A SOCIAL SCIENCE WITHOUT SACRED VALUES

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"Nothing is at last sacred but the integrity of your own mind."

Ralph Waldo Emerson

In this essay, we follow up on the work of other scholars who have recently cautioned about the dangers of ideological uniformity in the social sciences. We forward the paranoid egalitarian meliorist (PEM) model to help account for bias in the social sciences. Paranoid is not a pejorative term, but describes a sensitivity to perceived threats to egalitarian meliorism. We argue (1) that many social scientists are paranoid egalitarian meliorists; (2) that they are therefore very sensitive to threats to a sacred egalitarian narrative; (3) that this sensitivity may be excessive (at least in the domain of science) and may cause researchers to unfairly reject research that challenges egalitarianism; (4) that this may then lead to the marginalization of individuals who forward controversial theories and/or data; and (5) that these tendencies lead to bias in the social sciences.

In 1969, Arthur Jensen, a then respected educational psychologist, published an article in the Harvard Educational Review in which he controversially argued: (1) that intelligence tests are not biased and measure something real and important; (2) that compensatory educational programs had largely failed to boost intelligence; and (3) that it was plausible that *some* of the black-white intelligence gap (whites score roughly a standard deviation higher on intelligence tests than blacks) was caused by genetics (Jensen, 1969). Although the article was responsibly written and completely bereft of stridency or dogmatism, it was greeted with a fleet of denunciations and ad hominem attacks[1]. Indignant scientists and political pundits impugned Jensen's character, calling him an elitist, a racist, and even a fascist (Miele & Jensen, 2002). Some political activists began to interrupt Jensen's speeches, a pattern that persisted for many years. Worse, some even threatened his life. For a while, Jensen could not open his mail and was escorted around the Berkeley campus by bodyguards

Although extreme, this example is not unprecedented. From its inception, science has often clashed with sacred social narratives. And when it has, the scientists who propounded the gainsaying theories were often viciously attacked and slandered.

Sometimes, they were even arrested or killed. To take a common example, Galileo was violently denounced and ultimately arrested for writing a dialogue that strongly suggested that the earth revolved around the sun (heliocentrism). Today, we no longer have sacred narratives about the order of the ether. We have left the cosmos to astronomers and physicists; therefore, we can hardly understand the consternation that heliocentrism caused. But we do have sacred narratives about human nature and the social order.

In this essay, we will examine how such sacred narratives create bias in the social sciences. We will also forward a model that helps explain how this bias works, which we call the paranoid egalitarian meliorist (PEM) model.

II

A sacred value, according to Philip Tetlock, is a value "that a moral community treats as possessing transcendental significance," and that cannot be compared to or traded with other values (Tetlock, 2003, p. 320; see also, Atran, Axelrod, & Davis, 2007). Put more simply, a sacred value is something that people *really* care about, and that they are unwilling to trade or negotiate. Protecting a child's life is a sacred value for most of us. We would not be willing to contemplate killing a child in exchange for something else, be it money or fame or everlasting beauty. The very thought of trading a child's life for something else provokes disgust and an immediate interdiction from our nervous systems[2]. Today, as noted, many students, professors, and media personalities do not have sacred values about the structure of the cosmos; but they do have sacred values about the structure of society and about the nature of the humans that comprise it.

What these sacred values are depends largely upon what political party a person identifies with (or, perhaps, what political party a person identifies with depends largely upon their sacred values). Conservatives and liberals (roughly, Republicans and Democrats in the United States) have (some) different sacred values (Haidt, 2012). For many conservatives protecting the life of an unborn child is a sacred value. They are wholly unwilling to negotiate abortion. It is an unalloyed evil that must be eliminated. For many liberals, on the other hand, equality is a sacred value. Therefore, inequality is not a tolerable if unfortunate side effect of capitalism, but a malignant growth that threatens the moral status of the entire socioeconomic system.

The social sciences are comprised almost entirely of socially liberal researchers (many are also economically liberal; see Gross & Fosse, 2012; Sanderson & Ellis, 1992). Inbar and Lammers (2012) found that only 6% of social and personality psychologists identified as conservative; Bill von Hippel and David Buss, in a still unpublished survey of members of the Society for Experimental Social Psychology, found that a paltry four out of over 300 members surveyed voted for Mitt Romney in the 2012 election (quoted in Jussim, 2015). Because of this, the social sciences are (arguably) plagued by political correctness (a generally liberal way of protecting sacred values) and (potentially) biased in ways that preserve a sacred narrative about social (metaphysical) equality.

Recently, a number of scholars (most of them social psychologists) have raised concerns about this possible bias and have lamented the growing ideological uniformity of social psychology (and other social sciences, including sociology). Although some scholars had expressed concern about this before (see, for example, Redding, 2001; Tetlock, 1994), they were largely ignored or dismissed. However, the force and eloquence of the renewed pleas to examine the pernicious effects of ideological uniformity have made the problem harder to ignore. Many of these scholars collaborated on an article that was just published in *Behavioral and Brain Sciences* (Duarte, Crawford, Stern, Haidt, Jussim, & Tetlock, 2015) in which they laid out their arguments and forwarded recommendations for correcting the problem.

Specifically, Duarte and colleagues asserted that the dearth of conservatives in the social sciences can (and does) create bias in three ways: (1) it allows liberal values (sacred equality narrative, for example) to become enmeshed into social theory and method; (2) it causes many researchers to focus on topics that support sacred liberal narratives while avoiding topics that might contradict them; and (3) it encourages an incomplete and unappealing psychological profile of conservatism because most researchers who study conservatives are hostile toward their political beliefs. Duarte and colleagues supported their arguments with many examples. Consider two.

One, researchers have consistently complained that stereotypes are inaccurate, unjust, and maladaptive products of a biased social brain (see Jussim, 2012). However, it turns out that *many* stereotypes are actually remarkably accurate. Because many stereotypes are about talent, skill, and personality inequalities among social groups, this line of research, according to Duarte et al., was not surprisingly initiated by a conservative social scientist, Clark McCauley (McCauley & Stitt, 1978). That is, liberal researchers were not interested in discovering that stereotypes were accurate because that would violate a sacred liberal narrative about equality.

