

AGENDA 2017

Social psychology circa 2016: A field on steroids

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state of the field

Abstract

This paper considers the current state of the field in social psychology. On the one hand, we have made enormous progress in integrating our research with other disciplines, reaching out to general public and using our knowledge toward addressing major societal ills. On the other hand, social psychology has been recently mired in a crisis of confidence concerning the appropriateness of our methods and the robustness of our findings. We propose that shifting our attention to theory, method, and application, as well as away from a pervasive “outcome focus,” can extricate social psychology from its current doldrums and allow it to realize its potential as an indispensable social science.

These days, to be a social psychologist is to likely experience a bundle of conflicting emotions, pride and a sense of accomplishment, admixed with anxiety and fear; and excitement about our potential alongside insecurity about our future. Torn between the poles of opportunity and challenge, we spend our days in worried soul-searching and self-examination. In the pages that follow, we discuss both our promise and our problems. The latter are serious, to be sure, but not fatal. We have what it takes to dig ourselves out of the hole. Social psychology is far too vital and important to fail.

The “Good News”

Perhaps as in no other time in our history, social psychology has been experiencing recently an explosion of research activity and connectivity both to other disciplines and to lay audiences. From the 1980s onward, we have been intimately connected to cognitive psychology through the dominant social cognition paradigm that inspired several decades of creative science (cf. Fiske & Taylor, 1984, 1991). The social cognition movement introduced social psychologists to cognitive notions of information processing, inference, and memory, as well as to concepts of encoding, retrieval, priming, and inhibition, among others. It also enriched our methodological toolkit by adopting from cognitive psychology a variety of techniques for investigating mental phenomena, including the Stroop test (Bench et al., 1993), dual task paradigms (Pashler, 1994), cognitive load operations (Paas, Tuovinen, Tabbers, & Van Gerven, 2003), and so on. Equipped with sophisticated expertise in these matters, social psychologists became frequent contributors to journals outside of their disciplinary boundaries, such as *Journal of Experimental Psychology:*

General, Cognitive Psychology, Cognition, Memory, American Psychologist, Psychological Review, Psychological Bulletin, Science, Nature, Psychological Science, Behavioral & Brain Sciences, and Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, among others.

Notably, social psychologists brought to the table their own topics of inquiry, such as person memory, the cognitive aspects of group behavior, and notions of motivation and emotion. The latter spurred their own inherent developments including, in particular, the burgeoning subfields of motivated cognition and self-regulation. In this way, social psychologists not only benefited from cognitive theory and methods but also contributed to the understanding of cognition by demonstrating the relevance to mental phenomena of motivational constructs that formerly had not been taken into account (e.g., Bargh, Gollwitzer, Lee-Chai, Barndollar, & Trötschel, 2001; Forster, Liberman, & Higgins, 2005; Higgins & King, 1981; Pica, Pierro, Belanger, & Kruglanski, 2013, 2014).

These developments demonstrate that psychological functioning cannot readily be separated into isolated “silos” of inquiry. Indeed, most psychological phenomena bundle together the different aspects of our mentality. Emotion is intimately bound with motivation, motivation is cognitively represented, cognition is motivationally driven, and group phenomena cannot be fully comprehended without recourse to members’ perceptions, needs, and affective reactions.

Beyond its connectivity to cognitive psychology, social psychology has developed strong ties to the judgment and decision-making literature; indeed, the distinction between these two subdomains of psychology is blurred at this point. To a large extent, this development owes its impetus to Tversky and Kahneman’s

seminal work on biases and heuristics (e.g., Kahneman, 2003a; Kahneman & Tversky, 1973, 1979; Tversky & Kahneman, 1981) and the impact this has had on the work of numerous social psychologists (e.g., Nisbett & Ross, 1980). Phenomena of base-rate neglect, availability, and anchoring were creatively investigated and clarified by social psychologists (Schwarz *et al.*, 1991; Strack & Mussweiler, 1997), and Tversky and Kahneman's distinction between heuristic and extensional reasoning inspired the dual-process/dual-systems paradigm (e.g., Chen & Chaiken, 1999; Evans, 2008; Kahneman, 2003a; Strack & Deutsch, 2004) and occasioned a debate about its adequacy as a model of people's approach to inference and judgment (Keren & Schul, 2009; Kruglanski & Gigerenzer, 2011; Moors & De Houwer, 2006).

