

Uncertainty, Academic Radicalization
and
the Erosion of Social Science Credibility

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The psychology of insecurity: Seeking certainty where none can be found

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Abstract

This chapter presents a perspective on the role of uncertainty and distress in the radicalization of the social sciences, including social psychology, and it discusses some of the consequences of that radicalization. Political extremism often emerges as a response to uncertainty. Ironically, extremism often constitutes an embrace of simplistic dogmas and myopic certainties about answers to complex questions. After reviewing these processes, how they might apply to and explain the radicalization of the American social sciences is discussed. Evidence is reviewed documenting the extent to which such radicalization has occurred. The chapter then reviews evidence regarding ways in which this can threaten the validity of some of the most highly canonized conclusions in the social sciences on politicized topics. We conclude the chapter by specifying some clearly falsifiable hypotheses that have emerged from this perspective, including the prediction that the continuing radicalization of the social sciences will erode public trust and credibility given to the claims that emerge on politicized topics.

Uncertainty and insecurity can produce extremism, in part, to mitigate that uncertainty through the embrace of simplistic dogmas. Thus, ironically, uncertainty can eventually produce not just certainty, but a particularly poisonous form of certainty. Whether fascists, White supremacists, or Qanon-devotees on the right, or Marxists, anti-fascists, or various critical social justice theories on the left, extremists are often characterized by dogmatic certainties about truth and morality. Blinding certainty brooks no dissent, a key component of authoritarian movements everywhere. Why did Germany lose WWI? Jewish conspiracies. Why was life so terrible for peasants under the Czar? Exploitative bourgeoisie and Kulaks. Why did Trump win the 2016 election? Russian interference. Why did Trump lose the 2020 election? It was stolen.

This psychological witches brew renders extremists particularly vulnerable to delusional scientific beliefs (e.g., the purging of “Jewish” science from Nazi Germany, and the embrace of Lysenkoism in the Soviet Union), terrible policy decisions, and violations of basic human rights up to and including committing large scale atrocities. Both fascist and communist regimes have committed mass murder on unimaginable scales. In the aftermath of George Floyd’s murder in the U.S. there was a wave of protests that included over \$2 billion in property damage and set the stage for dozens of murders (RealClearInvestigations, 2022). The few cities that moved to defund police, soon rediscovered why they needed police.

This chapter presents a perspective on the role of uncertainty and distress in the radicalization of the social sciences, including social psychology. We restrict our discussion to the U.S. because it is the society we know best. Whether anything here applies to social psychology elsewhere (e.g., Bangladesh, Bolivia, Bulgaria or Burundi) is not addressed in this chapter because we lack sufficient information about it to perform a serious analysis.

This review documents the extent to which the radicalization of the social sciences has occurred, and then reviews evidence regarding ways in which this can threaten the validity of some of the most highly canonized conclusions on politicized topics. We conclude the chapter by specifying some clearly falsifiable hypotheses that have emerged from this perspective, including the prediction that the continuing radicalization of the social sciences will erode public trust and credibility given to the claims that emerge on politicized topics.

Defining Terms

Because our analysis is restricted to the academy in the United States our terms are selected to apply to it. Whether the analysis here applies to other countries is an empirical question we do not address, and if we were to address it, some of the terms require revision.

Uncertainty: A feeling that makes it difficult to anticipate events, plan for the future and to take decisive action. In this chapter we explore uncertainty and the negative affect associated with uncertainty as a motivator for behavior that reduces uncertainty.

Psychological distress: A sense of meaninglessness that stems from anxious uncertainty, including perceived threats to individual or ingroup well-being and political or moral values.

Left: Anyone from center-left people who vote mostly for Democrats all the way to radical Marxists, intersectionalists, critical (race) theorists, and Social Justice. We use the definition of Social Justice ideology here that was provided by deBoer (2021): "...the political movement ... which combines several schools of academic progressivism such as intersectionality, trans-inclusionary feminism, and anti-racism with a focus on interpersonal relations as the primary site of political activity, resistance towards economic class as a political lens, and a belief in the essentially immutable prevalence of bigotry."

Right: Anyone from center-right who votes mostly Republican all the way to fascists and White supremacists.

Radicals: Those endorsing beliefs on any extreme end of the political spectrum.

Activist: Anyone seeking to achieve political goals as a participant, instigator, or leader of any sort of group effort.

Extremism: Is a tendency in behavior, group identity and belief toward profound convictions opposed to the universal human rights, liberal democracy, and rule of law (including due process protections), and/or advocating the supremacy of a certain group (racial, religious, political, economic, social, etc. (e.g., Trip, Bora, Marian, Halmajan, & Drugas, 2019).

The Psychology of Uncertainty and Political Extremism

People can feel uncertain about many things such as their beliefs, values, relationships, careers, their future and their place in the world. These dimensions often hold important foundations in their self-concept and identity. Since uncertainty can make it difficult to plan for the future and execute decisions, people can become highly motivated to reduce uncertainty. In this section, we review the evidence that captures the features of uncertainty that prompt a path of radicalization to extremist behaviors.

What Causes Extremism? Some Limitations To This Review

Not all uncertainty leads to extremism and uncertainty is not the only cause of extremism. Researchers have demonstrated that the path to extremism satisfies a multifaceted palette of needs, such as needs for control (Hogg & Adelman, 2013) and belonging (Leary, et al., 2006). It can also be a response to perceived unfairness or injustices (Moghaddam, 2005). Yet however important these other processes may be, they are not the focus of the present chapter.

How Does Uncertainty Lead To Extremism?

Life events are often wrought with the potential to create the uncertainty that generates feelings of personal insignificance, humiliation or helplessness. These events can catalyze extreme behaviors (Kruglanski, et al., 2014). Kruglanski and his team outlined a radicalization model that identified an individual's extremist behaviors stemming from a need to rectify a lack or loss of significance in their life, now known as Significance Quest Theory (SQT). The quest for significance is a means to relieve the turmoil and distress that results from uncertainty. Research examining SQT has found that perpetrators of ideologically motivated violence often had previously experienced economic and social loss of significance (Jasko et al., 2017).

The quest for significance includes a need for esteem, achievement, meaning, competence, control, desire to matter, to be someone, to have respect and so on (Kruglanski et al., 2009; Kruglanski et al., 2013, Deci & Ryan, 2000; Fiske, 2010; Frankl, 2000; Higgins, 2012; Maslow, 1943; White, 1959). Loss of significance and feelings of worthlessness are usually distressing, triggering a quest to regain what has been lost or protect what has been threatened. However, understanding problems and solutions is more difficult

and more uncertain in more complex environments. Consequently, the demand on cognitive resources to mitigate uncertainty increases as the environment becomes more complex. Because people are limited in their processing capacities, they need to apply shortcuts to arrive at a good enough solutions to loss of significance events, and regain a feeling of satisfaction or closure (Kruglanski, et al., 2012; Kruglanski, & Gigerenzer, 2011). These shortcuts reflect a need for simplicity during a time of extreme cognitive distress for the person and renders them vulnerable to the simple answers provided by extremist narratives.

When individuals are uncertain, they tend to seek out like-minded groups (Fiske & Taylor, 2008) and uncertainty has been found to amplify identification with radical groups, and to increase intentions to behave in more extreme, active, and mobilized ways to protect and promote ingroups (Hogg, et al., 2010). Combine this with findings that, when people are uncertain they are more likely to have a preference for strong, hierarchy-based, autocratic leadership (Rast et al., 2013) and one has a recipe for some of the worst forms of anti-democratic radicalism.

Foreshadowing our application of these ideas to social science, especially the consideration of alternative explanations for hot button social and political issues, the drive to reduce uncertainty can cause a **myopic effect**. As a result of this effect people devalue other important goals and become overly attentive to the focal goal. This happens through a disproportionate commitment to ends served by the extreme behavior that prompts a devaluation or a forceful suppression of alternative considerations (Shah, et al., 2002).