And two, many researchers in social psychology have argued that the political right is prone to prejudice, and that it attracts a certain personality type that is often domineering and authoritarian (Jost, Glaser, Kruglanski, & Sulloway, 2003). However, some recent theorists have argued (and demonstrated) that people across the political spectrum are biased against others who espouse ideological beliefs that contradict their own (Brandt, Reyna, Chambers, Crawford, & Wetherell, 2014). Conservatives are biased against liberals, Democrats, gays and lesbians, atheists, and labor unions, for example, whereas liberals are biased against soldiers, business people, and Christian fundamentalists. Social psychologists largely ignored liberal social prejudices because they were not salient to mostly liberal researchers. (One's own biases are seldom regarded as biases; they are regarded as truths about the world).

Duarte and colleagues ended with a number of possible palliatives. Because a lack of political diversity is the fundamental cause of the disease that Duarte and colleagues bemoaned, most of their recommendations focused on increasing the number of conservatives, libertarians, and other non-liberals in social psychology. For example, they suggested that universities should formulate and adopt anti-discrimination policies

(against conservatives), should create reach-out programs to attract non-liberals, and should conduct studies about obstacles and barriers non-liberal students might face in social psychology. (They made a number of other suggestions, but this provides a useful sample.)

We (Bo and Ben Winegard) and Dave Geary (Winegard, Winegard, & Geary, 2015) wrote a comment on the article in which we largely agreed with Duarte and colleague's argument that ideological uniformity in social psychology (and social science more generally) is potentially dangerous and possibly distorts science through biased peer reviews, grant reviews, and hiring processes. And we tried to elaborate on their arguments by forwarding a model of bias in social psychology (and the social sciences more broadly). We argued that most researchers in the social sciences are egalitarian meliorists, that is, they adhere to a sacred narrative which asserts that all social classes, ethnic groups, and sexes *could be* the same on every socially valued trait (biologically, they are the same save for superficial differences)[3] and that people can, through sustained effort, increase social equality (see, Winegard & Winegard, 2014). This sacred narrative leads to what we termed "paranoid egalitarian meliorism" (PEM). We also believe that some conservatives adhere to egalitarian meliorism, whereas some liberals do not, so that the cause of bias in the social sciences is more complicated than the political affiliation of the researchers (an assertion with which Duarte and colleagues would almost certainly agree) (Inglehart & Welzel, 20005; Lyle & Smith, 2012; Tybur, Miller, & Gangestad, 2007).

III

Paranoid sounds bad. Nobody wants to be paranoid. And science is supposed to steer clear of value-laden terms such as "paranoid egalitarian meliorism," right? Sure. But, the term "paranoid," as used in our model, does not refer to a state of frantic, irrational vigilance, but rather to an understandable mental bias designed to reduce the costs of inevitable errors. That sounds horribly abstruse, but the basic idea is simple.

In 2006, Martie Haselton and Daniel Nettle published an article in Personality and Social Psychology Review entitled "The paranoid optimist: An integrative evolutionary model of cognitive biases." In it, they argued that most people are "paranoid optimists"; they are fearful of potential environmental threats, but romantically optimistic about their ability shape the world. They are paranoid optimists because their brains were designed to manage inevitable errors in the least costly (and most advantageous) way possible. In the case of environmental threats, error management generally leads to paranoia because it is often less costly to mistake an innocuous stimuli for a threat than to mistake a threat for an innocuous stimuli. This is probably best illustrated by considering a smoke detector (Nesse, 2001).

A smoke detector is designed to commit more false alarms that false negatives, because most people don't want a smoke detector that remains silent while one's house burns

down. It is better, in other words, to have a smoke alarm that sometimes goes off when one burns one's toast but that *almost always* goes off when one's house is actually on fire than to have an alarm that almost never goes off when one burns food but that *sometimes* remains off when one's house is razed by flames. Smoke detectors will inevitably make mistakes (even billions of dollars of investment would not create an error free smoke detector). They are therefore designed to *make the least costly error.* We might say, then, that a smoke detector is paranoid. It is designed to be especially sensitive to cues of fire.

Paranoid egalitarian meliorism (PEM), then, is egalitarian meliorism that is especially sensitive to equality threats, and paranoid egalitarian meliorists (PEMs) are people who exhibit such sensitivities. For example, the idea that biologically endowed personality traits such as extroversion, ambition, or intelligence, differ among people and/or groups such that some people and/or some groups have more or less of one or more valued traits, appears to strike a challenge to equality. If there are more men than women in engineering departments because men, on average, are better at mechanical reasoning than women, then this means that certain valued outcomes in society will *be unequal unless society actively intervenes to alter a natural inequality.* If, on the other hand, the disparity between men and women arises because of active discrimination, *then intervention simply allows the flowering of natural equality, which the discrimination was preventing.* PEMs would err on the side of believing that discrimination, not personality traits, leads to group differences in socially valued outcomes (such as representation in engineering departments). Put another way, PEMs are like the smoke detector from above; only they are "designed" to detect threats to equality rather than to detect fire. Their alarm is especially sensitive, and it is often tripped by potentially innocuous stimuli (such as research on group differences in personality traits).

Unlike the smoke detector example, our model requires two stages of processing (see figure 1). The first stage is the detection (or nondetection) of threatening theories and/or data; and the second stage is the assessment of the theories and/or data. Consider the example of an article about biological sex differences. In the first stage, a researcher would detect whether the article is a threat to an egalitarian narrative. And in the second, the researcher would assess the article's (and other articles') arguments for and against a partial genetic hypothesis of sex differences. Generally speaking, if a theory is detected as a threat, then it will be assessed unfavorably and ultimately rejected (see figure below). That is, a theory that is assessed as a threat often triggers some form of motivated reasoning, which then dismisses the threatening theory. So, in the case of sex differences, a researcher who detected a threat might read copious books and articles arguing that sex differences are entirely socially caused, convincing him or herself that genes play no role in sex differences and therefore dismissing the threatening article's conclusions (See Haidt, 2011).
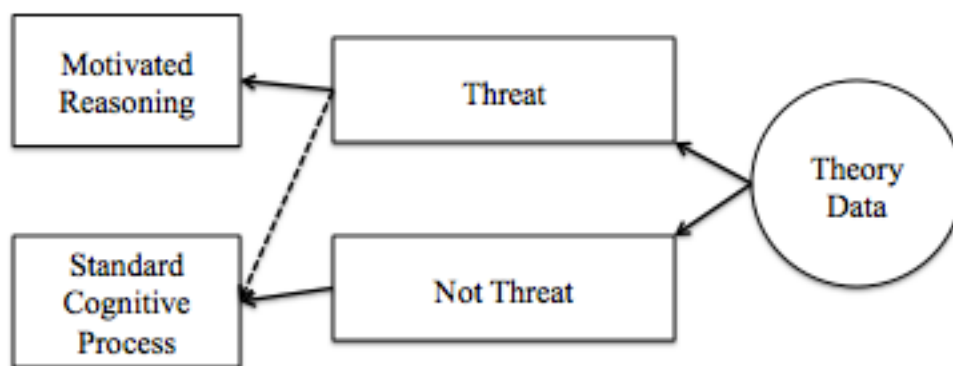
Figure 1. Model of two stages of PEM. First, a theory and/or data are analyzed as threat or not. If they are a threat, then they often (but not always) trigger motivated reasoning. If they are not a threat, they generally trigger unmotivated reasoning. The motivated reasoning is usually capable of dismissing the threatening theory and or data. Some people are able to use unmotivated reasoning even if a theory is detected as a threat. One goal should be to emphasize this and strengthen the link from threat to unmotivated reasoning.

