institution (Brown, 2019; Paul & Maranto, 2023). Requiring such statements is largely designed to signal to minority candidates that the institution seeks to diversify the faculty and to ensure that faculty hired will contribute to improving outcomes for minority students (Brown, 2019). Some feel that diversity statements, as a practical matter, operate as “loyalty oaths” (Thompson, 2019) allowing committees to screen out candidates who do not have progressive political views (Brown, 2019; Flier, 2019; Paul & Maranto, 2023). Again, schools should include political and viewpoint diversity within their definition of diversity and in their rubrics for evaluating diversity statements. Many schools have not defined what is meant by “diversity” for purposes of DEI statements nor have they set forth criteria for evaluating such statements (Brown, 2019), but more are doing so. UCLA, for example, has developed a rubric for assessing candidate contributions to DEI (Paul & Maranto, 2023).

When possible, sociopolitical diversity on faculty selection committees should improve the prospects of hiring SPD candidates (see Galinsky et al., 2015; Michel, 2017), particularly given the strong homophilic tendency of faculties to admit or hire people like themselves (Bowman & Bastedo, 2017). Most universities require their faculty hiring committees to undergo training on best hiring practices, which frequently includes training on implicit bias with respect to race, ethnicity, gender, or sexual orientation. But especially in view of research showing that sociopolitical bias is often stronger than racial bias (Redding & Cobb, 2023), these trainings should also include training on bias vis-a-vis sociopolitical views. Many psychologists have negative views of conservatives in particular, which may drive psychologists’ intentional or unintentional discriminatory behavior toward them. Thus, sensitivity training on sociopolitical diversity based on Haidt’s groundbreaking work on moral diversity (e.g., Haidt, 2012; Haidt & Graham, 2007) as well as recent research findings that challenge the view that conservatives are more authoritarian or closed minded than liberals (Costello, 2023; Ditto et al., 2018), for example, would be useful.

Should departments engage in the affirmative-action hiring of sociopolitical minorities in psychology (e.g., conservatives, libertarians, centrists)? Affirmative action is designed to remedy past or current discriminatory practices leading to the underrepresentation of certain groups and/or to achieve diversity in the school or workplace, with the rationale for affirmative action hiring likely being the strongest in educational institutions. With respect to remedying discrimination, we know from recent surveys of academic psychologists that they admit that they discriminate against political conservatives in faculty hiring (Honeycutt & Freberg, 2016; Inbar & Lammers, 2012). With respect to the goal of achieving diversity, we know that SPD people are severely underrepresented in academic psychology (Redding, 2023, this volume). Yet, affirmative action per se, which is illegal in some states

(and perhaps, legally speaking, inapplicable to non-protected classes) and which most Court watchers believe is likely to be struck down as unconstitutional in the affirmative action case (*Schuette v. Coalition to Defend Affirmative Action*) now pending before the Supreme Court, is probably not advisable.

Instead, we simply need efforts to attract and encourage SPD students to attend graduate school (see next section) and to recruit sociopolitically diverse faculty candidates. A candidate's sociopolitical diversity (when known, or pertinent – e.g., he or she does politically relevant research, policy-relevant research, or research on social issues) should be viewed as a “plus” faculty in hiring. (This does not mean, however, that departments should hire unqualified applicants or ones that are substantially less accomplished than non-diverse applicants. Using diversity as a “plus” factor entails only a modest tipping of the scale in favor of the diverse applicant.) The APA has long supported affirmative action, both for the nation and for the APA and the graduate programs it accredits, filing *amicus* briefs in the courts and issuing position statements in favor of affirmative action along with publishing in its journals numerous articles promoting affirmative action and diversity. For example, a brochure published over 20 years ago by the APA's Office of Communications, “How affirmative action benefits America,” discusses the importance of preserving affirmative action and makes the case that “[d]iversity helps to enrich the lives of all Americans in many ways, including through improved learning, better health, and safer communities” (American Psychological Association, 1999). Thus, psychology faculties and the APA should welcome affirmative efforts – short of affirmative action per se – to recruit SPD faculty members.

But once a SPD junior professor is hired, he or she may face obstacles to professional advancement and an unwelcoming or even hostile environment in their department, particularly if he or she does research, or teaches on topics from a sociopolitically diverse perspective (Honeycutt & Jussim, 2023, this volume; Jussim, 2012; Redding, 2023, this volume; Stevens et al., 2018) or, as one colleague put, “getting into trouble simply for speaking and acting like a conservative.” Maranto and Woessner (2012, p. 5, emphasis added) counsel that because “conservative professors run the risk of being stereotyped as a ‘typical’ right-winger . . . when taking a new position, conservative academics should lay low for a while . . . young conservative scholars have to reveal their underlying political disposition strategically. *Ideally, if the academy becomes more ideologically diverse, few academics will have to hide in the political shadows.*” Yet, hiding in the political closet can be psychologically damaging (see Redding, 2020; Redding & Cobb, 2023) and no doubt contributes to psychology's difficulty in recruiting and retaining SPD talent (see Puritty et al., 2017). As Wood (2017, p. 92) explains, “[t]o navigate to a tenured position by means of disguise imposes a profound cost on a scholar and one that is seldom paid in full the day tenure is granted. By then, the faculty member is enmeshed in relationships and understandings that are not easily undone without risk of catastrophe. The usual result is that a newly tenured faculty member stays under cover and gradually modifies his views to accommodate the expectations of his peers.”

New faculty wishing to work from sociopolitically diverse perspectives should be affirmatively encouraged to do so, and such work should be seen as “mainstream” within the department, so they do not feel like outsiders (see Huff, 2021a, b). Some institutions require faculty to include diversity statements, outlining the ways they have contributed to diversity in their teaching, research, and/or service, in the review packets they must submit when applying for promotion or tenure (Brown, 2019). Contributions to sociopolitical and viewpoint diversity (in research, teaching, advocacy, clinical and applied work, or service) should not only be welcomed by psychology departments but sought after in such diversity statements.