Ideological commitment to activism, orthodoxies, and dogma is key to radicalization because it identifies specific activities (e.g., crushing one's opponents) as the means of choice to the goal of personal significance (Shah, et al., 2002).

This myopic effect can be seen in a recent analysis of *monomania* (Haidt, 2021), defined as an unhealthy obsession with one thing. That one thing, in far right circles is often nationalism, and in far left circles, is often how the evil actions of the powerful create and sustain injustice. Haidt (2021) generated two hypotheses about monomania that foreshadow two of the main claims that appear in this chapter: 1. It makes groups illiberal; and 2. It makes them stupid. Although Shah et al (2002) did not use the term "monomania"

per se, the idea uncertainty leads to a myopic commitment to a single goal is consistent with Haidt's (2021) analysis.

Both left- and right-wing extremists consider their political beliefs to be superior on a range of topics, including health care, immigration, and affirmative action, compared with moderates (Toner, et al., 2013). Political extremists, both left and right, are overconfident in their beliefs (van Prooijen et al., 2018), and despise and caricaturize their opponents (Iyengar, et al., 2019; Westfall, et al., 2015). This is consistent with the psychology of the uncertain mind, the need to arrest distress is answered by simple solutions at the cost of accuracy. Later in this review, we present evidence strongly suggesting that such processes can be disastrous for the supposed truth-seeking commitments of social science.

Thus we have a completely ironic conclusion that is strongly supported by extensive research: Uncertainty causes certainty. Of course, it is not that simple. The fuller model is that uncertainty about issues fundamental to self and identity, especially the type of uncertainty experienced after some sort of loss of significance event, are often experienced as disturbing and people are then motivated to alleviate the distress. Extremists often provide simplistic answers to complex social and political problems. This simplicity is part of the appeal to someone distressed by uncertainty. Thus, uncertainty leads to radicalization, radicalization tends towards dogmatism and monomania, and it is in this manner that myopic certainties can be produced by seeking out simplified narratives and ignoring alternative explanations and goals.

Uncertainty and Extremism in the Academy

In this section we first review evidence for the radicalization of the American academy. Although a model is presented to provide a framework for understanding the evidence, this portion of the review is primarily empirical. Abundant evidence from survey research and real world events attests to the radicalization of the social sciences and humanities.

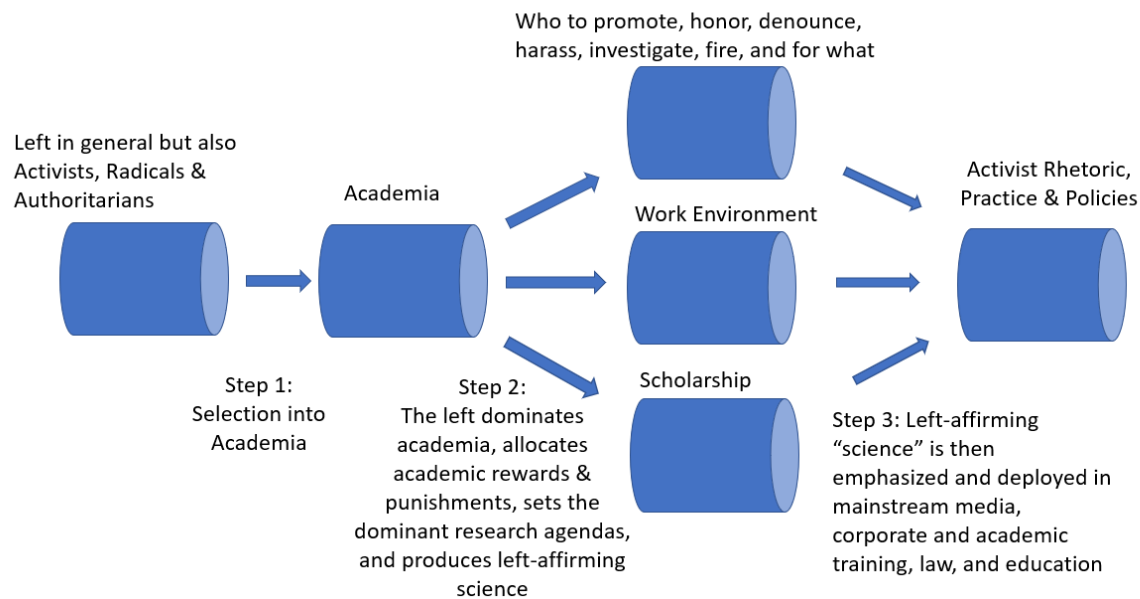
The second portion of this review is speculative. Given the wealth of evidence documenting a link between uncertainty and extremism, *in general*, we apply the insights gleaned from that work to generate

testable explanations for how uncertainty contributed to the hard leftward shift in the American social sciences and humanities.

The Radicalization of the Social Sciences and Humanities

Figure 1 presents the Activist to Academia to Activism Pipeline Model of Academic Self-Radicalization. Although a full review of the evidence for the model can be found elsewhere (Honeycutt & Jussim, in press), we briefly summarize its main features next.

Activist to Academia to Activism Pipeline Model of Radicalization



Step 1 captures the now-abundant evidence that radicals, activists, and extremists select into academia. The social sciences and humanities skew massively left, which has been demonstrated using multiple methodologies, including party registration, donations to political candidates and causes, self-reported ideology, and self-reported voting. For example, the ratio of registered Democrats to Republicans ranges from about 10:1 to over 40:1 in most social science and humanities disciplines (Langbert & Stevens, 2021). In social psychology, in 2012, faculty voted 301-4 for Obama over Romney (Buss & von Hippel, 2018). Surveys of faculty consistently show that not merely do social science and humanities professors skew left, large minorities, about 40% self-describe as radicals, activists or Marxists (Gross & Simmons, 2014; Kaufmann, 2021).

In Step 2, led by the radicals and activists, academia creates a hostile work environment not merely for political opponents, but for almost any academic who expresses dissent against prevailing leftist orthodoxies and shibboleths. Even after controlling for measures of actual academic achievement (such as publication), faculty holding more left positions on social attitudes end up at more prestigious institutions (Rothman & Lichter, 2009). Faculty (regardless of their personal politics) are vastly more likely to be hounded and harassed for expressing views skeptical of diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives, arguing for merit-based policies rather than affirmative action, or views critical of the concepts common to the oppression toolbox of modern academia (implicit bias, microaggressions, stereotype threat, systemic racism, white supremacy, etc.) than for expressing support for those initiatives or views (German & Stevens, 2021, 2022; Honeycutt & Jussim, in press).

The recent blossoming of work on leftwing authoritarianism (LWA; Conway et al., 2018; Costello et al., 2022) is useful for understanding the self-radicalizing nature of the social sciences. This work demonstrates that LWA has three key psychological characteristics: intolerance, censorship, and aggression, all directed at one's political opponents. Leftwing authoritarian aggression can manifest as social vigilantism (attempts to impose one's moral views on others, see Saucier & Webster, 2010; Costello et al., 2022), a phenomena anyone can see for themselves in academic Twitter on a daily basis.

We speculate that LWA is common in the academy on several grounds. First, the left is overrepresented in the social sciences. A largely nonleft presence in many fields predicts about double the level of people who identify as far left compared to the American population. Most surveys indicate that 4-15% of Americans are on the far left (Hawkins, Yudkin, Juan-Torres, & Dixon, 2018; Pew Research Center, 2014; Twenge et al., 2016). In fields or departments lacking a nonleft presence, heuristically, one might guess that the far left is overrepresented in academia. With so few academics right of center, one could approximately double the estimates of the far left found in representative surveys of the general American public to arrive at an initial plausible estimate of the likely proportion of the far left to be found in academia (without the politically right half of the country, numbers on the left double). This produces a prediction that

about 20% of academics are on the far left, including a portion that would be expected to be high in LWA and hold extreme left-wing views.