There are two broad reasons the PEM model helps explain bias in the social sciences (we will explain this in more detail and with more nuances in the next section). The first, as suggested in section II, is that a large proportion of social scientists are probably PEMs-- or exhibit characteristics indicative of PEMs. For example, Gross and Simmons (2007) found that social science professors are more liberal than professors in other academic disciplines; and they found that social scientists are *even more* liberal on social issues than they are on economic issues, a finding corroborated by Inbar and Lammers (2012) and discussed at length in Duarte and colleagues (2015) article. Although we will note that we do not think there is a one to one correspondence between PEM and liberalism, and that, in fact, many conservatives and some libertarians are PEMs, social liberals are almost certainly more likely than conservatives and libertarians to hold a sacred egalitarian meliorist narrative (Haidt, 2012; Pinker, 2005). This provides *prima facie* evidence that many social science professors are PEMs; but more research is needed on professors' attitudes toward equality, egalitarianism, and meliorism *independently* of their political ideology.

And the second is that many of the topics that social scientists study are fraught with importance for sacred social narratives, and therefore, many of the theories and/or data forwarded by social scientists could be interpreted as a threat to the egalitarian meliorist narrative (for example, research on the causes of inequality, research on sex differences, research on stereotypes, research on race differences (what little is done), research on self-control, et cetera).

If it is true that paranoid egalitarian meliorism is a major cause of the bias in the social sciences, then we would predict that: (1) the higher the proportion of PEMs in a discipline the more likely it is that that discipline will be hostile to research that threatens a sacred equality narrative; (2) the more a line of research (or theory) is perceived to

challenge the sacred equality narrative, the greater the hostility and resistance it should provoke from PEMs (and areas of discipline dominated by PEMs); and (3) the most maligned researchers should be those who forward theories or data that threaten the sacred equality narrative. In part V, we will cover specific historical examples that appear to corroborate these predictions. Here, we want to note that a few studies support them (obviously, more research is needed on this).

For example, Geher and Gambacorta (2010) found that researchers in women's studies and sociology (fields likely dominated by PEMs) were more likely than researchers in other fields (not so dominated by PEMs) to view differences between men and women and even hens and roosters as caused by nurture (not nature), but not differences between cats and dogs. Presumably, this is because researchers in women's studies and sociology are hyper attuned to possible threats to gender equality (that is, they are strong PEMs). Horowitz, Yaworsky, and Kickham (2014) found that although many sociologists accepted that differences in intellectual ability among individuals were caused at least partially by genetics, a majority *did not* believe that differences between men and women in skills such as communication and spatial reasoning were at least partially caused by genetics[4]. And Winegard, Winegard, and Deaner (2014) found that sex and gender textbooks were riddled with errors about evolutionary psychology (which often posits that at least some sex differences are genetically caused and therefore is often perceived as threatening the egalitarian meliorist narrative); and that sociology textbooks contained more errors than psychology books (probably more PEMs in sociology, although that is an empirical question). Taken together, these studies suggest that motivated reasoning is selectively triggered by perceived scholarly challenges to group level equality.

The PEM model also straightforwardly provides two explanations (not mutually exclusive) for the consistent use of ad hominem attacks against researchers who propound theories or data that are perceived to violate a sacred egalitarian narrative. In the examples below, we will describe the motivations that lead to ad hominem attacks as if they were conscious and intentional; however, this is a literary technique to make our reasoning more clear. Probably, most of the mechanisms that lead to ad hominem attacks are unconscious, and those who engage in ad hominem attacks do so only because they really believe that another researcher deserves to be "called out" for his or her treachery.

The first is that PEMs honestly believe that the researchers who propound such theories or data are morally reprehensible people. This might sound extreme--do scientists really believe that other scientists are bad people simply for espousing unpopular theories? --, but it is completely rational if our model is correct. Assume you adhere to the egalitarian meliorist narrative. You encounter Arthur Jensen's argument that genetics probably play some role in the black-white intelligence gap. First, you would detect this as a threat to your sacred value (equality). Then, you would almost certainly attempt to *refute* Jensen's argument in any way possible (confirmation bias). You might read reams of books and articles arguing against Jensen. After this, you would think that Jensen's argument was painfully weak and, in fact, preposterous. You would then seek a reason Arthur Jensen would have published such a thinly supported theory that had potentially dangerous ramifications. One obvious reason is because Jensen was a morally corrupt human being.

(Also, many PEMs may believe that the hypotheses that are forwarded are more extreme than they really are; in other words, the threat such hypotheses present is often grossly exaggerated; see table 1).

ACTUAL HYPOTHESIS	HOW INTERPRETED
1. Some of the black-white gap in intelligence is caused by genetics	1. Blacks are genetically inferior to whites and deserve to be poor
2. Some of the disparate representation in STEM fields is caused by differences in personality traits between men and women	2. Women are inferior to men in science and should not be allowed equal opportunity to participate in science fields
3. There are differences among racial groups because of different evolutionary histories	3. There is a racial hierarchy and Caucasians are at the top and Africans are at the bottom

Table 1. Often hypotheses that are moderate and reasonable are exaggerated by those who see them as dangerous. For example, Jensen's hypothesis, cited in the introduction, that some of the black-white gap in intelligence is probably caused by genetics is interpreted to mean that blacks are genetically inferior to whites. It is unclear how much of this misinterpretation is willful and how much is automatic. However, such hypotheses are often presented to the public in a grossly exaggerated form, convincing fair-minded people that those who originally proposed the hypotheses must be acting with malicious motives.

