

opposition to higher classes (Bourdieu 1984). This opposition seems to be reflected in the research interests of social psychologists.

In the case of Western social psychology, some of the commonly studied topics are: ethnic prejudice, climate-change denial, and system justification (see the target article). All of them can be attributed to the political Right rather than Left. However, in the case of East European social psychology, the most commonly studied topics include: complaining, belief in an unjust world, entitlement attitudes, conspiracy theories, nationalism, and non-competitiveness (Bilewicz & Olechowski 2014). These issues combine anti-capitalism and social conservatism—a mix common among the low-status groups in post-Communist countries. East European social psychologists tend to perceive these topics in terms of pathologies. This stigmatizes negative evaluations of current economic and political order, and delegitimizes collective action.

Another good illustration of regional differences in research topics is the use of the implicit association test, a measure of unconscious attitudes (Greenwald et al. 1998). This method, originally developed in the USA to explain stereotyping, discrimination, and racial biases (see Greenwald & Banaji 1995; McConnell & Leibold 2001), has been used by Polish social psychologists as a tool for measuring consumer attitudes toward corporate brands (e.g., Maison et al. 2001; 2004). The same technique can then be used in the interest of groups that are discriminated against (in the West) or in the interest of the market and the power-brokers (in Eastern Europe). This example seems to further illustrate the differences in the economic worldviews of social psychologists.

Social identities of social psychologists are construed in opposition to the “participants”—the low-status out-group members worth studying (Hegarty & Bruckmüller 2013). Thus, social psychological research might not be biased because of liberal political inclinations, but rather, by the opposition between researchers and the values of the low-status groups in their societies.

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## On the history of political diversity in social psychology

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**Abstract:** We argue that the history of political diversity in social psychology may be better characterized by stability than by a large shift toward liberalism. The branch of social psychology that focuses on political issues has defined social problems from a liberal perspective since at least the 1930s. Although a lack of ideological diversity within the discipline can pose many of the problems noted by Duarte et al., we suggest that these problems (a) are less apparent when the insights of social psychology are pitted against the insights from other social science disciplines, and (b) are less pressing than the need for other types of diversity in the field, especially ethnic and racial diversity.

In the target article, Duarte et al. argue that social psychology has become more politically lopsided over the years, with liberals and liberalism all but dominating a field that was once much more politically diverse. They go on to suggest a number of ways that the science of social psychology would benefit from increased

representation of conservatives and conservative ideology in our departments, leading journals, and academic discourse. Our goals in this brief commentary are threefold.

First, we question the authors’ conclusions about increasing liberal homogeneity in social psychology, and we come to a somewhat different conclusion from our own historical analysis of the field: Social psychology has been (and continues to be) a politically liberal social scientific discipline since at least the 1930s. Second, we consider how liberalism within the field can be both a weakness and a potential strength. And finally, we suggest that increasing political diversity, while important, may be less important for the health of the field than increasing other types of diversity, especially racial and ethnic diversity.

The starting point for our historical analysis of the field is the foundation of the Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues (SPSSI) in 1936. From the outset, SPSSI members focused on liberal concerns such as racial prejudice, class conflict, and war. Prominent psychologists in this camp included Otto Klineberg, Gordon Allport, David Krech, Ralph White, Dan Katz, Nevitt Sanford, Daniel Levinson, Else Frenkel-Brunswick, Theodore Newcomb, Brewster Smith, and, later, Tom Pettigrew, Herb Kelman, Irving Janis, and Bob Abelson. Most contemporary researchers studying stereotypes, prejudice, and intergroup relations more broadly and, increasingly, environmental and health psychologists, are the intellectual heirs of the SPSSI researchers from the 1930–1960s eras.