Second, because academic hiring usually requires high levels of consensus, even a minority of extremists in some university or department may generally be sufficient to ensure hiring like-minded colleagues. Because hiring deliberations are usually confidential and behind closed doors, we doubt that this process is capable of empirical verification or falsification. However, indirect evidence consistent with it can be found in work showing that substantial minorities of academics *endorse* discriminating against their political opponents (e.g., Honeycutt & Freberg, 2017; Inbar & Lammers, 2012). This is the *political purity spiral hypothesis*: A field will move ever-further to the left because of groupthink and political ingroup favoritism until either saturation is reached or some external factor disrupts the process. Consistent with the political purity spiral hypothesis, surveys show that far left representation in the social sciences and humanities runs, not at 20%, but at around 40% (Gross & Simmons, 2014; Kaufmann, 2021).

Third, one can look for evidence of LWA-type behaviors in the academy – especially censorship and aggression directed toward political opponents. There is converging evidence both from surveys of academics and from the real world, of academics seeking to punish their colleagues for transgressing against left shibboleths (see Stevens et al, 2020 for a review; see also German & Stevens, 2021, 2022). Although punishing apostates has probably occurred through much of human history, in modern American parlance, these are often referred to as “cancellation” attacks. For example, Kaufmann (2021) found that substantial minorities of faculty and nearly half of graduate students in social science and humanities fields *endorse* ousting academics who obtain research findings that contest certain left shibboleths, such as that diversity is not a net benefit, non-traditional parenthood is actually worse for children than non-traditional forms of parenthood, and that women and minorities actually perform worse in any work or school context.

Although survey responses are not actual behavior, behavioral manifestations of such beliefs can now be found throughout the academy. For example, Chemistry professor John Sherman was removed from teaching, placed on indefinite leave, and is being investigated for making statements such as, “Well, I’ll give you a fact. Black people do poorer on IQ tests than white people. Is that racist? That’s a fact. Is it racist to

say it? I don't know. Asians do better than white people on IQ tests, and that's a fact.”(Carl, 2022). Similarly, Dorian Abbott was first denounced by students at the University of Chicago, then disinvited from a prestigious talk at MIT after he criticized diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives (Meyer, 2020; Small, 2021).

Of course, these are just two anecdotes. But they are excellent examples of larger trends. Far more liberals than conservatives abandon friendships over political differences (Cox, 2021), and academic outrage mobs are far more likely to call for punishing someone who violates leftwing values and beliefs (German & Stevens, 2021, 2022; Honeycutt & Jussim, in press; Stevens et al, 2020). We use the term “academic outrage mob” to refer to: 1. Groups of academics; 2. Who have no official standing to inflict punishment (they are not the dean under whom the target works, or the editor or publisher of their paper); but who 3. Rise up in a chorus of denunciation of their target in order to get that target punished (deplatformed, disinvited, paper retracted, step down from a position, investigated, suspended, or fired). Mobs seeking to punish their ideological opponents is a classic manifestation of authoritarianism; when they are leftwing academic mobs, this is plausibly described as a manifestation of LWA. For example, academic outrage mobs have sought to get papers retracted that have contested the sensibilities of transgender activist or criticized affirmative action; and they have sought to get faculty fired for expressing skepticism about microaggressions, or publishing a book arguing that there was no evidence for a polar bear crisis resulting from climate change (Jussim, 2020; Stevens et al, 2020).

The Foundation for Individual Rights in Education (FIRE) maintains a Scholars Under Fire database (see also German & Stevens, 2021, 2022). A scholar is deemed to be targeted for sanction when there is “...a campus controversy involving efforts to investigate, penalize or otherwise *professionally* sanction a scholar for engaging in constitutionally protected forms of speech” (German & Stevens, 2021, p. 6). In 2021 alone, FIRE tracked over 100 such targeting incidents, with about two-thirds involving scholars targeted from the left. Given what is known about faculty political beliefs, it is likely that most of these scholars were also on the political left, but just not as far left as the people targeting them.

However, even that disparity *understates* the extent to which *the American academy* engages in LWA-type behavior. The attacks from the right in FIRE’s database *were almost all from outside of the academy* (for example, government officials or outrage mobs made up of people from the general public ginned up by rightwing media). Nearly all of the attacks from *within* the academy were from the left and nearly all of the attacks from the left were from *within* the academy. We conclude, therefore, that there is converging evidence from multiple sources – surveys, news reports, and FIRE’s database – to indicate a substantial presence of behavioral manifestations of leftwing authoritarianism in the American academy.

Is the Academy Really Far Left? Comparisons to the American Mainstream

This chapter is prepared for a book that will probably mostly be read by other academics. Therefore, what goes on in the academy is likely to seem “normal” rather than “extreme” to most academics, because it *is normal in academia*. What is politically “normal” in the academy, however, is not “normal” outside of it. Although one risks being denounced, deplatformed, and sanctioned for criticizing DEI efforts in the academy, vast majorities of Americans oppose hiring or admissions based on affirmative action (DEI is plausibly viewed as overlapping a great deal with affirmative action). For example, California, the largest state in the U.S., with over 10% of the country’s entire population, a state in which White people are a minority, and which is one of the most liberal states in the country, has voted twice to *ban* affirmative action in hiring (Friedersdorf, 2020). Similarly, national surveys also show widespread opposition to affirmative action. Over 70% of Americans oppose considering race in college admissions, including large majorities of Black (62%) and Hispanic (65%) respondents (Horowitz, 2019). Similarly, over 70% say race should not be considered in employment decisions, including 54% of Black and 69% of Hispanic respondents (Horowitz, 2019).

Another way to understand how far left of the American mainstream the academy is would be to compare DEI at universities to U.S. Supreme Court cases that permitted diversity to be a factor in college admissions. The Court wrote: “[t]here are many possible bases for diversity admissions,” and provides examples of admittees who have lived or traveled widely abroad, are fluent in several languages, have overcome personal adversity and family hardship, have exceptional records of extensive community service,

and have had successful careers in other fields.” We note that, although DEI and other diversity programs are legion throughout the American academy, we know of none that gives an admissions advantage based on any of these standards.

For example, Berkeley’s publicly posted rubric (Berkeley, 2022) for evaluating DEI statements includes none of these types of diversity and, instead, entirely focuses on progressive identity politics. From their rubric, the highest scores given to DEI statements reflect “Clear knowledge of, experience with, and interest in dimensions of diversity that result from different identities, such as ethnic, socioeconomic, racial, gender, sexual orientation, disability, and cultural differences.” That one risks being denounced, demonized, disinvited, deplatformed, and denied a job because one criticizes DEI, which is plausibly viewed as affirmative action on steroids – given how many Americans reject race/ethnicity based selection processes – exquisitely demonstrates how far left of the American mainstream the academy has become on issues of what to do about racial disparities.

Speculations on the Role of Uncertainty in the American Academy’s Shift to the Left

How did it get this way? The current state of the academy surely derives from a complex interplay of social, cultural and political forces. In this section, however, we offer some speculations on the role of uncertainty in producing this shift to the extreme left.

Uncertainty: If removing legally enforced oppression did not eliminate and hardly reduced inequality, what does? The social sciences and humanities have long focused on understanding prejudice, oppression, and inequality (Adorno et al, 1950s; Allport, 1954; La Piere, 1934). However, in the 1950s and 1960s, most of the legal structure supporting racial discrimination (school segregation, Jim Crow, redlining) was repealed and prohibited. Sweeping civil rights laws were passed and periodically strengthened over the years. Nonetheless, few of the substantial and sometimes massive racial and ethnic inequalities that existed at the time of the passage of Civil Rights legislation have been eradicated; some have barely diminished, if at all. Disparities exist in wealth, income, health, education and incarceration (USA Today, 2020).

This is where uncertainty comes in. There are always three very broad classes of potential explanations for such disparities (each with a myriad of variations within it): Current discrimination,

historical discrimination, and something about the groups themselves. The explanatory power of current discrimination is obvious. If a group's opportunities (whether in school or work) are restricted, they will fare worse. If a group is targeted for excess punishment by the criminal justice system, they will end up arrested and imprisoned more.