And the second is that it discredits such researchers, and it deters others from engaging in similar research (or reaching similar conclusions). This explanation, of course, is more obvious and is quite well documented (Haidt, 2012; Watson, 1998). So, to stick with the Arthur Jensen example, imagine, again, that you are a paranoid egalitarian meliorist. You fervently believe that evidence of genetic differences between blacks and whites will lead to deleterious consequences, so you want to prevent others from encountering such evidence or from taking such evidence seriously if they do encounter it. If you attack Jensen's character, you may undermine his arguments by associating them with racism or some other nefarious attitude; and you may deter other scholars from pursuing research about race differences in intelligence.

We should clarify, before moving to section IV, that our theory does suggest that the focus on political party affiliation is slightly (though certainly not entirely, as noted above) misguided. A straightforward hypothesis of the political party affiliation theory of bias is that researchers who forward theories and/or data that contradict any of the sacred tenets of liberalism (because the social sciences are overwhelmingly liberal) should be attacked, criticized, and maligned as much researchers who forward theories and or data that violate the sacred tenets of egalitarianism meliorism. The PEM model, on the other hand, predicts that the most vicious attacks will be reserved exclusively for those who

threaten the sacred egalitarian narrative, and that many of the attacks will come from conservatives and libertarians who also adhere to the sacred egalitarian narrative[5]. Although this is obviously an empirical question, history suggests that the PEM model's predictions are accurate. Many scholars who have attacked various tenets of (modern political) liberalism (for example, Matt Ridley, Thomas Sowell, Clark McCauley, and Steven Pinker) remain in good standing in the academy, despite some snipes and slanders. On the other hand, those scholars who have threatened the sacred egalitarian narrative (for example, Charles Murray, J. P. Rushton, Arthur Jensen, Richard Lynn, and Linda Gottfredson) suffered relentless smear campaigns and remain outside of the academic mainstream (and are especially abhorred in fields such as social psychology and sociology).

IV

Duarte and colleagues (2015) forwarded several reasons liberal dominance in social psychology can lead to bias. They also addressed some of the mechanisms through which such bias might manifest. We agree with most of what they said; therefore, we will only briefly describe how PEM can lead to widespread bias in the social sciences. In other words, we believe that Duarte et al.'s description of bias is largely accurate, and we mean only to add a few nuances and to adjust the model to account for PEM.

In our model, there are two distal causes and four direct causes of bias in the social sciences (see table 2). The two distal causes are (1) that the number of PEMs has increased in the population, especially in the population of educated citizens; and (2) that PEMs are naturally attracted to the social sciences. The four proximate causes are (1) that more PEMs in the social sciences leads to the establishment of a sacred egalitarian narrative and pressure to conform to it; (2) that this shared sacred narrative (possibly) leads to biased hiring and tenure processes, and also to administrative pressures; (3) that this development of a shared narrative also leads to biased peer review decisions and scientific double standards (Gottfredson, 2012); and (4) that all of these distorted peer review processes feedback into the system, augmenting existing biases (see figure 2).

DISTAL CAUSES
1. Increased number of PEMs in population
2. PEMs are naturally attracted to social sciences
PROXIMATE CAUSES
1. More PEMs in social sciences leads to sacred narrative and taboo areas
2. Shared narrative leads to biased hiring/tenure processes
3. Shared narrative also leads to biased peer review and scientific double standards
4. Biased reviews feed back into the system and exacerbate existing bias

Table 2. Causes of bias in social sciences.

DISTAL CAUSES

(1): Social scientists Ronald Inglehart and Christian Welzel (Inglehart & Welzel, 2005; Welzel, 2013) have shown that there has been a dramatic increase in the prevalence of emancipative values across the twentieth and into the twenty-first century. Emancipative values, according to Welzel, reflect a desire for autonomy and equality of opportunity (Welzel, 2013, p. 67). We believe that such emancipative values also lead to what Thomas Sowell (2007) called an "unconstrained vision" of human nature. According to this vision, humans are largely perfectible and are limited only by the flaws and shortcomings of their surrounding environments. This vision is an almost inevitable concomitant of emancipative values because it emphasizes individual autonomy and freedom from constraint (in this case, from internal constraint). It also almost inevitably gives rise to a desire for what Sowell (2002) called "cosmic justice," that is, the extirpation of all undeserved inequalities (including individual and group differences). And this leads to a sacred egalitarian narrative, which not only contends but sacredly proclaims that all groups are identical on all socially valued traits. Therefore, across the twentieth and twenty-first centuries as emancipative values have increased so has the number of egalitarian meliorists (and paranoid egalitarian meliorists).

(2): This cause is more speculative than the others. However, it seems plausible to us that PEMs would be more attracted to the social sciences than they would to other disciplines. We have focused largely on the *egalitarian* part of paranoid egalitarian meliorism, but the *meliorism* is also important. PEMs believe that they can (and should), through dedicated effort, alleviate many existing ills in the world. In the social sciences, they believe that they will be able to pick research areas that promote their goals. Therefore, through self-selection, the social sciences become comprised of a large proportion of PEMs.

PROXIMATE CAUSES

(1): Because many social scientists share the same egalitarian narrative, they can elevate that narrative almost to the level of an orthodox theology. Certain assumptions are simply accepted; they are true, and anyone who challenges them is cast out and attacked as a heretic (in part V, we will examine some researchers who were thus cast out and attacked). This prevents researchers from exploring certain hypotheses and, indeed, seals off entire areas of research from investigation. These areas become taboo--untouchable by any researcher who desires to maintain good standing in the academy.