However, the field of social psychology during much of this era was comprised of more than just the SPSSI social-justice tradition. A second tradition developed in the 1950s, which centered more on rigorous scientific experimentation and distinguished itself from the “softer” side of social psychology that focused on social issues. Prominent in this group were Leon Festinger, Carl Hovland, Hal Kelley, Don Campbell, Stanley Schachter, John Thibaut, and Bill McGuire. Probably most of these now-deceased researchers also at least leaned toward political liberalism, even though their research was not as clearly connected to politics. Duarte et al. seem less concerned about liberalism in these less politically relevant branches of social psychology.

Duarte and colleagues rely on a survey by McClintock et al. (1965) to suggest that psychology was more politically heterogeneous a half century ago than it is today. However, it is difficult to make inferences about the politics of social psychologists from those data. The difficulty arises for two main reasons: (1) The survey lumped the then-small field of social psychology in with the larger other specialties in academic psychology, such as learning, sensation and perception, and physiological psychology, whose subject matters were far from social issues; and (2) as Duarte et al. note, party identification was not as highly correlated with political ideology in the American public then as now:  $r=.00$  in 1956;  $r=.62$  in 2004 (Lewis-Beck et al. 2008). The “sorting” of political parties into distinct ideological camps is a well-documented but fairly recent phenomenon (Levendusky2009), and there is no reason to think that academic psychologists were immune to such broader societal trends. As such, no doubt numerous psychologists who identified as Republicans in the McClintock survey were liberal and some who identified as Democrats were conservative. As noted, we think it is a good bet that most social psychologists in those days were at least somewhat politically liberal, regardless of their party identification.

One of us has long argued that scientists with differing theoretical or ideological priors have two competing models available to them in presenting their findings: the adversarial model and the inquisitorial model (Sears 1966; 1994). In the present context, the adversarial approach would pit the findings of liberal and conservative researchers studying a common question against one another. Each side would argue its position to the best of its ability, marshalling evidence in support of its position and accepting or disputing the conclusions of its scholarly adversaries. In the legal world, the adversarial model is practiced by the American justice system (i.e., with a prosecution and a defense) and follows the contours of a political debate. In the inquisitorial model, by contrast, ostensibly

neutral researchers attempt to gather and present evidence fairly from both sides of an issue. That also has a long legal tradition, of course, and is widely practiced in court systems around the world (e.g., China, Russia, Germany, and Scotland).

When viewed through an interdisciplinary lens, social psychology has many potential adversaries in more conservative disciplines such as economics and political science. Social psychologists can pit, say, a theory of symbolic politics against theories of self-interest or prospect theory against the rational-actor model typical in economics. In these cases, social psychologists can usefully adopt the adversarial model by presenting their best case while those with other philosophies, ideologies, and viewpoints do the same. What typically emerges is a richer, more nuanced picture of the phenomenon under study. Boundary conditions and limitations of each approach can be identified and potentially reconciled.

Nevertheless, when viewing the internal dynamics of a decidedly liberal field, many of the shortcomings identified by Duarte et al. are important. When a field develops a political consensus with no one to argue for other views, an adversarial model is no longer viable and an inquisitorial model is likely to be hampered by bias. With respect to the SPSSI tradition, Duarte and colleagues' point to a hostile climate toward conservatives and illustrate how problems of embedded bias in theory and methods can hinder scientific inference and discourse. It is ironic that a field that so aptly documented the dangers of insular groupthink and ideological homogeneity is so susceptible to them. We agree with Duarte and colleagues that such homogeneity of ideology adversely impacts the field's intellectual richness and creativity.

While a diversity of political viewpoints would benefit social psychological science, we also believe that political diversity is not necessarily the most important type of diversity for the field as a whole to pursue. Exposure to politically diverse viewpoints – and challenges to the insights of the field – is always possible from other social science disciplines and from society as a whole. Social psychologists may therefore do well for the science by increasing their commitment to interdisciplinary collaboration and public dialog. However, diversity in traditionally disadvantaged ethnic groups, racial groups, and economic classes is still sorely lacking, not just in social psychology, but across most of social science as a whole (see Medin & Lee 2012). Given the historical substantive foci of social psychology within the social sciences – often with explicit goals to seek justice for disadvantaged people – we are not sure that political diversity should be the leading priority.