## **The Psychology Career Pipeline: Recruiting and Nurturing SPD Students**

To begin, we must recognize that getting buy-in and active engagement on diversity efforts from departmental and institutional leaders and holding them accountable for outcomes are the *sine quo non* for effective diversity programs (Dobbin et al., 2015; E.A.B., 2022). Graduate programs that do an exemplary job in recruiting and retaining minority students have “a high level of institutional, administrative, and/or faculty commitment and support for a diverse student body” (Rogers & Molina, 2016, p. 153).

### ***Mentoring and Recruiting SPD Students for Graduate School***

The graduate school pipeline begins at the undergraduate level (perhaps even earlier in high school, when over 300,000 high school students take their first psychology course, Clay, 2022), when students are forming their career aspirations. Research shows that liberal college students are more interested in pursuing a Ph.D. degree and are more likely to do so than SPD students, even though liberal and conservative students are equally qualified for graduate school (Fosse et al., 2014; Woessner & Kelly-Woessner, 2009). SPD students face a variety of obstacles to entering the pipeline for graduate school and ultimately a career in psychology. SPD college students report lacking academic role models, fewer opportunities to do research with professors, and more distant relationships with their professors (Woessner & Kelly-Woessner, 2009; Woessner, 2012). Whether in college or graduate school, SPD students have few SPD professors with whom they can work with on research projects and rely on for support and mentoring. These disadvantages make SPD students both less inclined toward and less well prepared for graduate study (Woessner & Kelly-Woessner, 2009).

Psychology programs around the country have developed various initiatives that mentor and prepare undergraduate minority students for graduate school, and such

programs could also include or be developed for SPD students. Such initiatives include outreach and mentoring programs, summer research boot camps, and assisting students in applying to graduate school (Huff, 2021a, b). Although there is not a literature on how to recruit SPD students to attend graduate school, strategies for doing so with respect to minority students can be applied to the recruitment of SPD students. Effective strategies include (1) having minority faculty and graduate students go on recruiting trips to schools with a high percentage of minority students, (2) hosting summer research programs for minority college students, and (3) providing scholarships and other financial assistance. Moreover, it is important to have a critical mass of minority faculty (and graduate students) who can serve as mentors, role models, and recruiters, and with whom students can work with on research and other projects (Rogers & Molina, 2016 Vasquez & Jones, 2006). Similarly, faculty and graduate students can go on recruiting trips to colleges and universities enrolling a high percentage of SPD students. Graduate psychology programs can host summer research programs for such students, provide financial assistance for them to attend graduate school, and ensure that they have faculty and peer mentors. But we must ensure that SPD students interested in graduate study or in working with professors on research projects are not ignored. Students may be encouraged or discouraged to apply to graduate school as a function of the response they receive from prospective graduate school professors, who may pay less attention to the overtures and applications from members of marginalized groups, as shown by Milkman et al.'s (2015) study.

### *Inclusive Graduate Admissions*

Posselt's (2016) sociological study of departmental graduate admissions committee deliberations sheds light on how committees screen applicants. Committees place a premium on whether there is a match between the applicant's research interests and those of faculty (and, thus, the applicant's ability to support faculty research) and on attracting accomplished minority students. Notably, selecting graduate students is "about creating their programs' futures by selecting new members who would uphold the core, identity, and status of the group . . . faculty . . . did not privilege applicants who would push their elite communities in bold new directions. Instead, they favor students who would 'fit' well in the department's culture" (Posselt, 2016, p. 73). In this regard, faculty show considerable homophily – i.e., favoring applicants who were most like themselves in background and interests and who best fit with the department's current culture.

Considering the factors important to admissions committees, it is easy to see why SPD applicants are at a disadvantage in graduate admissions. They do not have sociopolitical views in common with committee members, they may not share the same research interests as faculty, and they may be perceived as not fitting well with the department's sociopolitical culture. More sociopolitically diverse admissions committees should result in less homophily in admissions decisions (see Posselt,

2016), though given the dearth of SPD faculty in most psychology departments, it often will be difficult to have such diversity. As with faculty hiring committees, admissions committees should be trained on implicit bias with respect to sociopolitical identities and values, particularly given the studies showing discrimination against conservative students in graduate admissions (Redding, 2023, this volume). Additionally, faculty should look for ways that SPD students can contribute to their research and other projects by bringing to bear their diverse perspectives.

The question posed earlier with respect to faculty hiring can be asked with respect to graduate student admissions: should we institute affirmative action for SPD students? The Supreme Court has said that the constitutionality of affirmative action in education rests on the educational benefits that flow from having a diverse student body, and to a lesser extent when it comes to graduate admissions, the benefits of producing a diverse cadre of professionals who can serve diverse populations (*Regents of California v. Bakke*, 1978). A diverse student body produces educational benefits mainly because students are exposed “to the ideas and mores of [diverse] students” and the “robust exchange of ideas” that results among students having “a wide variety of interests, talents, and perspectives . . . People do not learn very much when they are surrounded only by the likes of themselves” (*Regents of California v. Bakke*, 1978, p. 313). In addition, a “critical mass” of underrepresented minority students is necessary for minority students to feel comfortable expressing their view in class and to ameliorate their feelings of isolation (*Grutter v. Bollinger*, 2003). But as with faculty hiring, affirmative action per se is probably unwise. Instead, we need affirmative reaching-out efforts in the mentoring and recruitment of promising SPD undergraduate students for graduate study. In addition, as in faculty hiring, sociopolitical and viewpoint diversity should be considered a “plus” factor in graduate admissions. (Oftentimes, an applicant’s sociopolitical views are inferable from what is listed on his or her resume – e.g., college clubs and organizations, internships, and research projects. So long as the reason for asking is not to discriminate against the applicant, admissions committees can inquire about such activities, ask applicants what sociopolitical or viewpoint perspectives they might wish to engage when doing so is relevant to their field or research interests, or ask applicants – *ala* a kind of diversity statement – if they could broadly share their sociopolitical perspectives or life experiences.)