(2): The establishment of a sacred narrative almost inevitably leads to biased hiring and tenure processes. In section III we noted that ad hominem attacks are a natural, though not inevitable, manifestation of PEM. PEMs often honestly believe that researchers who forward theories and/or data which challenge the sacred egalitarian narrative are morally reprehensible. Because of this, they are very unlikely to desire to hire those researchers. Note that this does not need to be some kind of top-down conspiracy (although it

certainly can be) with shadowy bureaucrats colluding to punish heretics. It can be a natural, bottom-up process. Imagine, again, that you are a PEM. You believe that Arthur Jensen is a bad person for forwarding dangerous hypotheses about racial differences in intelligence. You *definitely* don't want to hire him. Most of your colleagues would probably feel the same. Therefore, researchers who challenge the egalitarian meliorist narrative have a difficult time finding and keeping desirable jobs.

Although this contention is very hard to test, some research does support it. Rothman, Lichter, and Nevitte (2005), for example, found that, controlling for productivity, conservative academics were at less prestigious institutions than were liberal academics. Conservatives, as we have noted, are probably more likely to challenge egalitarian meliorism than are liberals. However, many conservatives are egalitarian meliorists in one way or another. Therefore, we suspect that this effect would be larger if one were to look directly at the degree to which researchers challenged the egalitarian meliorist narrative rather than at their political party affiliation. That is, because many conservative researchers *do not* directly challenge egalitarian meliorism they are not so discriminated against as those researchers who do. And if one focused only on those researchers who do challenge egalitarian meliorism, one would probably find that they paid a steep price in institutional prestige for their defiance of the orthodox sacred narrative.

Furthermore, many social psychology and sociology job advertisements and mission statements directly appeal to egalitarian meliorists, almost certainly dissuading others from even applying. For just one example, the Santa Cruz social psychology website (see http://psychology.ucsc.edu/about/research/research-areas-social.html) has an informational essay on its main page that is entitled "Social Justice." The essay describes the mission of the department, noting that they "examine justice-related issues in different cultural, political, and policy contexts, through a variety of research methods." Students are encouraged "to attend to issues of race, class, sexuality, ethnicity, gender, and physical ableness, and are steeped in critical theoretical perspectives such as feminist theory." Of course, this is a very unique and ideologically saturated description of "social justice," which excludes, for example, attending to the amazing progress Western civilization has achieved because of the development and expansion of democracy and free markets (Pinker, 2011; Ridley, 2011).

(3): Scientific article submissions are reviewed by *other scientists in the field*. Of course, this usually makes sense. Who can better assess the qualities of a scientific paper than the experts in the field? However, when most scientists in a community share a sacred narrative, this process can lead to biased journals because reviewers are more critical to manuscripts that violate that narrative than they are to manuscripts that don't; and, they may be more favorable to manuscripts that explicitly or implicitly support it than those that don't. Such scientific double standards act as a sieve that selectively filters out challenges to the sacred narrative.

Some evidence supports these claims of reviewing bias, but, as is usual, more research is needed. For example, Abramowitz, Gomez, and Abramowitz (1975) asked psychologists to review a manuscript and rate its suitability for publication. The article's methods and

analyses were held constant across conditions. In one condition, however, student protesters who were occupying an administration building were described as more mentally healthy than a cross-section of students on campus, and in the other, the protesters were described as less mentally healthy. Reviewers who were more liberal than others were more lenient in the pro-protestor condition than in the anti-protester condition. And those more liberal reviewers were stricter than less liberal reviewers in the anti-protester condition. In a large study of the peer-review process, Mahoney (1977) also found congruent results, noting that reviewers were biased against articles that contradicted their theoretical perspectives.

Ceci, Peters, and Plotkin (1985) found similar results in assessments of Internal Review Board applications. Specifically, they submitted proposals that hypothesized either "reverse discrimination" (that is, discrimination against Whites) or traditional discrimination (that is, against ethnic minorities). The rest of the application was held constant. The Internal Review Boards approved the "reverse discrimination" proposals less often.

(4): Assuming that proximate cause three is true (and we think it is), it would inevitably create a synergistic effect with existing bias because journals would publish many more articles that support the sacred egalitarian narrative than that challenge it. New generations of researchers would be educated with those articles, imbibing and internalizing evidence that buttresses the narrative while not encountering strong challenges to it. And this all leads to increasing ideological purity because those researchers who do not agree with the orthodoxy in the social sciences will choose other careers (perhaps, for example, in economics). In a sense, this last cause acts as a boiler to cook out the remaining impurities, leaving behind an unadulterated ideology.
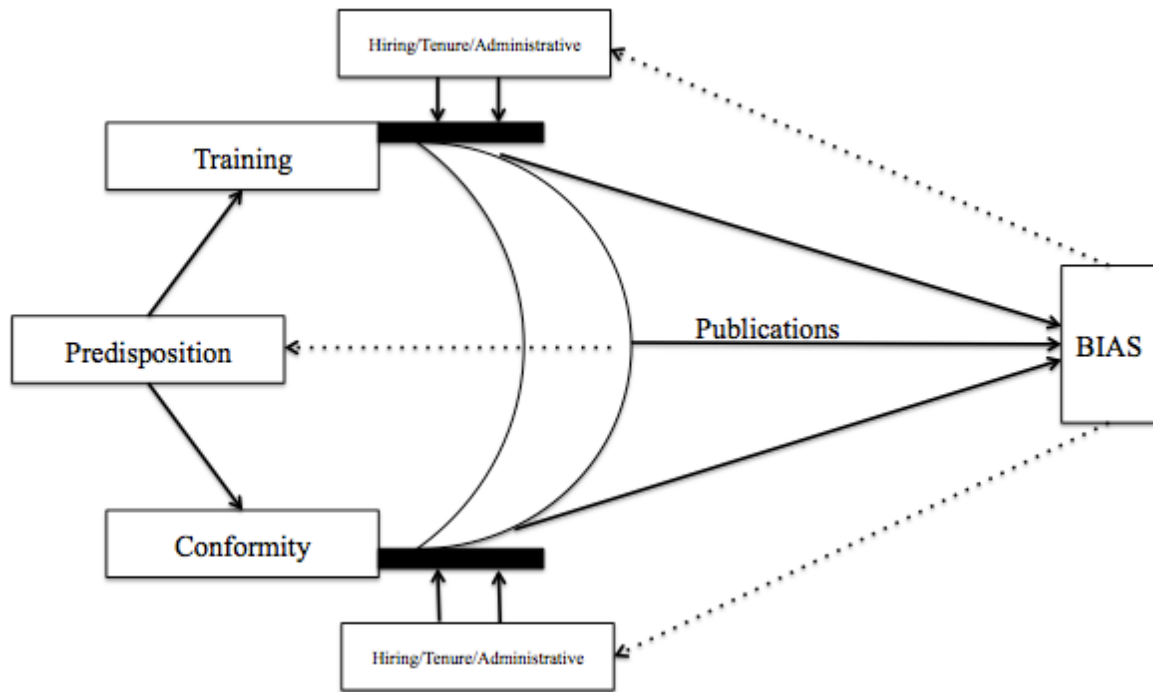
Figure 2. A model depicting bias in the social sciences. First, many people who are attracted to the social sciences are PEMs, because they believe they can ameliorate social ills by studying social relationships. Second, they are trained to perceive humans as largely determined by social forces; also they conform to peers who believe that humans are largely determined by social forces. These individual tendencies are intensified by institutional forces (hiring decisions, tenure decisions, and administrative pressures) which are depicted as squeezing a lens in this model, making it more biased. These forces all lead to biased publications, which then feed back into the system (depicted by dotted lines), reinforcing existing biases. See text for further explication.