However, past discrimination can produce inequality in the absence of present discrimination. It can have a long reach by virtue of creating everything from enduring socio-economic differences to residential segregation patterns that can perpetuate modern inequalities even in the absence of modern discrimination. For example, relatively few Black American soldiers received the benefits of the 1944 G.I. Bill (Ibrahim, 2021), which provided tuition to attend college and reduced rate mortgages. By restricting the ability to obtain higher education and home ownership, this reduced the income and wealth of generations of Black Americans. Inheritance means that the inequalities created then persist today, even in the absence of modern discrimination. If poverty motivates some crime, then the poverty induced by historical discrimination can also create disparities in arrests and imprisonment in the present by virtue of inducing higher levels of criminal behavior. Past discrimination can cause present disparities, even in the absence of present discrimination.

Last, there is the possibility that something about the groups causes inequality. At least since the publication of *Blaming the Victim* (Ryan, 1972), even raising the possibility that something about groups may cause inequality has inspired outrage mobs, denunciations, and accusations that the person so raising these possibilities is a vile human being (e.g., Jussim, 2019). Virulent rejection of even considering this has stemmed from genuinely horrible acts committed in the name of group superiority/inferiority – including slavery and the mass murders and genocides committed under colonialism and by the Nazis.

Nonetheless, *some* disparities are not readily attributable to either present or historical discrimination. For example, Asian Americans have higher education and income levels than do any other racial/ethnic group included in the U.S. Census (Ryan & Bauman, 2016; Guzman, 2017). We know of no one who has argued that America is an “Asian Supremacy.” If anything, America has a history of anti-Asian discrimination, and the spike in anti-Asian hate crimes during the Covid pandemic indicated that current

discrimination against Asians still occurs (Center for the Study of Hate & Extremism, 2020). Nonetheless, neither present nor past anti-Asian discrimination can readily explain the *higher* educational and income status of Asians.

Furthermore, there are often substantial disparities among White ethnic groups. For example, in 2018, in the U.S., mean household income among ethnic Basques was \$27,000 higher than household income among ethnic Dutch (U.S. Census, 2022). That either pro-Basque or anti-Dutch discrimination explains such a difference is implausible. Last, the idea that *there are no differences between different cultures* is also absurd. However, if there are differences between cultures, then it is reasonable to think that some differences in characteristics, behaviors, and socially valued outcomes between people from different cultures derive from being socialized into different cultures (Henrich, Heine, & Norenzayan, 2010).

Last, there clearly are *some* biological differences between groups that produce some disparities. Two well-known examples are Tay Sachs disease, which is more common among Ashkenazi Jews and sickle cell anemia, which is more common among North Africans than among other groups. Differences in gene expression may help explain racial disparities in lung cancer as well (National Cancer Institute, 2018).

Thus, although we know, in principle, that disparities result from some combination of current discrimination, past discrimination, and group differences, research has only rarely directly compared the three explanations against one another. Indeed, given the risk of denunciation, harassment and punishment for publicly declaring anything other than discrimination causes group differences on socially valued attributes (e.g., German & Stevens, 2021, 2022) it is likely that research contesting discrimination accounts has been suppressed (Honeycutt & Jussim, in press; Stevens et al, 2020; Zigerell, 2018). Therefore, anyone who says they know where most disparities come from is likely either lying, bullshitting (in the academic sense of “flagrant disregard for truth”; e.g., Frankfurt, 2005), is (willfully?) ignorant of obvious potential alternatives, or is engaging in motivated reasoning. In other words, the nature and sources of the inequalities that so many academics seem to care about is often not scientifically well-established with any certainty – i.e., it is deeply uncertain.

Uncertainty, amplified: George Floyd's murder and the aftermath. On May 25, 2020, George Floyd, a Black man, was murdered by White Minneapolis police officer, Derek Chauvin (Mangan, 2021). A video of the murder went viral, and sparked massive international social justice, anti-police, and anti-racist protests.

We propose that this likely ratcheted up the already massive uncertainty around these issues. First, and foremost, it is likely that many felt that Floyd's treatment revealed the uncertainty facing Black Americans every day – who never know when just the wrong run-in with the police can result in arrest or death. This uncertainty was likely experienced by many Black people, but not only by Black people – it likely raised these sorts of concerns empathically for many people from all sorts of backgrounds committed to racial justice.

According to the Washington Post's Police Shootings database (Washington Post, 2022), 1,021 people were shot and killed by police in 2020, of whom 244, or about 24% were Black. Interestingly, across the entire political spectrum, Americans overestimate this percentage, with liberals overestimating it the most at 60%; but even conservatives estimate it at about 40% (McCaffree, & Saide, 2021). Because so many liberals *overestimate* the danger of police killing, uncertainty around fears of such police shootings would be rationally elevated given the perceived elevated nature of the danger.

One can see evidence consistent with the uncertainty-radicalization link in some of the societal responses to Floyd's murder. Whereas targeted efforts at police reform could have been inspired by this tragic injustice and are widely supported by large majorities of Americans, many academics either promoted variations on the far more extreme defunding or abolishing of the police, or jumped on the bandwagon supporting them after Floyd's murder (Politico, 2020; Vox, 2020). Although we know of no surveys assessing academic support for such policies, the far left skew of academia would predict that such support was likely to have been much higher than in most other sectors of the U.S. Regardless, this sort of response to the emotional distress so many people, including academics, felt after witnessing the viral videos of Floyd's brutal murder, is highly consistent with the basic research we reviewed earlier on how uncertainty and distress can produce extremism.

Predictably, the disastrous consequences of such a policy quickly became self-evident. The case of

Minneapolis is instructive, as a concrete example of how an extreme focus on the downside of policing blinded people to the benefits of policing:

1. In June, 2020, the Minneapolis City Council unanimously approved eliminating the city's Police Department, a policy to be voted on in a subsequent city referendum (NPR, 2020).
2. Following the Floyd protests and the defund movement, police left the department in "droves." Before the protests, Minneapolis had 888 police officers; by November 2020 it had 735 (Washington Post, 2020).
3. By November 2020 there were also 50% increases in homicides and a five year high in violent crimes (Washington Post, 2020).
4. By February 2021, Minneapolis had only 638 officers working and the City Council voted to *increase funding* to hire *more* police officers (Associated Press, 2021).
5. A referendum held in the November 2021 election to defund the police lost by a margin of 56-44%. The mayor opposing the defund amendment won re-election; four City Council members who had supported it lost their seats (CNN, 2021)

This pattern is not unusual. There has been a dramatic spike in violent crime after the Floyd protests and riots. The simplest explanation (and possibly though not necessarily the only viable one) is police retreat – such as the flood of resignations and retirements in Minneapolis, but also reductions in police budgets and lower willingness on the part of police departments to intervene in community affairs by stopping citizens for what might be illegal or suspicious behavior (Reilly, 2021). Given that police do far more than inflict lethal injustice on innocent Black people, such as deter crime and arrest actual criminals, the benefits of having a strong police presence are lost when police are defunded or retreat. This should have been (and we would argue, actually was) obvious to anyone except those on the far left calling for abolishing police. Even though it may not have been obvious to far left academics, it is, apparently, obvious to most Black people, 81% of whom in a national survey preferred the same or greater police presence in their neighborhoods, a figure which was similar to that of other groups (Saad, 2020).

Furthermore, the Floyd tragedy is plausibly viewed as having catalyzed the installation of whole new bureaucratic units and programs within universities dedicated to "diversity, equity, and inclusion"; at least,

many university pages devoted to DEI refer to Floyd's murder. The logical connection of addressing police brutality and racism by installing college DEI bureaucracies is strained at best, despite the frequency with which such programs seem to mention George Floyd. Regardless, given the opposition to affirmative action throughout almost every American demographic (Horowitz, 2019), this is also far more extreme than the American mainstream.