### ***Fostering an Inclusive Graduate School Environment***

It does little good to successfully attract and admit SPD students to graduate programs if they fail to graduate. Research shows that critical to the retention of minority students is providing a welcoming and inclusive environment for them, which requires having: (1) faculty committed to recruiting and retaining minority students, (2) a critical mass of minority faculty and students, (3) faculty and graduate student mentors for minority students, (4) opportunities to work with faculty on diversity issues research, and (5) diversity and multicultural courses and an ethnically

inclusive curriculum (Rogers & Molina, 2016; Vasquez & Jones, 2006). All of these strategies can be applied to SPD students. (Ways to have to an inclusive curriculum for SPD students and ideas are discussed in the next section).

We know from empirical research and anecdotal accounts that the graduate school environment – how welcoming, inclusive, and supporting it is, and whether students have a sense of belonging – plays a crucial role in minority student retention and success. The same is true with respect to SPD students. Unfortunately, SPD students and professors report that the academic environment is often unwelcoming, exclusionary, and hostile to them (Redding, 2023, this volume).

SPD students should be made to feel welcome on their first day in graduate school, during the orientation session for incoming students. Just as orientations emphasize the diversity and inclusiveness of the program with respect to race, ethnicity, gender, and sexual orientation, so too should it emphasize the diversity and inclusiveness of the program with respect to sociopolitical values and viewpoint diversity.

Having mentors who are supportive of the sociopolitical identity and research interests of SPD students is crucial. Research consistently shows that student-mentor relationships are key in shaping students' educational experiences (see Chambliss, 2014), and that faculty and peer mentors are particularly important for ensuring minority student success. Rogers and Molina (2016) found that providing mentoring and social support was among the most important factors contributing to minority student retention in psychology graduate programs. Graduate students say the same thing and emphasize the importance of having allies and mentors among minority faculty and fellow graduate students (Rogers & Molina, 2016). Again, the same is true for another minority in psychology – SPD students.

Unfortunately, SPD students tend to have few academic role models and more distant relationships with their (mostly liberal) professors (Woessner & Kelly-Woessner, 2009). Moreover, SPD students and faculty often feel that they must “pass” as a member of academia's liberal sociopolitical super-majority in order to succeed (Shields & Dunn, 2016). As one psychology professor recounts, “As I began my graduate studies in psychology, I faced an important choice: Should I attempt to hide my own conservative political beliefs? Indeed, I was specifically advised by more than one social psychology professor to not disclose my own right-of-center politics if I wish to be successful in social psychology” (Everett, 2015, p. 25). SPD graduate students and junior professors are often advised not to reveal their sociopolitical identity if they want to succeed in graduate school, land an academic job, or get tenure (Maranto & Woessner, 2012; Shearmur, 1995; Shields & Dunn, 2016). Shearmur (1995) describes the rock and a hard place that such students find themselves in, having to “steer the difficult pathway” (p. 16) between staying true to themselves and pursuing the issues that interest them while not alienating the professors upon whom their academic and career success depends:

[Y]ou face the interesting intellectual task of developing your concerns in ways that will count as achievements in disciplines which will, typically, be dominated by people with whom you are in disagreement . . . You have to do it in this way when power is in the hands of people who oppose you . . . many editors of scholarly journals and faculty who are on

appointments or tenure committees will, for the most part, not be sympathetic to [your ideas] . . . life in the university can be frustrating because [you] will be surrounded by people who do not share [your] views . . . Don't volunteer your views . . . This may be very difficult advice for most of us to follow because we chose to pursue a career relating to ideas, and we care passionately about them . . . If you label yourself as [the sociopolitical other] you are likely to invoke a whole set of stereotypes, and everything you say is going to be interpreted in light of them . . . (Shearmur, 1995, p. 13–15).

SPD students' values and identities are regularly under assault in liberal psychology departments, where it is *liberal students and professors* who enjoy the privileges, such as not having to associate with colleagues who dislike or mistrust you because of your political views, not having to hide your political views, not having your political views routinely derided by colleagues, feeling “welcomed and ‘normal’” in the academy, being able to do research on politically charged issues without fear of censor or cancellation, being able to criticize colleagues' research on politically charged issues without fear of being called authoritarian or bigoted, and not being derided by colleagues if you present research at departmental colloquia that validates your political views (Jussim, 2012). SPD students are frequently on the receiving end of microaggressions (see Redding, 2020) by the liberal super-majority (Redding, 2023, this volume), which makes graduate school seem like a hostile environment.

Consider the recollection of one psychologist, who says: “I remember experiencing a ‘strong ethos’ of liberal politics in my undergraduate and graduate education. Professors would often make denigrating comments about conservatives and/or Republicans. The conservative point of view was never given in assigned readings. This bias also existed in most of [my fellow] students' views as well. As a person who held more conservative views, I always felt uncomfortable, and felt under constant pressure to ‘self-censor’ myself – remembering that it was a very bad feeling to fear that what you might say could be taken negatively. I never raised my hand in class to offer an alternative viewpoint” (Frisby, 2018, p. 180). Relatedly, sometimes the research pursued by their professors, especially those working in social psychology and certain applied subfields, is alienating to SPD students, for it paints conservatives and conservatism in a negative light (or ignores them and their views altogether) while being laudatory of liberals and liberalism (see Costello, 2023, this volume; Redding, 2023, this volume). To analogize to the racial context, consider how one African-American student felt at a law school with a faculty member who published anti-affirmative action scholarship: “Every day I was in [the professor's class], I felt my race was on trial. I felt alienated, angry, intimidated, and disconnected. These feelings were common among other students of color in the class” (Fox-Davis, 2010, p. 98).

