

they fail to realize is that this association is *circular*. It exists because liberal biases are built into the characterization and assessment of personality itself upon which the authors rely.

I suspect that the five-factor model of personality has become something of a sacred cow in psychology. This is unfortunate. The entire inventory is full of all manner of moral and political biases (though it is beyond the scope of this commentary to make this wider case). The liberal biases in the open-to-experience dimension, however, should be clear for all to see. I urge the authors, in line with their own commendable recommendations, and the entire field of psychology, to take note of the liberal ideological biases built into the most widely used measure of personality.

## Political bias is tenacious

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**Abstract:** Duarte et al. are right to worry about political bias in social psychology but they underestimate the ease of correcting it. Both liberals and conservatives show partisan bias that often worsens with cognitive sophistication. More non-liberals in social psychology is unlikely to speed our convergence upon the truth, although it may broaden the questions we ask and the data we collect.

Most people, but especially political liberals, view diversity of almost any kind as an intrinsic good. But Duarte et al. recognize that greater diversity of political views in social psychology should not be seen as an end in itself. In no way diminishing contemptible cases of politically conservative students made to feel unwelcome in our field, the preeminent value of diversity in this case is its potential to produce better science. Duarte et al.'s core argument is that a more politically diverse social psychology will serve as an antidote to liberal bias and help the field more quickly and efficiently "converge upon the truth" (sect. 1, para. 5).

Their argument rests on two key assumptions. The first is that social psychological research is widely vulnerable to political bias. While only a small percentage of social psychological research has an explicitly political focus, it is important to remember that only a few decades ago climate science would have seemed irrelevant to partisan politics. As partisan hostility increasingly insinuates itself into everyday American life (Iyengar & Westwood 2014), its potential to ensnare previously apolitical scientific questions in the web of the ongoing culture war will grow as well. Moreover, social psychological research is uniquely susceptible to political bias because its fundamental motivating assumption – that human behavior and outcomes are largely determined by social forces – lies precisely on the intellectual fault line of left-right ideological conflict. Any research that bears on the role of individual versus situational determinants of human outcomes is vulnerable. It is hard to dispute, for example, that liberal sympathies in social psychology contributed to the field's initial reluctance to accept research demonstrating substantial genetic contributions to intelligence and personality (e.g., Kamin 1974).

More formally, the persistent intuition that political ideology biases the interpretation of scientific data has now been confirmed by dozens of experiments over the past five decades (Lord & Taylor 2009; MacCoun 1998), and there is little reason to

believe that social psychological researchers are immune to these effects. While some evidence suggests that liberals are dispositionally less prone than conservatives to motivated reasoning (e.g., Jost et al. 2003), a recent meta-analysis by our research group examining more than 30 studies of politically biased evidence evaluation found clear evidence of partisan bias in both liberals and conservatives, and at virtually identical levels (Liu et al. 2014). Moreover, several studies have provided intriguing evidence that partisan bias becomes more rather than less pronounced with greater topical knowledge and cognitive sophistication (e.g., Kahan et al. 2013; Taber & Lodge 2006), as does a general insensitivity to one's own biases (West et al. 2012). Early studies documenting biased evidence evaluation used psychology researchers as participants (e.g., Abramowitz et al. 1975; Mahoney 1977), and this more recent research further confirms that high levels of knowledge, intelligence, and perceived objectivity do not necessarily provide protection from bias, as most people likely assume. Instead, they may simply allow scientists with strong ideological commitments to unknowingly deploy their considerable cognitive skills in biased fashion to become particularly resistant to attacks on those commitments.

Thus, we agree with Duarte et al. regarding the potential for political bias to impede the progress of scientific discovery in social psychology. We have considerably less confidence, however, in their subsequent assumption that increasing the representation of non-liberals in the field will effectively address the problem.

There is certainly wisdom in Duarte et al.'s assertion that increasing the number of conservative social psychologists would increase the likelihood of identifying flaws in research with embedded liberal biases. The anecdotal examples of liberal bias they cite are consistent with research on motivated skepticism (Ditto & Lopez 1992; Ditto et al. 1998) showing that a primary source of biased judgment is our tendency to uncritically evaluate information that confirms our prior beliefs and preferences.

But political bias is both implicit and tenacious, and there is little reason to believe that either liberal social psychological researchers, or any newly minted conservative ones, will be easily disabused of the tendency to expect and prefer empirical results that confirm their political views, and find flaws in results that do not. Social psychology has seen many theoretical controversies and data have resolved few of them (Greenwald 2012). Increasing the minority influence of conservatives in the field may lead to more diverse viewpoints being represented in the literature and a more challenging peer-review process, but rather than leading the field to converge on some universally accepted "truth," it seems more likely to engender theoretical conflict and a divided literature, with each side defending their operationalizations, methods, and data while disparaging those of the other side. Calls for greater civility and scientific humility are valuable, but another fear is that a prevailing liberal bias will be replaced by an "equivalency bias" favoring the view that liberals and conservatives are equally bestowed with psychological strengths and weaknesses. This may ultimately prove to be the case, but it may not, and defaulting to such an equivalency bias in place of a liberal one will leave our science no better off.

In the mid-1900s, psychologists were optimistic that integration by itself would improve interracial relations, until research and real-world experience revealed that contact produces beneficial results only under specified conditions (Dovidio et al. 2003). Analogously, additional efforts will be required to approximate a social psychology free of political bias, and there is important convergence here with ongoing efforts to acknowledge and combat researcher bias more generally (Simmons et al. 2011).

Duarte et al. offer an important critique and some initial plans of attack, but the challenge remains to develop strategies that allow the signal of data to rise above the noise of ideological conflict. Making our field more welcoming to scholars of all political persuasions is intrinsically right, and it will surely lead to new questions and novel data. But in times so partisan, and for a field as entangled

in ideology as social psychology, convergence upon the truth is likely more than even liberals can expect from diversity.