V

In the above, we described the PEM model of bias in the social sciences. We contended that many social scientists adhere to a sacred egalitarian meliorist narrative and are especially sensitive to perceived threats to egalitarianism. In this section, we will examine three historical examples of vicious and sustained attacks on academics who were perceived to have threatened the egalitarian meliorist narrative. Each example illustrates that this problem not only plagues the social sciences and academia but also plagues much of the intelligentsia more broadly (for example, mainstream media outlets). Each example also illustrates the deadening effect on discourse such crusades can cause.

1. Charles Murray and *The Bell Curve*

In 1994, Richard J. Herrnstein and Charles Murray published *The Bell Curve: Intelligence and Class Structure in American Life.* The book was an incredibly long exploration of the relation between intelligence and life outcomes in the United States. Specifically, Herrnstein and Murray argued: (1) that general intelligence is real and can be measured reasonably well with existing instruments; (2) that individuals vary in general intelligence; (3) that the heritability of general intelligence is probably no lower than 40% and no higher than 80%; (4) that various forces in the United States were conspiring to make general intelligence more important than it had been before; (5) that a "cognitive elite" was separating from the rest of the population; and (6) that social problems were becoming increasingly populated among those with low cognitive ability. Herrnstein and Murray also included two chapters (13 and 14) in which they reviewed evidence that there were large ethnic differences in intelligence scores, that at least some of those differences were (probably) caused by genetic factors, and that those differences had large real-world consequences. It is important to note, before addressing the conflagration of criticism and outrage the Bell Curve ignited, just how cautious and moderate Herrnstein and Murray were when they addressed ethnic differences in intelligence:

> "It seems highly likely to us that both genes and the environment have something to do with racial differences. What might that mix be? We are resolutely agnostic on that issue; as far as we can determine, the evidence does not yet justify an estimate." (p. 311)

The response to the Bell Curve was furious. After a few thoughtful reviews (for example, in the New York Times Book Review, see Browne, 1994), the book was excoriated and review after review panned Herrnstein and Murray, calling them elitists and racists. Soon, many academics joined in, writing reviews, essays, and even books criticizing the Bell Curve and eviscerating its authors. Stephen J. Gould (1994), in a representative review, stated that Herrnstein and Murray "claim that racial differences in IQ are *mostly* determined by genetic causes…[emphasis added]." And concluded that the message of the Bell Curve must be resisted or else it would "cut off all possibility of proper nurturance for everyone's intelligence." Many reviews made Gould's distortions appear tame. For example, Bob Hebert, writing for the New York Times (1994), wrote that "Mr. Murray" was "getting kicks by thinking up ways to drape the cloak of respectability over the obscene and long-discredited views of the world's most rabid racists." He concluded, "It's an ugly stunt. Mr. Murray can protest all he wants, his book is just a genteel way of calling somebody a nigger."

Murray is still hounded by accusations that he is a racist and an anti-poor elitist. In fact, Murray's reputation was so thoroughly besmirched by the "bell curve wars" that those who cite his works today are also vulnerable to accusations of racism. In 2014, Paul Ryan, a Republican congressman from Wisconsin, was blasted simply for quoting a Charles Murray book (in this case, *Losing Ground*, not *The Bell Curve*). For example, Josh Marshall (2014) wrote that, "When you start off by basing your arguments around the work of Charles Murray you just lose your credibility from the start." Marshall then lists a few reasons one loses credibly for quoting Charles Murray, including that Murray

"is best known for attempting to marshal social science evidence to argue that black people are genetically not as smart as white people."

Not every attack or criticism on *The Bell Curve* was unconstructive, and science requires robust and vigorous debate. It is doubtful that Herrnstein and Murray got everything right. And scientists, therefore, need to discuss, debate, and test their contentions. But many of the fulminations against *The Bell Curve* followed the pattern illustrated above: they disregarded most of the book (which is *not* about race differences), misrepresented Herrnstein and Murray's arguments (for example, Gould claimed that Herrnstein and Murray argued that *"race differences in IQ are mostly* determined by genetic causes," which is demonstrably untrue), and attacked Herrnstein and Murray's personal character, accusing them of nefarious motives (racism). In a sense, the intelligentsia turned Murray into an effigy to publicly pummel so as to deter other scholars from daring to challenge so directly the sacred egalitarian narratives that they hold dear.

2. Larry Summers and women in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM)

In 2005, Larry Summers, then president of Harvard university, gave a talk to the National Bureau of Economic Research (NBER) in which he addressed the differential representation of men and women (there are more men) in tenured positions in science and engineering at prestigious universities and research institutions. He forwarded three hypotheses to explain the differential representation: (1) the high-powered job hypothesis; (2) the differential aptitude at the extreme end of the intelligence distribution hypothesis; and (3) the socialization and discrimination hypothesis. According to hypothesis 1, men are more willing than women to work the long, grueling hours required to be successful in a math or engineering department at a top-tier university. According to hypothesis 2, there are more men than women at the extreme ends of the intelligence distribution (both on the low end and the high end); therefore, there are more men than women of exceptional intellectual ability. And, according to hypothesis 3, women are socialized to pursue "feminine" hobbies and jobs and are discriminated against in certain academic disciplines such as science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM).