Uncertainty and distress-induced authoritarianism: The rise of cancellation attacks in the aftermath of Floyd's murder. Many Americans were deeply distressed about Floyd's murder in particular, and that murder almost certainly heightened general distress over racism and injustice in America. Distress over racism is especially common among those on the left, who, according to some studies, experienced ambient distress over these issues long before Floyd's murder (Napier & Jost, 2008).

Core characteristics of authoritarianism include efforts to punish one's political opponents and deprive them of basic human rights. Because we are discussing the social justice protests and the radicalization of the academy, we refer readers to others who have reviewed rightwing authoritarianism (e.g., Altemeyer, 1981), and we focus exclusively on leftwing authoritarianism here. The key question is whether there is any evidence of an increase in intolerant, hostile, censorious behavior post-Floyd in the academy?

There is indeed real world evidence of all three. First and foremost, there was a wave of cancellation attacks in the summer and fall of 2020. Although cancellation attacks are not new, they have been on the increase for some time, especially within academia. For example, FIRE's Scholars Under Fire database currently identifies 344 scholars subject to cancellation attacks from their left between 2015 and 2022. Because 2022 is not complete, Table 1 below only shows data through 2021, although we note that as of March 30, 2022 there have already been 18 attempts to sanction scholars from their left. Three things are clear: 1. Cancellation attacks have been generally increasing; 2. There was a spike in attempts from the left of the scholar in 2020; And, 3. Attempts to sanction scholars from within the academy (other scholars and graduate students) have also increased.

Table 1: Scholars Subjected to Cancellation Attacks From the Left in FIRE's Scholars Under Fire Database

Year	Total number of Scholars Under Fire from their left	Scholars Under Fire from their left and targeted by other scholars	Scholars Under Fire from their left and targeted by graduate students
2015	19	3	8
2016	22	4	3
2017	29	9	6
2018	38	9	4
2019	40	10	4
2020	98	30	11
2021	80	29	15

We speculate that the stress and uncertainty produced by Floyd's murder manifested as increased extremism, authoritarianism, and intolerance in the academy. To give a flavor of what these attacks look like, we describe four from FIRE's Scholars Under Fire database here:

- Harald Uhlig (economics, University of Chicago) was denounced, investigated and suspended from an editorial position for tweets critical of BLM.
- An open letter denounced Steven Pinker (psychology, Harvard) and called for his removal as a distinguished fellow of the Linguistic Society of America. They objected to his scholarship and tweets.
- Faculty organized to call for retraction of a book by Elizabeth Weiss (anthropology, San Jose State University) which was critical of policies permitting Native American control over anthropological research and censorship over scholarship.
- Timothy Jackson (Music, University of North Texas) criticized a colleague's claims that music theory is dominated by a White racial frame. He was removed as editor of a journal he had founded.

Although these are only four examples, it is important to remember that the FIRE report has 94 additional ones, and that is just from one year, 2020. Furthermore, FIRE's database, although invaluable, is likely missing cases, because unless there were public reports, a sanction attempt was not recorded. There may be far more of these attacks than will ever be documented (see, e.g., Stevens et al, 2017, for lived experiences of such attacks before the term cancellation became common to describe them), so the incidents in FIRE's database likely represent the tip of an iceberg.

In addition to cancellation attacks, there has also been a rise in the ideological justification for suppressing views that oppose far left progressive propositions. An excellent example of this sort of extremist, left-authoritarian response to Floyd's murder was the Princeton Faculty Letter (2020), which calls for an egregious abrogation of academic freedom. Princeton is called to, "Constitute a committee composed entirely of faculty that would oversee the investigation and discipline of racist behaviors, incidents, research, and publication on the part of faculty, following a protocol for grievance and appeal to be spelled out in Rules and Procedures of the Faculty. Guidelines on what counts as racist behavior, incidents, research, and publication will be authored by a faculty committee for incorporation into the same set of rules and procedures." Regardless of whether one believes this Orwellian call for Big Brother-like oversight of faculty intellectual activities is justified or not, such a curtailment of open expression in the name of anti-racism sets a new standard for limiting expression. Although Princeton University has not yet adopted this policy, that so many faculty, graduate students, and alumni signed on to the open letter advocating for is consistent with a rising tide (we would argue in but not just in Princeton) of ideological calls for speech and expression restrictions among the academic left. Consistent with the claim that this is not just Princeton, surveys have found large minorities of faculty and graduate students *endorse* ousting faculty who oppose a variety of left and far left positions (Kaufmann, 2021).

How Radicalization and Political Activism Corrupts Scholarship

Political Activism Does Not Corrupt Scholarship On Non-Politicized Topics

Biases only matter in domains about which one is biased. There is no reason to expect such political processes to have any effect on nonpolitical scientific topics such as the search for exoplanets, the tensile

strength of new ceramic materials, or Bayesian models of visual perception. One might have an agenda when one studies issues such as these (a theoretical agenda, allegiance to a particular perspective, method, or intervention, etc.) and those agendas might operate in a manner similar to political ones, but that is beyond the scope of the present chapter. Even though biases may characterize almost any area of research, in the many areas of research that are not politicized, they will *not* be political biases.

How to Detect Politically Biased Social Science

There is now an extensive literature documenting how political biases distort psychological science (Crawford & Jussim, 2018; Duarte et al, 2015; Honeycutt & Jussim, 2020, in press; Jussim, et al., 2015; Martin, 2016; Redding, 2013, in press; Zigerell, 2019). However, before reviewing some of its key points, we consider a question that raises skepticism about the possibility of revealing such biases: Given that no one reviewing a literature can read the researchers' minds, how can we determine whether scholarly work is politically biased?

This is the wrong question. The right answer to this question is “of course no one can read anyone else’s mind.” However, just as one does not need to read the minds of participants in a study to reach a valid conclusion regarding whether their judgments are racially or gender biased (e.g. Darley & Gross, 1983; Fiske & Neuberg, 1990), one does not need to read minds to determine whether a paper or an area of research is politically biased. The core logic is identical – in the case of lay studies of bias, one simply examines the behavior or judgments for evidence of bias. For example, if employers consistently favor White over similar Black job applicants, we would conclude that those employers were racially biased; no mindreading is required. How does this work for evaluating social science?

Tests for Political Bias

We note here that the following are all framed around testing for left biases. This is because, as reviewed previously in this chapter, academia in general, but the social sciences especially, are overwhelmingly populated by people on the left. Right biases in research surely exist, and the few social scientists on the right are likely just as prone to biases as social scientists on the left (Honeycutt & Freberg, 2017). But, there are so few social scientists on the right in academia that such biases are likely to be rare.

Although the tests provided below are framed around left biases, they can be applied just as readily to identifying right biases, however rare they may be in the social sciences.

Below we describe four tests that can be used to determine whether a claim is politically biased. In each case, we present two examples to illustrate how the test operates. However, the literature is filled with far more examples than can be found here. We direct readers to the now-extensive literature on political biases for many more examples (Crawford & Jussim, 2018; Duarte et al, 2015; Honeycutt & Jussim, 2020, in press; Jussim, et al., 2015; Martin, 2016; Redding, 2013, in press; Zigerell, 2019).

Test 0: Does the study vindicate some left narrative? We call this “Test 0” because it is a necessary but not sufficient condition to infer political bias. It is necessary because, if the claim does not vindicate a left narrative, it cannot possibly be left-biased. It is not sufficient because the claim or study may simply be valid. Nonetheless, inferring political bias starts with answering this question. To do so, one needs to be able to identify major left narratives. Although it is impossible to identify them all, here are some common ones:

1. Equalitarianism (Clark & Winegard, 2020), which includes any of the following ideas: There are no biological differences between groups on socially valued traits (and, especially, no genetic differences); prejudice and discrimination are the only sources of group differences (and anyone who says otherwise is bigoted); Society has a moral obligation to arrange itself so that all groups are equal on socially valued outcomes.
2. Any claim framed as advancing "social justice," or the programs designed to increase it (such as diversity, equity, and inclusion programs, diversity training, implicit bias training, etc.).
3. Liberals are more competent, informed, and morally superior to conservatives (or more conservative political parties, which can vary by country).
4. Attitudes supporting environmentalism are good.