These feelings of alienation, marginalization, and lack of respect, which are not uncommon among SPD students vis-à-vis the liberal academic environment (Redding, 2023, this volume), highlight the importance of having a welcoming and inclusive departmental environment for these students. Entering into a profession “is not just to take up a technical task, but [is] to place oneself inside a cultural frame that defines and even determines a very great part of one's life” (Posselt,

2016, p. 74, quoting Clifford Gertz). Moreover, just like their race or gender, people's sociopolitical values are often an important part of their identity (Redding & Cobb, 2023). We need to ensure that the cultural frame that SPD students enter when beginning their psychology career is welcoming and comfortable for them. Addressing the reasons for the limited progress in attracting and retaining minority students in STEM fields, a recent commentary in *Science* (with many of the authors drawing on their own experiences as minority students in STEM), makes the case that the problem lies in the lack of inclusive educational environments for minority students that encourage them to embrace their identities in their academic and professional life (Puritty et al., 2017). They also point out that minority students are the victims of microaggressions, stereotypes, and implicit bias, which produces feelings of exclusion and the felt need to assume a different identity for graduate school, where they also often feel unsupported in the social justice projects they may wish to undertake.

However, “[e]ncouraging [minority] students to embrace their identities” is critical to inclusion . . . an inclusive institution values an individual’s identity and encourages the relationship between cultural identity and work” (Puritty et al., 2017, p. 1101–1102). All of this fosters a sense of belonging, which is impeded by experiences of implicit bias, but which is important to student success and satisfaction with their academic experience (Hausmann et al., 2009). Indeed, the graduate school to career pipeline is often “leaky,” with substantial attrition of minority students, precisely because many feel isolated, alienated, and unvalued in their graduate program (Huff, 2021a, b). Again, providing effective mentoring and emotional support is key to making students feel welcome and included (Huff, 2021a, b), and mentors can provide a safe space and support system for SPD students to express their sociopolitical identity, views, and interests.

## **Inclusive Curricula and Pedagogy**

Unfortunately, for the most part, undergraduate and graduate courses in psychology expose students only to the prevailing ideological and sociopolitical orthodoxies in the field. This is especially true for topics relating to race, gender, sexuality, and sexual orientation and for policy- or politically-relevant topics. Textbooks often fail to present such topics in a balanced way. Most introductory psychology textbooks contain inaccurate information about intelligence, for example. Many are critical of the traditional “g” theory of intelligence and present alternative theories such as Gardner’s “multiple intelligences theory” but fail to point out the extensive empirical evidence for “g” and the relative lack of empirical evidence supporting the alternative theories (Warne et al., 2018). Surveying introductory psychology textbooks, Del Guidice (2003) found that most downplayed or completely ignored the research on gender differences in personality and cognition, preferring instead to emphasize egalitarian notions, if they discussed gender differences at all. Although many textbooks include sections explaining the policy implications of psychological theories

and research findings, virtually all such discussions present liberal or progressive policies, or at the very least, ones favoring government programs and interventions. Thus, textbook authors should strive to be more balanced in discussing research findings and their policy implications.

This also highlights the fact that teaching is a “persuasive enterprise” (Friedrich & Douglass, 1998). Professors aim to convince students of certain foundational theories and facts in their subject matter, and whether intentionally or unintentionally (e.g., by the course content chosen), to persuade students to accept their preferred perspectives on certain issues. Consider again the controversial topic of intelligence (Friedrich & Douglass, 1998). Students will come away with a very different take on the topic as a function of whether the professor emphasizes test bias, genetic studies, “g” theories of intelligence, multiple intelligences theory, *The Bell Curve*, or the critiques of *The Bell Curve* and related perspectives.

The declaration of the American Association of University Professors (1915, p. 298) counsels that professors “should, in dealing with [controversial] subjects, set forth justly, without suppression or inuendo, the divergent opinions of other investigators.” Friedrich and Douglas (1998, p. 554) propose a model of “democratic ethics and significant choice” whereby professors teach students about different sides of an issue, allowing them to engage in open inquiry and debate and to choose for themselves, without penalty or favor in grading, what they want to believe. Moreover, professors should disclose any persuasive agendas they may have. Course assignments and examinations should be structured to allow students to argue for various sides of an issue or to explain the arguments supporting a particular perspective without having to endorse it (Friedrich & Douglas, 1998). Redding and Silander’s (2023) *Sociopolitical competence guidelines for psychologists* includes an ethics code for teaching, providing that: “In teaching and postgraduate education, psychologists should explore sociopolitical values as an important aspect of diversity. They should present diverse perspectives and fairly represent the range of research and opinion on these topics, and provide opportunities for students to voice their opinions without fear of discrimination or censorship. Psychologists do not discriminate against students or trainees . . . on the basis of their sociopolitical views.” Perhaps course evaluations should include several questions asking whether students felt free to voice their opinions in class, whether the professor imposed his or her opinions on students, and whether different sides of controversial issues were presented.