The response to Summers' speech was rapid and vitriolic. MIT biologist, Nancy Hopkins, who attended the conference, first provided details of the speech to a Boston Globe journalist, and reported that she had to leave the talk because if she had stayed she "would've either blacked out or thrown up" (Bombardieri, 2005) The Globe contacted five other participants who said they were "deeply offended" by Summers' speech (and four who were not). As soon as details about the speech spread, Summers was widely depicted as being an intolerant sexist. For example, in a relatively representative article at the Guardian, provocatively (and misleading) entitled *Why women are poor at science, by Harvard president,* Suzanne Goldenberg (2005) painted a tendentious picture of Summers as a right-wing bully who had clashed with his African-American and left-wing colleagues. Although these details (even if true) were not at all relevant, they were included in the article to "contextualize" selected snippets from his speech. Those snippets, of course, were also carefully chosen to look as damning to Summers as

possible. There were few sentences in the article addressing the actual empirical status of Summers' hypotheses.

Similar mischaracterizations were reported in many media outlets, leading to more and more hostility.
The growing furor over Summer's comments eventually led to his resignation (although, this controversy was certainly not the sole cause).

As with the criticisms of *The Bell Curve*, not every criticism of Summers' speech was ugly or ill informed. And Summers' almost certainly got some things wrong (and he was actually quite circumspect in the speech, and noted that he was certainly not an expert on many of the issues he was discussing). But many of the attacks on Summers' speech completely ignored his cautions and assailed his character, accusing him of maleficent subterranean motives such as a desire to oppress women or discourage them from entering science (which is *the exact opposite of what he said in the speech!*). Similar to Murray, Summers' reputation was thoroughly besmirched by the nasty attacks he faced, and he is still haunted by accusations of sexism (See, also, Pinker, 2005, for a good analysis of this controversy).

3. Nicholas Wade and *A Troublesome Inheritance*

In 2014, Nicholas Wade, then a respected scientific journalist at the New York Times, published the book, *A Troublesome Inheritance: Genes, Race and Human History* (2014a)*.* The book was, with possibly one exception (see Sarich & Miele, 2004), the first of its kind: a mainstream book (published by Penguin) about race differences and their possible consequences in human societies. In it, Wade argued: (1) that researchers have shied away from studying racial differences because of moral concerns; (2) that those moral concerns are legitimate but probably misguided because our society is not threatened by a rebirth of racist policies; (3) that race is a biologically real and useful category; (4) that human races are probably different from each other in small, but non-trivial ways; and (5) that some of these differences may explain variation in the structure and function of different human civilizations. It is useful to note, before examining the copious attacks and curses Wade's book provoked, how forthcoming Wade was about the speculative nature of his undertaking (because this was a source of many attacks)[6]:

> "The conclusions presented in these chapters fall far short of proof. However plausible (or otherwise) they may seem, many are speculative. There is nothing wrong with speculation, of course, as long as its premises are made clear. And speculation is the customary way to begin the exploration of uncharted territory because it stimulates a search for the evidence that will support or refute it." (p. 15)

The response to Wade's book was swift and almost universally hostile. After a laudatory review by Charles Murray at the Wall Street Journal, a deluge of antagonistic essays and

reviews followed, many of them ignoring Wade's cautions and candor and assailing his character, insinuating, often not subtly, that he was either a racist or an ignoramus who would inevitably provide fodder for racists. For example, Eric Michael Johnson, an evolutionary anthropologist writing at Scientific American, published a review entitled *On the Origin of White Power* which included a picture of the Ku Klux Klan. The review begins, with strong suggestions of irony, "Nicholas Wade is not a racist" (Johnson, 2014). It goes on to associate Nicholas Wade with all kinds of unsavory political organizations and attitudes, quoting David Duke as saying, "Wade says in this book many of the things I've been saying for the last 40 years of my life," which is, of course, a transparent attempt to smear Wade by association. In between, the review does address some of the science and raises several useful criticisms of Wade's narrative; however, these are almost certainly lost to most readers and what is left is the strong insinuation that Wade is a racist who is trying to provide "scientific" support for those who share his white supremacist views.

Many similar reviews were published, and eventually, 139 geneticists and evolutionary scientists published a somewhat strange open letter in the New York Times that appeared to denounce *A Troublesome Inheritance* (Coop, Eisen, Nielsen, Przeworski, & Rosenberg, 2014). In it, the authors accused Wade of "misappropriating" research from geneticists to "substantiate" his own "guesswork." The letter states that "...Wade juxtaposes an incomplete and inaccurate account of our research on human genetic differences with speculation that recent natural selection has led to worldwide differences in I.Q. test results, political institutions, and economic development…" It is not entirely clear what the authors want to reject about Wade's book: his presentation of their research (possibly?), or his hypotheses about race differences around the world (almost certainly?). Obviously, these researchers are free to write, sign, and publish such a letter, and to engage Wade in a critical dialogue (which, unfortunately, Wade sometimes undermined in the weeks ensuing his book's publication by using ad hominem attacks of his own, see, for example, Wade, 2014b). However it is not common to write an open letter repudiating someone's legitimate hypotheses without forwarding evidence that those hypotheses are wrong. Many researchers, no doubt, disagree with other researchers who cite their own work. They do not usually write an open letter disavowing those other researchers' hypotheses.

But, of course, those hypotheses are not usually about race differences. What is likely, then, is that these geneticists were attempting to separate themselves from Wade's very public violation of a sacred egalitarian narrative; and, in fact, some quite clearly wanted to rebut what they considered Wade's dangerous speculations. Mark Jobling (2014), for example, asserted that he signed the letter because the book is potentially dangerous and will possibly provide "succor for racists by using speculation to support the idea that differences between population groups are in their genes" (Jobling, p. 2). We do not mean to suggest that the signatories were acting in bad faith; they were probably confident that Wade's book really was dangerous and really might provide useful ammunition for racists. In other words, the book tripped their threat detectors, and they were strongly motivated to denounce Wade and his speculations.

As with *The Bell Curve* and Larry Summers' speech, Wade's book did receive some healthy and deserved criticisms. And science of course thrives on attempting to annihilate hypotheses, which it can then discard (or retain, if those hypotheses pass many empirical tests), so Wade's speculations should be exposed to rigorous criticism. However, many of the criticisms of Wade's book were either aimed at its author, accusing him of propounding pernicious doctrines because of some character defect or another, or misrepresented his views, reducing his nuanced presentation to simplistic assertions about racial essences[7]. As with the two examples above, Wade was made an effigy and then publicly bludgeoned. It remains to be seen if his reputation will recover.