A social science claim that advances some left narrative can be either demonstrably true, demonstrably false or unjustified by the evidence. “Unjustified” is different from “demonstrably false,” because it includes evidence that is mixed, ambiguous or subject to alternative explanations. This means simplistic conclusions confidently declaring a single interpretation as true are not justified.. Regardless, if a

paper seems to vindicate some left narrative, one has a *contender* for a biased paper, which can then be subject to additional tests. Although for purposes of brevity we present only one example under each test to illustrate how to use it, many more can be found in the broader literature on manifestations of political biases in social science (e.g., Clark & Winegard, 2020; Crawford & Jussim, 2018; Duarte et al, 2015; Honeycutt & Jussim, 2020, in press; Martin, 2016; Redding, 2013, in press; Zigerell, 2019)

Test 1: Did they misinterpret or misrepresent their results in ways that unjustifiably vindicate some left narrative? If they did, the paper is left-biased. If the results show X and the claims based on the study are left of X, then the paper is left-biased. If the results are muddled or mixed and the conclusions emphasize left-affirming narratives, then the paper is left-biased.

A common example of findings misrepresented as more left-vindicating than they really are occurs whenever some demographic gap is interpreted as reflecting unfairness, discrimination, or some “ism” in the present. Gaps may reflect these, but they also may reflect any of a myriad of other alternatives, including group differences in behavior or preferences. A famous gender discrimination in graduate admissions lawsuit in the 1970s failed because, although it was true that women were admitted at lower rates than were men, this did not occur because of discrimination. It occurred because women disproportionately applied to programs with lower admissions rates (Bickel, et al., 1975). Similarly, a report interpreted as showing gender bias in grant funding (van der Lee & Ellemers, 2015) actually found that women apply disproportionately to programs with lower funding rates; within programs, the evidence of a gap was weak to nonexistent (Albers, 2015).

Test 2: Do the authors systematically ignore papers and studies inconsistent with their left-affirming conclusions? If any area of research has produced mixed results, one can usually present a “compelling narrative” simply by ignoring results that disconfirm that narrative. Of course, the very fact of having ignored disconfirming or contrary findings will not be transparent *in the paper doing the ignoring* by the very fact of having been ignored. The paper will appear “scientific” – it will have logic, a compelling narrative, and even scientific citations! It will likely even have statistics! It will have all the trappings and form of

science – but whether such an analysis actually deserves to be called “science” is debatable (e.g., Gelman, 2017 refers to this type of thing as “pseudoscience”; Schimmack, 2021, refers to it as “unscientific”).

One example of this is in the area of gender bias in peer review. The left position is “smash the patriarchy” – which can be accomplished, in part, by exposing the extent and power of biases favoring men. But what happens when papers exist showing conflicting findings? A scientific field would acknowledge the conflicting findings and seek to combine or integrate them in some way, show that one set of findings are based on flawed methods, or otherwise try to resolve the contradiction. A pseudoscientific field will be populated by many papers that simply ignore opposing conclusions. A politically left-biased pseudoscientific field will be populated by many papers that simply present findings that advance left narratives and ignores findings on the same topic that contest left narratives.

Honeycutt & Jussim (2020) evaluated whether, by these standards, claims about gender biases in peer review qualifies as science or pseudoscience. They identified every empirical study of gender bias in peer review they could find. They then compared citation counts and sample sizes among studies finding clear evidence of biases against women versus papers finding either no bias or biases favoring men (papers with muddled or unclear findings were excluded). Four papers showing biases against women were cited a total of nearly 4000 times, averaged over 50 citations per year, and had median sample sizes of under 200 participants. Six papers showing egalitarianism or biases favoring women were cited under 900 times, averaged 9 citations per year, and had median sample sizes of over 2300 participants. Sample size is one of the main markers of more credible research (Fraley & Vazire, 2014), so the grand irony here is that the literature on gender bias in peer review cites less credible papers more than four times as often as more credible ones. That is one powerful bias.

Of course, this does not mean that *the individual studies* examining gender bias in peer review were pseudoscience. What is plausibly described as pseudoscience is the thousands of papers that conclude that there are systematic gender biases against women that simply ignore the studies failing to find gender biases against women.

Test 3: Leaping to left-affirming conclusions on the basis of weak data. Sometimes, results actually do vindicate some left narrative but should be considered tentative and preliminary (e.g., if based on small samples or results emerging from a single research lab or group). If the conclusions are expressed with triumphant certainty, the paper is left-biased.

The poster-child for this is implicit bias, although work using the implicit association test (IAT) actually meets all of the tests identified here (and some not included here). Although implicit bias can be measured by methods other than the IAT: 1. Different methods often do not correlate with each other very highly, so it is not clear they measure the same thing; And, 2. The IAT is the workhorse method, used by thousands of studies. If the conclusions based on the IAT are often of dubious credibility, then much of the field of “implicit bias” has feet of clay (see Jussim, et al., in press, for a review of those criticisms; see the list of over 30 such articles (with new additions added regularly) critical of the IAT and implicit bias in this online repository (Jussim, et al., 2022). Next we simply present a partial list of those many flaws and limitations (see Jussim et al, 2022; in press, for fuller expositions and additional criticisms of the IAT):

1. Claims to the effect that 80-90% of Americans were supposedly found to be unconscious racists appeared immediately after the publication of the first IAT article (Greenwald, et al., 1998; see Mitchell & Tetlock, 2017 for a review). Such claims were imprudent, leaping to an unjustified equalitarian conclusion emphasizing the pervasiveness of unconscious racism based on preliminary studies from a single research time prior to the broader scientific community having an opportunity to skeptically vet the methods, findings, claims and conclusions. The validity of any new method or measure cannot be established by any set of preliminary studies. Doing so requires many years of skeptical scrutiny by independent scientists before validity, if any, can be scientifically established with any confidence (Jussim, et al., 2019). Over 20 years after the publication of the first IAT article, critiques have appeared with titles such as:

More Error than Attitude in Implicit Association Tests (Chequer, 2021)

Implicit? What Do You Mean? A Comprehensive Review of the Delusive Implicitness

Construct in Attitude Research (Corneille, & Hütter, 2020).

Unconscious Gender Bias in the Academia: Scarcity of Empirical Evidence (Skov, 2020)

Invalid Claims about the Validity of Implicit Association Tests by Prisoners of the Implicit Social-Cognition Paradigm (Schimmack, 2021).

2. Mitchell and Tetlock (2017) also reviewed the historical record to show that there was a rush to influence policy and the law – a pattern consistent with the conclusion that this dubious work was deployed by activists to claim a veneer of scientific respectability to advance political goals.
3. The IAT is a reaction time measure. At best, the IAT measures the strength of association of concepts in memory, which is not any type of bias or prejudice. A slew of statistical issues and methodological artifacts means that the IAT is not even a clean measure of the strength of association.
4. Critiques of the IAT have concluded that it contains more error than attitude (Chequer & Quinn, 2021), may capture cultural stereotypes (beliefs about what other people believe) as much as or more than own beliefs and attitudes (Arkes & Tetlock, 2004) or actual knowledge about actual group differences and conditions (Jussim et al., in press; Payne, et al., 2017); and that IAT scores reflect four separate phenomena, of which attitude is just one (Conrey, et al., 2005).
5. The IAT, as used and reported, has a potpourri of methodological and statistical oddities. These undercut simple interpretations of results using IATs (all of these are reviewed in Jussim et al., in press). Its test-retest reliability is usually quite low, about $r = .4$. IATs are difference scores, which complexifies interpretation (relationships with other variables could result from relationships with only one of the variables involved in computing the difference, both, or their difference). As computed, the IAT D-scores are an effect size, yet, rather than simply reporting the mean IAT score as an effect size, its adherents often compute a Cohen's d from the IAT D-scores; this doubly-computed effect size usually functions to exaggerate IAT effects (Jussim et al., in press).
6. Although recent work comparing scores on different IATs has been interpreted as vindicating the “true zero” interpretation of 0 (i.e., as no bias; Cvencek et al, 2020), the only research that has ever attempted to validate IAT scores against external standards has found that scores well above 0 (typically ranging from IAT D scores of .3 to .6, depending on the study) correspond to egalitarianism (Blanton et al., 2015b). If IAT scores greater than 0 correspond to egalitarianism, levels of racism based on assuming IAT scores of 0 are

egalitarian are exaggerated.