Kahneman's and Tversky's work on human preferences and their collaboration with social psychologists such as Ed Diener and Norbert Schwarz led to a flurry of significant research on subjective well-being. That work, prospect theory (Kahneman & Tversky, 1979), and the biases and heuristics paradigm that challenged the very presumption of rational choice, had profound impact on the discipline of economics and significantly influenced economists' interest in life satisfaction (Fox, 2012; Kahneman, Krueger, Schkade, Schwarz, & Stone, 2004) and the comparisons of the world's nations on happiness and well-being (Diener, Diener, & Diener, 1995).

The links between economics and social psychology (indirectly mediated by Tversky & Kahneman's work) contributed to the emergence of behavioral economics, a dynamic field with accelerating impact that widely utilizes the substance and the methods of social psychology (Camerer & Loewenstein, 2004; Kahneman, 2003b). Social psychological theory and research have also had considerable impact on consumer and marketing psychologies. This led to the recruitment of numerous social psychologists into business schools, where they carry out research on behavioral phenomena relevant to business settings.

In keeping with cutting-edge scientific trends, social psychology has hardly missed the general biological focus that is currently sweeping psychology, and the research domains of social neuroscience and social cognitive neuroscience are among the most popular topics of study in our field (Lieberman, 2007; Ochsner, 2007).

Real World Impact

Social psychological analyses have had appreciable impact in the realm of education. For instance, the work of Carol Dweck on the growth and fixed mindsets has been disseminated in major educational institutions and is finding its way into major political decision-making bodies (Elliott & Dweck, 1988; Yeager, Paunesku, Walton, & Dweck, 2013). The White House sponsored a conference on mindset research, Secretaries of Education in the United States and the United Kingdom consulted Dweck on the implications of her work, and she addressed the United Nations on their

global development agenda (see Rattan, Savani, Chugh, & Dweck, 2015).

Social psychological expertise has been utilized substantially in the domain of substance abuse. Specifically, William Crano's work on this topic has guided National Institute on Drug Abuse prevention campaigns, and he advised the UN Office on Drugs and Crime in developing evidence-based standards of substance prevention, subsequently adopted by many of the UN's member states. Crano and his colleagues specifically applied their expertise and designed abuse prevention policies in numerous developing countries in Asia and the Middle East (Kazakhstan, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Dubai, and Abu Dhabi, among others; e.g., Donaldson, Handren, & Crano, 2016; Lac & Crano, 2009; Lamb & Crano, 2014; Miller, Siegel, Hohman, & Crano, 2013).

In the realm of violent extremism, our own team empirically evaluated a major program of de-radicalization carried out by the government of Sri Lanka, assessed patterns of Islamic radicalization in Philippine jails, collaborated with the U.S. Department of State and the UN in developing risk assessment procedures for Violent Extremism, and advised the governments of United Arab Emirates, Oman, and France on programs of de and counter-radicalization (see, e.g., Kruglanski *et al.*, in press; Kruglanski *et al.*, 2014; Webber *et al.*, under review). These are but some examples of the contributions that social psychologists are making toward addressing major societal issues to which our unique brand of knowledge is highly relevant.

Global Reach

Psychology as a whole and social psychology in particular have been increasingly global in their reach. Whereas half a century ago, social psychology was almost exclusively US-based; this is by no means so today. In a striking example of this, Social Identity Theory, a European theory, currently has 893 entries in Web of science. We have the *European Journal of Social Psychology*, the *European Review of Social Psychology*, and the *Asian Journal of Social Psychology*, all of which publish significant work in various domains of our science.