Course components or entire courses (for advanced undergraduate or graduate students) on “heterodox psychology,” “ideological and political bias in psychology,” “open-inquiry in psychology,” “challenging orthodoxies in psychology,” or “controversies in psychology,” which offer students alternative perspectives on key issues and controversies in psychology and teach them about the problem of bias and how to reduce it, could substantially broaden and enrich students’ education. They could provide a safe space for students to discuss unpopular ideas, and perhaps motivate SPD students to enter the field, especially since such students report lower levels of satisfaction with their social science courses (Woessner & Kelly-Woessner, 2009). The book in which this chapter appears, *Ideological and Political*

*Bias in Psychology: Nature, Scope and Solutions*, could be used as a textbook or reader in such courses. The *Society for Open Inquiry in Behavioral Science* website ([www.soibs.com](http://www.soibs.com)) also includes syllabi for heterodox courses on various topics in behavioral science, and the *Foundation for Individual Rights in Education* website ([www.thefire.org](http://www.thefire.org)) includes a free speech syllabus database for courses in various disciplines. Additionally, the *OpenMind* platform ([www.openmindplatform.org](http://www.openmindplatform.org)) provides an interactive program, designed by social psychologists, for use in classrooms to facilitate open discussion and improve critical thinking and open mindedness on politically charged issues.

Psychology departments, possibly in collaboration with related departments, could occasionally hire visiting scholars or public intellectuals or practitioners who are sociopolitically diverse or who do work that is sociopolitically heterodox, to teach in the department for a year (perhaps substituting for a faculty member who is on leave or to fill a temporary teaching need). Such visiting professorships (which are commonplace in law schools, for instance) provide students and faculty with fresh perspectives. Recognizing that its school had a dearth of sociopolitical diversity on its faculty, along with a survey finding that conservative students at the university felt intimidated about discussing political views in class (see Shields & Dunn, 2016), the University of Colorado instituted a yearly “visiting scholar of conservative thought and policy” program in its college of arts and sciences that brings to the campus each year a different high-profile conservative scholar to teach courses, give talks to campus and local groups, and engage in scholarly activities (Kueppers, 2016). And, of course, departments can easily and with little or no cost invite guest speakers to share their heterodox perspectives.

## **Heterodox Educational Programs and Conferences**

Model platforms for educating and mentoring diverse young talent outside of university settings have been the programs sponsored by the Institute for Humane Studies (IHS) and the Intercollegiate Studies Institute (ISI), with the latter having student chapters at colleges around the country and providing scholarships and fellowships for SPD students to attend graduate school. Such organizations provide a networking and support system for SPD students (Binder & Wood, 2012), particularly those with a scholarly bent who may be interested in attending graduate school. Both hold summer seminars and leadership institutes for advanced college students who apply for the all-expenses paid competitive program, where students attend intellectually rich seminars presenting conservative or libertarian perspectives led by professors and thought leaders in the humanities, social studies, journalism, or public policy. Many of today’s prominent public intellectuals and leaders attended their programs when they were students. These models could be extended to psychology; in fact, the IHS may soon include the discipline of psychology among its educational programs.

Heterodox conferences can also play an important role in educating and nurturing young talent. In 2018 and 2020, I organized “Heterodox Psychology” conferences, each attended by about 125 people and lasting for 3 days. In addition to professors and practitioners, many of the conference attendees were graduate and postdoctoral students who were invited to attend the conference based on nominations solicited from heterodox professors teaching in graduate psychology programs. Most wanted an academic career in the disciplines of social, evolutionary, or clinical psychology. The conferences provided an opportunity for the next generation of young scholars to learn about heterodox research programs and perspectives and to interact, in a relatively small group setting, with leaders in the field who have developed important heterodox subfields, theories, and research programs. Professor Geher observed that the “scholars attending this conference were brave – they had taken steps, at some point or another, to ask questions and provide information that has been, in one way or another, inconsistent with prevailing narratives in the field. They were bonded by the fact that they were more interested in advancing knowledge than in advancing a particular narrative or political agenda. And they shared a concern regarding modern academia – namely that the current political climate within academia is more stifling of work that challenges prevailing narratives than ever” (Geher, 2018). The conferences provided a safe and welcoming space for students to engage with heterodox ideas and scholars, something that often is unavailable even to professors. In this regard, consider that politically conservative members of the Society for Personality and Social Psychology rated the Society’s conferences and events as being less safe, less representative of their social identities, and less conducive to freedom of expression of diverse ideas and opinion than did their liberal counterparts, according to a recent member survey conducted by the Society (Society for Personality & Social Psychology, 2019).

The heterodox psychology conferences included keynote addresses by eminent psychologists, panel sessions, paper presentations, “hack-a-thon” workshops on ways to promote viewpoint diversity, and sessions on professional development issues for young heterodox researchers. (The conference programs can be found on the website of the Society for Open Inquiry in Behavioral Science: [www.soibs.com](http://www.soibs.com).) The following is a sampling of the general-interest topics included at the conferences: ideological influences on psychological research; approaches to debiasing science; heterodox psychology on the college campus; career advice for the aspiring heterodox researcher; developing a heterodox research program; being a rabble rouser in science; academic freedom and pedagogy in a sensitive age; dangerous ideas: are there some topics we shouldn’t study?; bringing heterodoxy to undergraduates; checking our blindspots: bias across the political spectrum; conservatives and people of faith in psychology; and, making the heterodox orthodox: communicating across political divides.

And, the following is a sampling of the range of subfields and topic areas, which included the following: myths of addiction; should the mental health professions weigh-in on political issues; challenging orthodoxies in gender and sexuality research; cultural competence: a politicized ethical mandate; political ideology in social psychology; what happens when you talk about intelligence research in

education; challenging the research on implicit bias and stereotyping; neuroscience applied to legal and public policy; the heterodox discipline of evolutionary psychology (largely established by two speakers at the conference, Leda Cosmides and John Tooby, who did so while they were junior professors).