## Mischaracterizing social psychology to support the laudable goal of increasing its political diversity

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**Abstract:** Duarte et al.'s arguments for increasing political diversity in social psychology are based on mischaracterizations of social psychology as fundamentally flawed in understanding stereotype accuracy and the effects of attitudes on information processing. I correct their misunderstandings while agreeing with their view that political diversity, along with other forms of diversity, stands to benefit social psychology.

I agree that increased political diversity in social psychology, like many other forms of diversity, would be a plus because it would foster diversity of thought on social issues. However, Duarte et al. have put forward this enlightened idea in an accusatory manner that mischaracterizes research and theory in the field.

To reveal the target article's biased perspective, I note the authors' analysis of the presumed undermining of social psychology by its political liberalism. Their first example is their claim that social psychologists are in denial about stereotype accuracy. Not so. Gordon Allport, a founder of research on stereotyping, argued for stereotypes' "kernel of truth" (Allport 1954/1979, p. 190), and his nuanced theorizing discouraged the notion that stereotypes are mere fictions. Consistent with Allport, understanding of accuracy requires differentiating between accuracy at the group and the individual levels (e.g., Ryan 2003). Sheer logic dictates that group stereotypes, as mental averages of group members, wrongly describe atypical individuals even while they may convey considerable accuracy at the group level. For example, in arguing that gender stereotypes are "data-driven representations of social reality," Wood and Eagly (2012, p. 91) reviewed numerous studies showing that beliefs about sex differences and similarities are moderately to highly correlated with empirical data on the personality traits, abilities, social behaviors, and occupational distributions of women and men (e.g., Hall & Carter 1999). These same authors also reviewed research spelling out the considerable potential of group stereotypes to mischaracterize individual group members.

Concerning a wide range of other stereotypes, Koenig and Eagly (2014) provided strong evidence of their grounding in observations of group members' behaviors. Their studies tested the proposition that stereotypes of group members derive from people's observations of their behaviors in the social roles in which group members are overrepresented relative to their numbers in the population. Yet, neither Koenig and Eagly nor the advocates of gender stereotype accuracy appear to have raised the ire of their social psychological colleagues.

Despite many social psychologists' considerable open-mindedness concerning group-level stereotype accuracy, most stereotype research addresses, not accuracy, but the negative consequences of stereotypes for individuals. One theme is that stereotypes disadvantage strivers from lower-status groups who attempt to take on new roles. It is stereotypes' descriptive accuracy that lends them the power to suppress the aspirations of those individuals who strive to break the strictures of stereotypes. Such individuals can face backlash (Rudman et al. 2012) and depressed performance of stereotype-relevant tasks (Steele & Aronson 1995). Other research emphasizes the many ways that stereotypes

legitimize the societal status quo (e.g., Cuddy et al. 2008). Yet, stereotypes' group-level accuracy and their support of the societal status quo are two sides of the same coin.

Another example that Duarte et al. offer of the presumed undermining of social psychology is their claim that social psychology is dominated by the view that prejudice and intolerance are limited to the political right. To support this claim, they feature a small number of studies that yielded one-sided characterizations of conservatives but soon faced contrary evidence produced by other researchers. On this point, Duarte and colleagues appear to be unfamiliar with the massive amount of research in social psychology on the effects of attitudes and ideology on information processing (see Eagly & Chaiken 1998). A fundamental proposition of attitude theory is that attitudes exert selective effects at all stages of information processing. Hundreds of studies have tested the proposition that people's attitudes bias information processing in favor of material that is congruent with their attitudes. Such *congeniality effects* are common in research on exposure and attention to attitude-relevant information and the perception, judgment, and evaluation of such information. Despite complexities arising from competition between pressures toward congeniality and pressures toward accuracy (e.g., Hart et al. 2009), neither attitude theory nor its typical findings yield support for the idea that congeniality biases are limited to or stronger among persons on the political right.

Duarte et al. correctly describe social psychology as populated mainly by political liberals. The phenomenon stems from liberals' attraction to a field that they believe produces knowledge that can facilitate social change. Following from the social movements of the last 50 years, adherents of increasing equality on the basis of gender, race and ethnicity, and sexual orientation have flocked to social psychology. However, their preferences for progressive social change do not invariably produce biased science, given that liberal, like conservative, psychological scientists are constrained by the shared rules of post-positivist science. When bias is present, it tends to be corrected over time, as illustrated by the aftermath of Jost et al.'s (2003) article.

Duarte et al. have stigmatized the entire field of social psychology based in large part on their exaggeration of social psychologists' hostility to group-level stereotype accuracy and their overemphasis on a few studies that negatively characterized conservatives. Their article thus displays their lack of broad knowledge of theory and research in this discipline. Also, they have unwittingly illustrated one of social psychology's oldest principles – that attitudes bias information processing, in this case by fostering their highly selective and one-sided characterization of social psychology. It is fortunate that they have published in a journal that allows others to correct their misjudgments.

## "Wait – You're a conservative?" Political diversity and the dilemma of disclosure

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**Abstract:** Many of the proposed recommendations for remedying the harmful effects of political homogeneity for psychology depend upon conservatives disclosing their political identity. Yet how likely is this, when disclosure is so harmful to the individual? Considering this issue as a *social dilemma* clarifies the pernicious nature of the problem, as well as suggesting how the dilemma can be resolved.

As Duarte and colleagues note in their thought-provoking and insightful article, there is a stunning lack of political diversity in social psychology. Ironically for a field in which one of the biggest topics of study is prejudice, the academy is both subtly