These three examples appear to illustrate quite well what happens to scholars who violate sacred egalitarian narratives. First, their works are often mischaracterized in crude ways. Second, the mischaracterized accounts are savagely attacked. And third, the scholars themselves are assailed for having hidden malignant motives (for example, sexism or racism). These three examples also seem to support our contention from section III that the sacred egalitarian narrative not political party affiliation per se is the major cause of bias in academia (and in the intelligentsia more broadly). We cannot think of a single comparable case in which a scholar was viciously smeared and denounced for attacking components of liberalism *not associated with egalitarianism*. For just one example, Gary Kleck, a professor at Florida State University, has published many articles that argue that many gun-control policies are useless and that the influence of gun ownership on crime rates is effectively neutral (Kleck & Patterson, 1993; Kleck, 2015). Kleck has certainly earned the ire of many liberals who vigorously dispute his findings and arguments; however, he has not been removed from the domain of respectable discourse or forced to suffer the unremitting assaults that Murray, Summers, Wade, Jensen and others have.

V

A few scholars have started to draw attention to potential biases in social psychology (and in the social sciences more broadly) (For example, Duarte et al., 2015; Haidt, 2012; Jussim, 2015; Tetlock, 1994). In this essay, we praised these scholars for focusing attention on this problem, and we largely agreed with their contention that the overwhelming proportion of liberals compared to conservatives in the social sciences is one cause of bias. However, we located a major cause of bias in the social sciences in a sacred egalitarian meliorist narrative, which is partially independent of a liberal/conservative divide (although, certainly not entirely).

We argued that many scholars in the social sciences are paranoid egalitarian meliorists (PEMs). Although paranoid sounds pejorative, we explained that in this context it simply refers to a fine-tuned sensitivity to threats to egalitarianism. PEMs are people who hold a sacred egalitarian meliorist narrative *and* who are very sensitive to perceived challenges to it. From this perspective, paranoid egalitarian meliorism (PEM) is not necessarily bad; and, in fact, in some respects, PEM is a positive good. People *should be* vigilant to potential threats to vulnerable populations. As the rise of numerous demagogues across history illustrates, it is troublingly easy to convert social unease into fear and hatred of marginalized groups. However, in science, PEM can lead to bad outcomes because the

scientific enterprise requires relative objectivity and freedom to inquire and explore. The goal of science is the pursuit of truth, and truth often challenges our cherished narratives about reality (Dreger, 2015). This means that some data, some hypotheses, and some theories will inevitably impugn someone's favorite story about human nature. Truth, in this sense, is almost certainly an equal opportunity offender (Hunt, 1998). Science will better thrive if these offenses are accepted as unpleasant but necessary steps on the path toward truth rather than rejected as intolerable affronts to decency.

End Notes

[1] A scientific article can be responsibly written and also wrong (whether Jensen was wrong is a complicated debate that we do not need to resolve here). Scientists forward hypotheses, which they and other scientists then feverishly attempt to refute (or falsify). It is perfectly reasonable to forward a hypothesis that is later falsified, and it is not evidence of bias or personality flaws to do so. Jensen was, according to everyone who knew him, singularly without racial bias.

[2] Some trades are more acceptable than others. The thought of trading a child's life for a material good, say a new Porsche, would disgust all normal humans. However, the thought of trading a child's life for the lives of 56 children is different, although certainly disturbing (see Tetlock, 2003).

[3] Egalitarian meliorism appears to accept that there are *some* biological differences among individuals, but that these differences are relatively unimportant. However, it does not accept that there are any systematic differences among social classes, sexes, or ethnic groups (Horowitz, Yaworsky, & Kickham, 2014).

[4] Adding more complications to this model, we can imagine 5 types of attitudes toward individual and group inequalities: (1) such inequalities would have no or few pernicious consequences; (2) such inequalities would have dire consequences but those are irrelevant; (3) such inequalities would have dire consequences and are very relevant; (4) such inequalities may or may not have dire consequences; and (5) such inequalities would be positively good (see table 1). Each of these attitudes corresponds to a type of detection system. For example, attitude 1 would result in the creation of a Bayesian system that is designed for optimal accuracy and that therefore makes an equal number of false alarms and false negatives. It is not designed to systematically err in one direction or the other. Upon the other hand, attitude 3 would result in the creation of a system that operates very much like a commercial smoke detector and that therefore makes many more false alarms than false negatives. Consider the example about men and women in engineering. System 1 would not see research that personality traits caused outcome differences in men and women as a threat; therefore, system 1 would analyze the data evenhandedly. System 3, on the other hand, would see the research as a threat to equality and would therefore strive to somehow dismiss the data.

[5] It is almost certain that conservatives and libertarians are less likely to adhere to egalitarian meliorism than liberals (Graham, Haidt, & Nosek, 2009); however, our experience and observations suggest that many conservatives and libertarians do, in fact, adhere to some form of egalitarian meliorism, often blaming inequalities in society on failed schools, broken families, degenerating morals, and welfare dependency rather than (even partially) on biological differences among individuals or groups.

[6] Possibly, this is still a legitimate source of criticism, because Wade does, from time to time, appear to forget about his cautions (see, Orr, 2014). Nevertheless, one would not guess how candid Wade was from reading most of the reviews about the book.

[7] Wade, for example, was very clear in the book that racial categorization is complicated and that "because there is no clear dividing line, there are no distinct races--that is the nature of variation within a species. Nonetheless, useful distinctions can be made" (2014a, p. 92). However, when many researchers rejected his hypotheses, they accused him of crude Platonism. For example, Jennifer Raff argued that "If Wade is right and races are distinct biological categories…," which is literally the opposite of what Wade argued (Raff, 2014). And Sarah Tishkoff, a signer of the open letter against *A Troublesome Inheritance*, noted that "You may see that individuals cluster by major geographic regions. The problem is, there are no firm boundaries," (quoted from

Callaway, 2014) which is *exactly what Wade asserted*, namely, there are no "distinct races," so, of course, there aren't any "firm boundaries."

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