7. Claims that small bias effects are “socially important” have yet to provide any evidence demonstrating such social importance. Instead, they are based on the presumption that small effects accumulate, which is an empirical question and should not be a reified truth absent evidence. A similar claim was once made about small self-fulfilling prophecies being socially important if they accumulate. The statement is logically true but mostly empirically false. Yes, *if* they accumulate, they can become socially important. In the case of self-fulfilling prophecies, though, once the evidence started rolling in, accumulation was rare. Instead, the already-small effects tended to dissipate (Jussim & Harber, 2005). Although an absence of evidence does not mean “implicit bias” effects do not accumulate, nothing but speculation can be based on an absence of evidence.
8. Procedures that change IAT scores have failed to produce changes in discriminatory behavior (Forscher et al., 2019).
9. There is currently no evidence that implicit bias training accomplishes anything other than teaching people about the research on implicit bias. There is no evidence that IAT training reduces prejudice or inequalities. In their thorough review of the literature on prejudice reduction, Paluck, et al. (2021, p. 549) conclude: “Thus, a fair assessment of our data on implicit prejudice reduction is that the evidence is thin. Together with the lack of evidence for diversity training, these studies do not justify the enthusiasm with which implicit prejudice reduction training has been received in the world over the past decade.”
10. A recent review of how the IAT is presented and taught to students in introductory psychology courses indicates that critiques and discussions of the limitations or weaknesses of the IAT are almost entirely ignored (Bartels & Schoenrade, 2021). Bartels and Schoenrade argue that this biased presentation of the IAT may lead to confusion and misunderstanding, both of the IAT as a test, and about one’s (potential) personal implicit biases. One definition of “propaganda” is “encouraging beliefs and actions with the least thought possible” (Gambrill & Reiman, 2011, p. e19516). This manner of describing IAT results in introductory texts fits this description.

Future Directions: Some Falsifiable Hypotheses

The analysis herein has argued that the academic social sciences have *already radicalized*, so it predicts that each of the hypotheses below would be confirmed effective immediately. In addition, however, if uncertainty/distress increase radicalization, then each of these patterns, which occur simply as a function of political biases (whatever their provenance) should *increase* after events that increase feelings of distress, helplessness, and loss of significance among leftwing social scientists, which is to say, “nearly all.”

Such events need to be widely publicized (disturbing events that few know about will not have these effects) to undercut what Smith (2014) has referred to as “sociology’s sacred mission.” Here is how that mission was described: “...exposing, protesting, and ending through social movements, state regulations, and government programs all human inequality, oppression, exploitation, suffering, injustice, poverty, discrimination, exclusion, hierarchy, constraint and domination by, of, and over other humans” (Smith, 2014, p.6). Although Smith wrote about sociology, the analysis herein suggests much of social psychology and other social sciences share that sacred mission. Smith (2014, p.4) seems to believe so, too: “...What I describe here about sociology is obviously also embedded in the intellectual and moral culture of American higher education and elite, knowledge-class culture more broadly.”

Smith’s (2014) analysis helps inform what type of events might increase social science radicalization in the U.S. (like Smith, we make no claim about other countries). They would be events that contravene this sacred mission. This would include events that are widely seen as increasing or even merely emblematic of inequality, oppression, exploitation, injustice, hierarchy, discrimination and domination, etc. Such events would include elections of Republican Presidents; appointment of conservative Supreme Court justices; widely publicized activities of far right extremists, especially violent activities; and any dramatic news event emblematic of oppression of sacred victim groups. It is possible that events such as the U.S. Supreme Court overturning *Roe v. Wade* (protecting women’s right to an abortion) or affirmative action would have a similar catalyzing effect on academic radicalization. We acknowledge that it is probably difficult to determine a priori which events will catch fire, as did the murder of George Floyd, but that is one prototype for this sort of event. The key to the perspective described herein is not that we can always identify which

such events will be sufficiently dramatic to generate the type of sustained public attention necessary to create the type of distress and uncertainty that increases radicalization. Instead, our analysis is that, *if* such an event occurs, it will increase academic radicalization manifesting as described throughout this chapter.

We use the term “positive” prediction to refer to phenomena one can expect to find, if this embryonic theory of academic radicalization is mostly correct. These are to be distinguished from “negative” predictions, which constitute phenomena expected *not* to occur and which, if they did occur, would also falsify the theory perspective at least in part. A good theory not only generates hypotheses about what will happen, but it also excludes certain possibilities (e.g., Roberts & Pashler, 2000). Therefore, we present both positive and negative predictions. As with most social psychological mini-theories, although no single disconfirmation would falsify the entire theory, consistent disconfirmation would.

Falsifiable Positive Predictions

Citation bias. Citation biases have been called “unscientific” (Schimmack, 2021) because systematically ignoring research that contests one’s preferred narrative or conclusions corrupts the purpose of scientific research, which is to reach conclusions that are actually true. This requires acknowledging uncertainty and mixed evidence; ignoring contrary evidence paints findings in a field as more consistent than they really are, and plausibly fits the definition of “propaganda” presented previously. Citation biases occur for all sorts of reasons and are not restricted to politics (see, e.g., De Vries, et al. (2018), for an example involving interventions for depression).

The radicalization of academia perspective, however, predicts that when new otherwise similar studies (in topic and methods) are published either vindicating or contesting left narratives, the vindicating studies will be cited at much higher rates than those that contest those narratives. This will hold true even when other aspects of the publications are held constant (such as outlet, impact factors, methodological quality factors such as sample size/sample representativeness/number of replications/consistency across different methods, etc.). However, this will hold true primarily for left hot-button issues, such as equalitarianism and environmentalism. It will also hold true only above a minimal threshold of attention. Most papers are mostly ignored creating a floor effect that renders finding any differences unlikely. So,

rephrasing this to become disconfirmable, when two papers on the same left-hot button topic are published with conflicting findings, at least one must be cited at least 50 times. In such cases, most of the papers with left-affirming findings will be cited at higher rates than those that contest left narratives.

Trapped priors. A trapped prior is a belief or expectation (in the Bayesian sense) that cannot be updated, no matter how much data or how high quality the data that conflicts with it (Siskind, 2021). The trapped prior concept can be exploited to generate falsifiable hypotheses regarding the extent to which dogmatic certainties have corrupted the scientific mission of the social sciences. One can test for the presence of trapped priors by providing evidence contesting left hot-button issues to social scientists and then evaluate the extent whether it changes their prior. For example, how many social scientists who believe stereotypes are inaccurate will have that belief changed by the actual evidence of moderate to high levels of stereotype accuracy from over 50 studies demonstrating it (Jussim, et al., 2018)? Can social scientists who believe stereotypes are inaccurate identify *any data* that would lead them to believe, or publicly admit, that stereotypes are not inaccurate? One can also study trapped priors with hypothetical scenarios. One could ask researchers whether there is any point (5 studies? 10? 100?) at which they would agree that something they hold sacred to be true (Smith, 2014) is actually false (inaccuracy of stereotypes, power of implicit bias, racism in the present causes most racial inequality, LGBTQ parenting is just as good as heterosexual parenting, affirmative action is a good solution to inequality, etc.).

Leftwing authoritarianism. The present perspective predicts that administration of any of the recently-developed scales measuring LWA (Conway et al, 2018; Costello et al, 2022) will show it to be overrepresented in the academy in general. Furthermore, it should be even more overrepresented in the social sciences and humanities, including social psychology, than in STEM fields.