Research papers, most authored or co-authored by students, were also presented on a range of topics, such as: gender fluid: unconventional conclusions from cross-cultural research; diversity in diversity preferences; beyond Adorno and Altmeyer: chasing authoritarianism's lost heterogeneity; trigger warning: empirical evidence ahead; improving social psychology through political diversity: a case study of abortion attitudes; when politically incorrect language promotes authenticity; ideologically based opposition to sex differences research from institutional research ethics boards; critical theory and victim ideology; challenging orthodoxies in clinical assessment; greater concern over female than male suffering; the role of cognitive conflict in doing good science; how to best frame intellectual pluralism in the behavioral sciences; and thinking left and right: a meta-analytic review of ideological symmetries in the need for certainty.

After the conferences, attendees were asked to complete a detailed questionnaire. Across the two conferences, the average political orientation of attendees (measured on a 7-point Likert scale, with "7" denoting a very conservative orientation) was a 3.6 (SD = 1.1). In terms of their overall satisfaction with the conferences, the average rating across the two conferences was a 5.8 (with "7" denoting being extremely satisfied). Thus, the average political orientation of conference attendees was slightly left-of-center and attendees were fairly satisfied with the conferences. There was only a modest correlation ( $r = 0.24$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ,  $n = 102$ ) between level of satisfaction with the conferences and having a conservative political orientation. Even though the conferences highlighted sociopolitical views and paradigms outside the current *zeitgeist* of psychology and, in so doing, necessarily included conservative and libertarian perspectives, it seems that both liberal and conservative students were well served by the conferences.

According to participants' qualitative responses, they benefitted from the conferences primarily in that they: (1) met and heard from others in the field who are also interested in heterodox ideas, (2) provided important networking opportunities, and (3) gave them confidence to research and teach about heterodox ideas. The following representative comments describe these benefits:

This is the first time I have experienced a politically diverse conference.

The environment to present 'risky' ideas was great and interesting.

The chance to meet, network, and learn from like-minded researchers was somewhat life changing as far as my time in graduate school.

I have solidified and formed new relationships with fellow open-minded scholars. These relationships are important for job opportunities, research opportunities, and selecting tenure letter writers.

The mere fact that there are others who share my heterodox political views gives me more confidence and feels like I have something of a support network.

This conference will affect the way I mentor new people in the field. Being aware of our massive bias will also change the way I consume information.

I learned a great deal about heterodoxy. The information on effectively communicating controversial ideas and across political divides was the most helpful.

I don't have enough words to articulate how much going to this conference meant to me, especially as an early-career researcher.

The student and post-doc attendees of the first conference were contacted a year later and asked to complete another questionnaire to assess the impact the conference had on their professional development. Eighty-one percent agreed with the statement that they had stayed in contact with people they had met at the conference, and 77% agreed that it had potentially assisted them in networking and career development. As one attendee said, "I am now connected to numerous inspirational academics." Fifty-eight percent agreed that what they learned at the conference influenced their research. "I have a list of ideas after listening to all the amazing presentations," one said. Fifty-two percent agreed that what they learned at the conference influenced their teaching. A student reported "including more references to diverse viewpoints and research in my lectures." Fifty-two percent also agreed that it empowered them to voice and discuss heterodox ideas with colleagues. "It gave me the confidence to talk about heterodox ideas," one said. Most (90%) agreed that the conference influenced their thinking about issues relating to viewpoint diversity in psychology. As one attendee explained, "This is the conference I have learned the most from during my graduate student career. I am now even more aware of the biases that I (and others in my field) may have, and I try my best not to be influenced by them in my writing, research, and teaching."

The conferences led to some important research collaborations, producing journal articles and book chapters on heterodox topics as a result of the relationships formed at the conference. One recent graduate was inspired to write an Op-Ed presenting a heterodox psychology perspective that was published in the *Wall Street Journal* and, happily, several students were offered postdoctoral positions by professors who they met at the conference.

## New Professional Organizations

New professional organizations can play important roles in promoting viewpoint diversity in psychology and in supporting SPD talent, particularly since existing organizations have been critiqued by many for not doing so or doing the reverse (e.g., Ferguson, 2023; Silander & Tarescavage, 2023, both this volume). Similar organizations have significantly altered the academic and professional landscape in other fields. The best example is the Federalist Society, established in 1981 by law students in reaction to the prevailing liberal bias in law schools and legal scholarship. The Harvard chapter "hoped to 'help create a friendly atmosphere for conservatives on campus'" (Hicks, 2006, p. 656). During that time conservative perspectives "just weren't permitted for discussion" at the law school, and "there

was a lot of silencing going on” (Hicks, 2006, p. 647). The Federalist Society quickly grew to include chapters at every law school and in many localities throughout the country. It now has a very significant influence on the legal profession (Avery & McLaughlin, 2013; Scherer & Miller, 2009), and the Society is credited with shifting the sociopolitical environment in law schools more toward the center (Hicks, 2006). Law school chapters sponsor debates and prominent speakers at their schools and provide a networking and professional development platform for students. Additionally, along with the John M. Olin Foundation, it sponsored promising young conservative or libertarian lawyers interested in careers as law professors with a one- to two-year fully funded visiting professorship position at a law school. It is through these fellowships that some law professors first got their foot in the legal academy (Cady, 2016). Similar organizations have been formed in medical (the Benjamin Rush Society) and business schools (the Adam Smith Society (Avery & McLaughlin, 2013)).

There now are organizations defending and promoting open inquiry, free speech, and academic freedom in higher education, such as the Foundation for Individual Rights in Expression (FIRE) and the Alliance for Academic Freedom (AAF). In 2015, the psychologist Jonathan Haidt founded *Heterodox Academy*, “as a response to the rise of orthodoxy within scholarly culture – when people fear shame, ostracism, or any other form of social or professional retaliation for questioning or challenging a commonly held idea” ([www.heterodoxacademy.org](http://www.heterodoxacademy.org)). Although it has grown to have a membership of over 5000 academics representing the full range of academic disciplines, psychologists predominate among its members.