## QTIPs: Questionable theoretical and interpretive practices in social psychology

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**Abstract:** One possible consequence of ideological homogeneity is the misinterpretation of data collected with otherwise solid methods. To help identify these issues outside of politically relevant research, we name and give broad descriptions to three questionable interpretive practices described by Duarte et al. and introduce three additional questionable theoretical practices that also reduce the theoretical power and paradigmatic scope of psychology.

Questionable research practices (QRPs) in social psychology and other disciplines have been the target of efforts dedicated to improving empirical social psychology; however, a focus on improving empirical practices can be more effective by linking it with a simultaneous focus on improving theoretical and interpretive

practices. While mature sciences are generally characterized by broad theoretical consensus (i.e., paradigms; Kuhn 1962), these perspectives are often in conflict, and efforts to resolve these discrepancies foment theoretical advancement and a more precise understanding of scientific phenomena (Popper 1959). When social psychology – or any scientific discipline – adopts a singular ideological worldview, this serves to quell sources of potentially generative conflict. It also leads to additional (and justifiable) concerns that researchers are motivated to produce and interpret findings in a manner that is consistent with a given research perspective.

Duarte and colleagues identify several instances of questionable interpretive practices (QIPs) that may have resulted from ideological homogeneity (Jussim et al., in press b). These are instances where researchers used proper research methods for gathering data, but engaged in potentially problematic interpretations of that same data. These practices are *unlikely to be unique* to research areas touched by political ideology, and we believe that naming them and giving them a more general description will help researchers be vigilant for these practices more broadly:

1. *Premature theoretical closure:* This is the practice whereby a finding is treated as firmly established when all of the necessary conditions for claiming that the finding is supported have not yet been tested. For example, Duarte et al. highlight work that suggested right-wing authoritarians are more likely to make hypocritical political judgments, when these judgments were only tested for a very limited range of issues.

2. *Imprecise naming:* There is an incentive to name constructs with as much breadth as possible so that the construct studied can be thought to extend to a wider array of situations. Duarte et al. highlight research where the original authors made claims about “unethical decisions” broadly, although they primarily measured decisions contrary to liberal values.

3. *Begging the question:* In some cases, a particular research question or method is framed in such a way that the only possible result confirms the researcher's hypothesis. Duarte et al. discuss research where the original investigators built their conclusion (denial of realities) into the name of their measure of environmental attitudes.

There are theoretical problems in (social) psychology that go beyond questionable interpretations of the data and include problematic theoretical practices at several stages of the theoretical process. We suggest that the QIPs identified by Duarte et al. are part of a more general category of questionable theoretical and interpretive practices (QTIPs). Although there are many potential QTIPs, we think that three are worth briefly describing and adding to the list offered by Duarte et al. in the target article and by Jussim et al. (in press b).

4. *Déjà vu constructs:* The incentives in social psychology are to produce novel theories, leading to a proliferation of theories in our major journals. However, oftentimes new theoretical constructs are merely old constructs with new branding (Hagger 2014). Instead of ego-depletion, for example, much of the work could fit under the much older label of mental fatigue.

5. *Homophone constructs:* Psychologists study many everyday behaviors and phenomena leading us to name our constructs with everyday words. This also leads to a situation where we give the same name to a variety of different phenomena that are not interchangeable. For example, intentions can mean many different things, and only by specifying the precise type of intentions (e.g., implementation intentions, continuation intentions; see Hagger 2014) is it possible to make precise predictions as well as comparisons across studies and literatures.

6. *Naturalistic fallacy:* Social scientists are particularly prone to providing empirical support for emerging social trends, reifying an apparently emerging status quo with data suggesting that these desired end-states are the way things naturally *are*. Historically,