Cancellation attacks. The present perspective also predicts that denunciation, ostracism, and punishment of scholars by other scholars will be primarily from the left and for violating left shibboleth's and Smithian (2014) sacred missions. These would manifest as firings, suspensions, loss of positions, investigations, and forced retractions of articles triggered by academic outrage mobs who fail to identify data fraud or unusually high levels of data errors or irregularities. The failure to identify data errors is key here

because articles are justifiably retracted when the underlying data is shown to be fraudulent or so riddled with errors as to lose all credibility.

Declining credibility among the public. We doubt that the public is paying rapt attention to the day to day arcania of what goes on inside academia in general or social psychology in particular. However, Lincoln's aphorism about fooling people, especially the part about "you can't fool all of the people all of the time" probably applies here. There are at least some reasons to believe that people have a reasonably good intuitive sense that fields which have large minorities (or more) of radicals, activists, and Marxists (as do the social sciences, Gross & Simmons, 2014) do not deserve the same credibility ascribed to fields studying apolitical topics or with better representation from across the political spectrum.

For example, Marietta & Barker (2019) found that not only do Republicans distrust academia more than do Democrats, but, regardless of personal politics, the more people view academia as left-skewed, the less they trust it. In their data, only 21% viewed academia as at least skewed 6:1 (Democrat to Republican). People in that category gave knowledge emerging from academia just over a 50-50 chance of being true; those who massively underestimated the skew in academia by virtue of believing it was about equally divided between Democrats and Republicans gave knowledge emerging from academia as having over a 90% chance of being true. Although they asked about academia in general, if their results apply more generally, we shudder to think what the estimated credibility will be when people discover that many social science departments have no Republicans at all and that, in social psychology, professors voted Democrat:Republican in 2012 not by 6:1 but by 75:1 (Buss & von Hippel, 2018). Thus, another prediction emerging from this perspective is that the credibility the public ascribes to the social sciences, including social psychology, will likely decline until these political trends reverse or the field institutes practices to limit the extent to which distorted and unjustified claims emerge on politicized topics.

Falsifiable Negative Predictions

Conservative underrepresentation. Conservatives are one of the most underrepresented groups in social psychology (Garcia, et al., 2019). Because use of the conventional meaning of "underrepresented" may be unusual for many progressive academics, we use it in its descriptive sense to mean "represented in

numbers lower than in the population.” For example, the Black membership of SPSP is only about 3%, so, compared to the Black portion of the U.S. population (U.S. Census, 2021), Black people are underrepresented by over 75%. By comparison, conservatives constitute about 4% of the SPSP membership (Garcia et al, 2019) and about 36% of the U.S. population (Saad, 2021). Thus, conservatives are underrepresented by almost 90% in SPSP.

Nonetheless, the present theoretical perspective predicts that professional social psychological associations (e.g., SPSP, SPSSI, SESP) will not acknowledge this state of affairs in these terms. Specifically, although the field is almost entirely on the American left, and although this may not be actively *denied*, none of those organizations will publicly describe conservatives as “underrepresented.” In modern academic parlance, “underrepresented” implies far more than “represented at lower levels than in the population,” which is what the term means outside of progressive circles. In academia, the term is generally used *prescriptively*, as a rhetorical springboard to justify directing extra initiatives and resources toward including such groups the progressive left considers protected or oppressed. Because our perspective argues for a process of increasing leftwing radicalization and extremism, and because extremists usually despise their political opponents, and because “underrepresented” is a term suggesting more support is required, characterizing conservatives as “underrepresented” in this sense is specifically predicted not to occur among the major social science organizations. We do not deny that the term “underrepresented” could be used, but if so, it would be expressed derisively or to dismiss as unimportant any such conservative underrepresentation. Should this change, i.e., should one of the main professional organizations in social psychology start even *referring* to conservatives as “underrepresented” as if it is a problem requiring attention, it would disconfirm this prediction.

For essentially the same reasons, this produces a related hypothesis. Many efforts within academia in general and social psychology in particular revolve around mitigating underrepresentation (e.g., Davis, 2019; Jimenez, et al., 2019). Nonetheless, the radicalization of academia perspective predicts that the inclusion of conservatives in “diversity, equity and inclusion” initiatives will not occur or be advocated by any of the major social science organizations. Because extremists despise their opponents, the very last thing they will

want to do is welcome them into the academic club. Again, should any of the major social science organizations launch initiatives to reduce conservative underrepresentation, it would disconfirm one of the major predictions of the present perspective.

Male underrepresentation. The 2019 SPSP diversity survey found that men are now underrepresented (36.5%) in the Society for Personality and Social Psychology (Garcia et al., 2019), a pattern that gets more extreme as stage of career becomes earlier. As of 2019, men made up 20% of undergraduate members, 33% of graduate students, 41% of associate professors, and 47% of full professors (SPSP, 2019). The present perspective predicts that neither rhetoric nor programs emerging from SPSP will acknowledge this fact or propose initiatives to increase the representation of men, who are not usually considered oppressed or “underrepresented” by radicals, who are far more likely to call for smashing the patriarchy than for greater representation of men. This prediction would be disconfirmed if, for example, SPSP officers start raising alarms about male underrepresentation and/or start creating initiatives to stem the drain of men from the field.

Conclusions

In this chapter, we have developed a perspective on ways in which uncertainty and distress have contributed to the radicalization of the social science professoriate, and how that has undermined some of its scholarship on politicized topics. As a theoretical perspective, we readily acknowledge that there is no data (yet) directly establishing some of the phenomena proposed herein. For example, there is no data directly linking uncertainty/distress to academic radicalization; and there have been no studies assessing the prevalence of leftwing authoritarianism in the academy.

Nonetheless, we did review the evidence for several of the proposed linkages described herein. First, we reviewed and summarized some of the key conclusions in the now-extensive literature linking uncertainty and distress to political extremism. These links seem quite well-established by sound empirical social science.

Second, we reviewed evidence of the radicalization of the social science professoriate. Leftwing extremists are massively overrepresented among social science professors. We speculated on the presence of

an inordinate number of leftwing authoritarians among those professors, primarily on the basis of three well-established facts: 1. People high in leftwing authoritarianism actively endorse censoring and punishing their political opponents; 2. Academics actually attempting to censor and punish their opponents has been on the rise for some time now; and 3. There was a spike in such efforts shortly after George Floyd's highly publicized and disturbing murder, a pattern consistent with the uncertainty/distress linkage to extremism.

Third, we reviewed some of the ways that common, highly touted, and canonized claims have gone wrong, consistently in such a manner as to vindicate left narratives without sufficient evidence that justifies doing so. Although for brevity we merely *illustrated* this problem with respect to unequal admissions and grant funding based on gender, claims about gender bias in peer review, and claims about implicit bias made on the basis of the IAT, many more examples can be found in reviews focusing specifically on the problems created by the political monoculture of the social sciences (Crawford & Jussim, 2018; Duarte et al, 2015; Honeycutt & Jussim, 2020, in press; Jussim, et al., 2015; Martin, 2016; Redding, 2013, in press; Zigerell, 2019).

Fourth, we have generated clear, falsifiable hypotheses about future behavior and practices in the social sciences. We look forward to empirical tests of those hypotheses. It is possible that the social sciences will stem the tide of increasing political radicalization. It is more likely that this will get more extreme before it moderates. Whereas social science as a club for progressives exploiting scientific skills to advance political agendas will work well for those inside the club (it probably will facilitate getting papers published, grants funded, awards, promotions, and jobs), it risks severely undercutting the credibility of the social sciences outside of progressive circles, and among the wider public. But this may be a price many see as worth paying in order to have a clear and easier path toward professional accomplishments such as tenure and promotions. It is also easier to advance progressive political goals on the basis of peer reviewed social science if there are few social scientists willing to contest those goals by debunking unjustified claims and skeptically evaluating dubious research. A culture of uniformity of values, open hostility to opponents, and exclusion is, for far left academics, a professional-win-political-win situation.

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