Recently, organizations have been founded to promote viewpoint diversity and open inquiry specifically in psychology and the behavioral sciences. The *Society for Open Inquiry in the Behavioral Sciences* was founded out of concerns that “[i]ncreasingly, orthodoxies, sociopolitical dogmas, and ideological norms have captured the behavioral sciences, skewing research, practice, and policy work.” The Society, which includes highly eminent behavioral scientists among its founding members, is “dedicated to maintaining open inquiry, civil debate, and rigorous standards in the behavioral sciences” ([www.soibs.com](http://www.soibs.com)). It publishes an open-access journal (the *Journal for Open Inquiry in the Behavioral Sciences*), hosts biennial conferences and periodic online events, conducts research and publishes books and reports on issues relating to open inquiry and viewpoint diversity, highlights threats to open inquiry and engages in advocacy to promote and defend open inquiry, and maintains a website that provides a variety of resources for teaching, research, and professional development. Other organizations and platforms largely for practicing psychologists and therapists, such as the *International Association for Psychology and Counseling* and *Critical Therapy Antidote*, have been founded in the last several years to challenge the prevailing political orthodoxies in the field and promote sociopolitical diversity in psychotherapy and the various clinical disciplines.

## New Heterodox Journals, and Journal Editing and Research Reforms

There is ample evidence documenting ideological bias in the peer review and editorial system, with authors that challenge prevailing orthodoxies often receiving unfair peer reviews, having difficulty getting their papers published, or having them subjected to heavy-handed editorial requirements to align their papers more with prevailing narratives (see Frisby, 2023; Honeycutt & Jussim, 2023; Warne, 2023, all this volume). Journal editors are under increasing pressure to reject politically incorrect papers, and top journals in the field are increasingly screening submissions on social justice grounds, as has been called for by some in the field (see Twenty Women and Nonbinary Scholars, 2021).

Articles often cause an outcry when they report politically unpopular research findings, and the very same articles likely would have been well received – or, at least not attacked – had the findings and/or interpretations of the findings comported with politically correct sensibilities (see Redding, 2013). Consider the uproar over the *Psychological Science* article reporting that “lower rates of religiosity were more strongly associated with higher homicide rates in countries with lower average IQ” (Clark et al., 2020, p. 170). Although the authors ultimately retracted the article over concerns about the validity and reliability of the measures (Bauer, 2020b), what prompted the outcry in the first place was not really concerns about the measures, but rather, that: “the authors made a number of statements that have been interpreted as politically charged and that some members of the academic community interpreted as racist . . . [some] questioned how the manuscript came to be published” (Bauer, 2020, p. 767). Responding to the controversy in “A call for greater sensitivity in the wake of a publication controversy,” the journal’s editor outlined the rigorous review process that the article had undergone but promised to “exercise greater care in our handling of all submissions, including those on sensitive topics . . . and that [articles’] conclusions and their possible implications are conveyed in a social sensitive and scientifically responsible manner” (p. 768–769). This may mean, as a practical matter, that politically controversial submissions may be subjected to a de facto higher standard for publication and/or that authors’ interpretations and conclusions will be curated, to some extent, by the editor. The danger here is that “[i]f when a study yields an unpopular conclusion it is subjected to greater scrutiny, and more effort is expended towards its refutation, an obvious bias to ‘find what the community is looking for’ will have been introduced” (Loury, 1994, p. 12).

Some propose managing authors’ sociopolitical perspectives, terminology used, and journal practices. A recent article in the *American Psychologist* proposes that journals include a citation diversity statement with each article detailing the efforts made by the authors to cite works by people of color, encourage submissions having a “diversity science approach” that includes “introduction and discussion sections of manuscripts [that] illustrate how research questions and findings identify and illuminate systemic oppression,” publish an acknowledgment accompanying papers

dealing with race that race is a sociopolitical construct, police the use of microaggressive comments in reviews, “require the use of system-centered language,” and “evaluate editor candidates based on their track records of dismantling white supremacy” (Buchanan et al., 2021, p. 1102, 1104). Many of these proposals are designed to ensure that papers by minority authors and/or those dealing with racial issues get a fair shake, but these very same concerns apply to SPD authors and papers presenting politically unpopular findings or perspectives. Authors of papers written from politically popular (i.e., liberal or progressive) perspectives that confirm prevailing orthodoxies are privileged in psychology. They need not worry that their papers will be rejected for political reasons, or that reviewers and editors will hold them to higher standards than others, or that they need to camouflage their findings, or that their paper will not get the attention or citations they deserve because of its political unpopularity (Jussim, 2012).

The establishment of alternative open-access peer-reviewed journals that welcome heterodox ideas may play an important role in giving voice to unpopular research programs and findings. Two such journals have recently been founded. The *Journal of Controversial Ideas* has itself become controversial by virtue of its mission to publish unpopular research (Bartlett, 2018). It allows authors to publish under a pseudonym if they desire, which can be unmasked later if they choose, thus allowing untenured faculty to publish controversial pieces without fear that it will damage their tenure prospects. The *Journal of Open Inquiry in the Behavioral Sciences (JOIBS)* (see [www.soibs.com](http://www.soibs.com)), published by the *Society for Open Inquiry in the Behavioral Sciences*, publishes empirical studies and occasional special issues carrying theoretical or commentary pieces. The unique publication standards and processes of JOIBS are designed to maximize open inquiry and debate while also eliminating bias and improving the quality of peer review. JOIBS will publish virtually all empirical papers submitted that pass a minimal quality screening by the editorial board. This eliminates editorial bias in publication decisions. Peer reviews will be obtained on each paper, but they will be published alongside the paper, serving as a combination of peer review and brief commentary on the paper (similar to commentaries on papers published in *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*). Reviewers can cite their review as a publication, and the fact that their reviews will be published should improve their quality and objectivity. It also gives readers the opportunity to see what the reviewers said about the paper and how the author responded to those reviews. Paper authors, however, need not revise their paper in accordance with the reviewers’ suggestions. Making it optional for authors to respond to reviewers’ suggestions eliminates the necessity for authors to conform their perspectives to those preferred by the reviewers. Authors may also publish null findings, thus helping to eliminate the “file drawer” problem in behavioral science.

