

01. NAMES OF AUTHORS OF THE TARGET ARTICLE: José L. Duarte, Jarrett T. Crawford, Charlotta Stern, Jonathan Haidt, Lee Jussim, and Philip E. Tetlock.
02. WORD COUNTS: Abstract (60), Main Text (965), References (77), Entire Text (1197)
03. TITLE: Towards a De-biased Social Psychology: The effects of ideological perspective go beyond politics.
04. AUTHOR: David C. Funder
05. INSTITUTION: University of California, Riverside
06. 900 University Avenue
Department of Psychology
University of California, Riverside
Riverside, California, 92521
USA
07. TELEPHONE: 951-827-3938
08. E-MAIL: funder@ucr.edu
09. HOME PAGE URL: rap@ucr.edu

ABSTRACT:

Reasonable conservatives are in short supply and will not arrive to save social psychology any time soon. The field needs to save itself through de-biasing. The effects of a liberal world view permeate and distort discussion of many topics that are not overtly political, including behavioral genetics and evolutionary psychology, the fundamental attribution error, and the remarkably persistent consistency controversy.

10. MAIN TEXT:

"A liberal is a man too broadminded to take his own side in a quarrel." -- Robert Frost

Liberals may be too open-minded for their own (ideological) good; they keep finding fault with themselves and this article is a good example. Which is not to say it's not largely correct. Social and personality psychology obviously lacks ideological diversity, and Duarte and colleagues provide strong circumstantial evidence that the causes include hostile climate, lack of role models, and subtle and not-so-subtle discrimination of the same sort that underlies other lacks of diversity elsewhere in society.

Duarte et al. argue that our science would be better if more "conservatives" were included in the ideological mix. But the point of view that carries this label has changed greatly in recent years. Not so long ago, no conservative would dream of shutting down the government over an ideological dispute, denying the validity of settled science, or passing laws to encourage open carry of weapons on college campuses. Conservatives were *conservative*. Such people indeed have a lot to contribute to any discussion, including scientific ones. But many modern-day "conservatives" -- especially the loudest ones -- would better be described as radical, and among their radical characteristics is a pride in anti-intellectualism and willful ignorance. In a call for more conservatives, who are we actually inviting and, I truly wonder, how many even exist? I am not optimistic about the feasibility of finding enough reasonable conservatives to join our field, even if we could overcome all of the barriers the target article so vividly describes. Even at best, such change is a long-term goal.

In any case, we shouldn't wait for conservatives to arrive and save us. We need to save ourselves. The target article presents mixed messages about whether de-biasing is feasible. On the one hand, it cites evidence that de-biasing is difficult or impossible. On the other hand, the entire article is an effort at de-biasing. I choose to believe the more optimistic, implicit claim of Duarte et al., which is that we can become more intellectually honest with ourselves and thereby do better science. I find the "mirror-

image" test particularly promising. For any finding, we should indeed get into the habit of asking, what if the very same evidence had led to the opposite conclusion?

Politics is the least of it. In focusing on research that seeks to describe how conservatives are cognitively flawed or emotionally inadequate, or on research that treats conservative beliefs as ipso facto irrational, Duarte et al. grasp only at the low-hanging fruit. More pernicious, I believe, are the way ideological predilections bias the conduct and evaluation of research that, on the surface, has nothing to do with politics. An awful lot of research and commentary seems to be driven by our value systems, what we *wish* were true. So we do studies to show that what we wish were true is true, and attack the research of others that leads to conclusions that do not fit our world view.

Examples are legion. Consider just a few:

Personality and abilities are heritable. This finding is at last taking hold in psychology, after a century's dominance of a belief in a "blank slate." The data were just too overwhelming. But the idea that people are different at the starting line is heartbreaking to the liberal world-view and encounters resistance even now.

Human nature is a product of evolution. Social psychologists are the last people you would expect to deny that Darwin was right -- except when it comes to human behavior, and *especially* if it has anything to do with sex differences (Winegard et al., 2014). The social psychological alternative to biological evolution is not intelligent design, it's culture. And as to where culture came from, that's a problem left for another day.

The Fundamental Attribution Error is, as we all know, the sad human tendency to view behavior as stemming from the characteristics -- the traits and beliefs -- of the people who perform it. Really, it's the situation that matters. So, change the situation and you can change the behavior; it's that easy. This belief is very attractive to a liberal world-view, and one does not have to look very hard to find examples of exactly how it is used to support various liberal attitudes towards crime and punishment, economic equality, and so forth. But the ideological consequences are not consistent. The Nuremberg judges apparently committed the Fundamental Attribution Error when they refused to accept the excuse of Nazi generals that they were "only following orders."

The consistency controversy, which bedeviled the field of personality psychology for decades and which still lingers in various forms, stems from the belief among many social psychologists that the Fundamental Attribution Error, just mentioned, affects an entire subfield of psychology. Personality psychology, it is sometimes still said, exaggerates the importance of individual differences. But to make a very long story very short, individual differences in behavior *are* consistent across situations (Kenrick & Funder, 1988), and personality is stable across decades (e.g., Nave, Sherman & Funder, 2010). Many important life outcomes including occupational success, marital stability and even longevity can be predicted from personality traits as well as or better than from any other variables (Roberts et al., 2007). And changing behavior is difficult, as any parent trying to get a child to make his bed can tell you; changing attitudes is just as hard, as anyone who has ever tried to change anyone else's mind in an argument can tell you. Indeed, does anybody ever change their mind about anything? Maybe so, but generally less than the situation would seem to demand. I predict that responses to the article by Duarte et al. will add one more demonstration of how hard it is to change ingrained beliefs.

11. REFERENCES

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