Although it would be infeasible for most journals to institute such practices, other reforms are possible with existing journals. Buchanan et al. (2021) have proposed reforms to combat systemic racism in journal review, editorial, and publishing standards and processes. Many of their proposals can be adapted to the problem of sociopolitical discrimination. Journals should include sociopolitical diversity within their diversity, equity, and inclusion statements. They should seek to publish

articles that address sociopolitical differences, as well as those that include different sociopolitical populations and issues of concern to those populations (see also Redding & Silander, 2023) and/or sociopolitically diverse authors and perspectives. (But so as not to treat study participants as if they are completely defined by their sociopolitical values, perhaps they should not be labeled as “liberal” or “conservative,” for example, but instead as “participants with liberal [or conservative] values.”) Sociopolitically diverse peer reviewers should be sought whenever a paper deals with sociopolitical issues. Because there are so few non-liberals in psychology, this may require journals to seek out reviewers from related disciplines or reviewers working in non-academic settings. (It may also be useful to obtain reviews from experts on bias in science, the role of sociopolitical values in science, the sociology of science, science studies, and the like.) Journals should provide training on sociopolitical diversity and inclusion for editorial board members, invite sociopolitically diverse scholars to provide commentary on articles, track rejection rates on articles presenting heterodox perspectives or findings, and ask authors to complete rating forms on their peer reviews.

Importantly, in publishing research on diverse sociopolitical groups or issues, authors, peer reviewers, and editors should not try to suppress controversial findings, should not seek to interpret findings to further the own views or agendas, and should be mindful of their own biases when evaluating research (Redding & Silander, 2023). A way to reduce bias and enhance credibility in research is for researchers to participate in the “open science” movement. They can preregister their studies (e.g., hypotheses, methods, planned analyses) on a preregistration platform and promote replicability attempts and research transparency by making the raw data and statistical analyses from studies available on open-access platforms. In addition, adversarial collaborations between researchers having different ideological or theoretical orientations on an issue help ensure that opposing perspectives or hypotheses are fully investigated and tested (Clark & Tetlock, 2023, this volume). Short of that, however, individual researchers can strive to test hypotheses coming from the left as well as the right (and other perspectives as well), when researching political or policy-relevant issue. For example, had researchers done so with respect to constructs such as authoritarianism and open-mindedness, they would have discovered much earlier than just recently that authoritarianism and closed mindedness or partisan bias exist not just on the right but on the left as well, and in apparently equal measure (see Costello, 2023; Ditto et al., 2018).

## **Best Practices and Ethical Norms for Preventing Bias in Clinical Practice**

In recent years, the clinical subfields in psychology (e.g., clinical, counseling, school) have become captured by liberal or progressive politics not just in the academy but also with respect to what goes on in day-to-day clinical practice (Redding,

2020; Redding & Satel, 2023, this volume). Until about 5–10 years ago, clients could reasonably be assured that clinicians' politics would stay outside the therapy room, but that is no longer the case (Redding & Satel, 2023, this volume). Upwards of 49% of clinicians report that their political beliefs moderately or strongly influence their therapeutic practice (Bilgrave & Deluty, 2002), and 23% report that their clients' political preferences are among the factors that impact them the most when working with clients who are different from them (Redding, 2020).

Clinicians should introspect on how sociopolitical values may bias their views of, and therapeutic relationships with, clients having values different than their own. They should also consider how their sociopolitical views may influence their conceptualization of client problems and therapeutic approaches. Clinicians should strive to understand and empathize with the client's sociopolitical values and consider whether their chosen approaches and therapeutic goals are consistent with the client's values and goals (Redding, 2020). Redding and Silander (2023) have developed a set of sociopolitical competence guidelines for clinical practice that provide prescriptive guidelines for implementing these and related principles. In addition, we should incorporate into our ethics codes a provision prohibiting discrimination based on sociopolitical values, include sociopolitical values in the enumerated lists found in multicultural guides of the factors to consider in culturally competence practice, and include training on diverse sociopolitical values as a part of multicultural training and practice supervision (Redding, 2020).

## Conclusion

Debiasing psychology to eliminate the pervasive liberal or progressive ideological bias so that, hopefully, there is no pervasive bias of any kind – whether in research, teaching, policy work, or clinical practice, requires some fundamental if not revolutionary reforms in our science and profession. *What is to be done?*

First and foremost, we must diversify those entering the field, meaning that we must undertake affirmative efforts to mentor and recruit sociopolitically diverse undergraduate students to enter graduate school, just as we do with minority students. Then, we must make the graduate school environment a welcoming and inclusive one for them that will support their professional development. We also must diversify psychology faculties, since it is the professors who have the greatest influence on the field given that they are the ones who produce most of the research, who teach and mold the future academic and practicing psychologists, and who are the most involved in working with the various professional organizations on legal and policy advocacy efforts and the development of professional policies such as practice guidelines, ethical codes, and accreditation standards.

Accompanying this revolutionary diversification of the profession, we should also diversify psychology curricula and pedagogy so that students are educated about diverse perspectives that are currently heterodox in the field. Recently formed new professional organizations and journals can help promote viewpoint diversity

in the field and support sociopolitically diverse scholars and practitioners, as will new journal editing procedures and new ethical norms and best practices for preventing bias against sociopolitically diverse clients in clinical practice.

*Much* is to be done.

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