According to a former editor of *Psychological Science*, James Cutting, "In 1990, there were no non-U.S. or non-Canadian authors in *Psychological Science*. By 1998, there were 13 percent, in 2002, there were 33 percent By 2006, only 59 percent of submissions came from the United States" (Cutting, 2007). A different analysis using data from the *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* showed that the number of authors from nations other than the United States has steadily increased since the journal's inception in 1965 and constituted almost one-third of *JPS* articles by 2000 (see Figure 1; Quinones-Vidal, Lopez-Garcia, Penaranda-Ortega, & Tortosa-Gil, 2004). There has also been an increase in the number of international psychology conferences and the number of countries from which the conference attendees hail (Adair, Coêlho, & Luna, 2002; Adair, Unik, & Huynh, 2010; Pawlik &

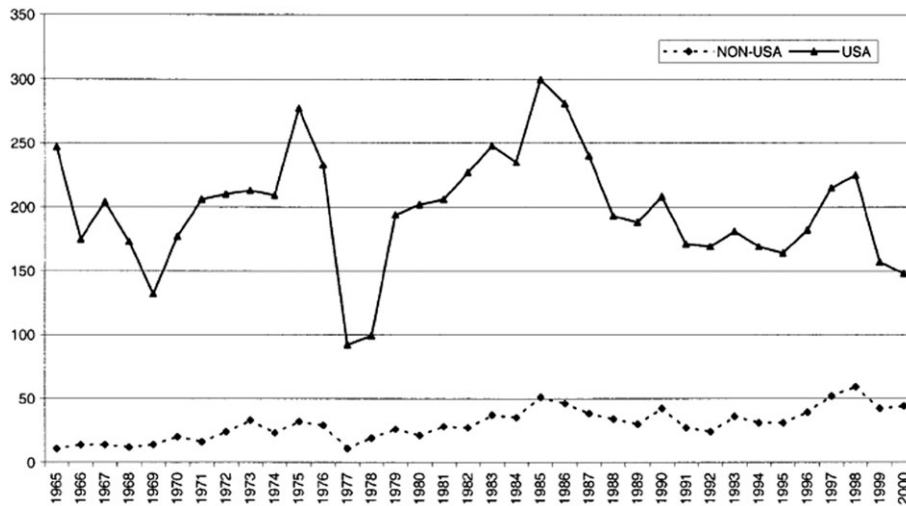


Fig. 1: Articles from the USA and elsewhere by first author (graph from Quinones-Vidal et al., 2004)

d'Ydewalle, 1996). Yet another sign of the increasing globalization of psychology is the extent to which cross-cultural psychology (an important subfield of social psychology) has surged in popularity in recent decades. In fact, since 1970, the number of publications in cross-cultural psychology has increased at twice the rate of psychology publications in general (Van de Vijver, 2013).

Psychology has become increasingly collaborative as well: "The median number of authors on an article in *Psychological Science* started at one in 1990 and moved to three by 2007, and the mean number of authors almost doubled, from 1.7 in 1990 to 3.2 in 2007" (Cutting, 2007; Wuchty, Jones, & Uzzi, 2007). Likewise, the ratio of authors per article for the *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* was 1.91 in the period of 1965–1974, 2.16 in 1975–1984, and 2.49 in 1984–2000. Relatedly, from 1965 to 1980, there were only 32 *JPSP* articles written by five authors, whereas from 1981 to 2000, there were 131 articles written by five authors. Of course, these are all data from only a few journals, albeit influential ones; it is likely that other outlets would reflect a similar trend.

Outreach to General Audiences

Among the good news for social psychology is the considerable outreach by social psychologists to general audiences, and the penetration and impact of social psychological ideas on the popular culture. This is manifest in the increasing number of popular, so called trade books, op-eds in major newspapers (like *The NY Times*, *The Guardian*, or the *Washington Post*), media appearances (even commercials!), public speaking such as at TED conferences, where social psychologists give some of the most popular talks of all times, and participation in political campaigns and political advisory boards. The increasing popularity of social psychology in public awareness can be seen using Google Books Ngram Viewer, which depicts the relative frequency of certain words and phrases in a corpus of published books. As Figure 2 shows, the term "social psychology" has experienced an immense increase in popularity over the past hundred years. Although other subfields of psychology (especially neuroscience) now appear to be on the rise as well, social psychology still remains the most prevalent subfield by far.

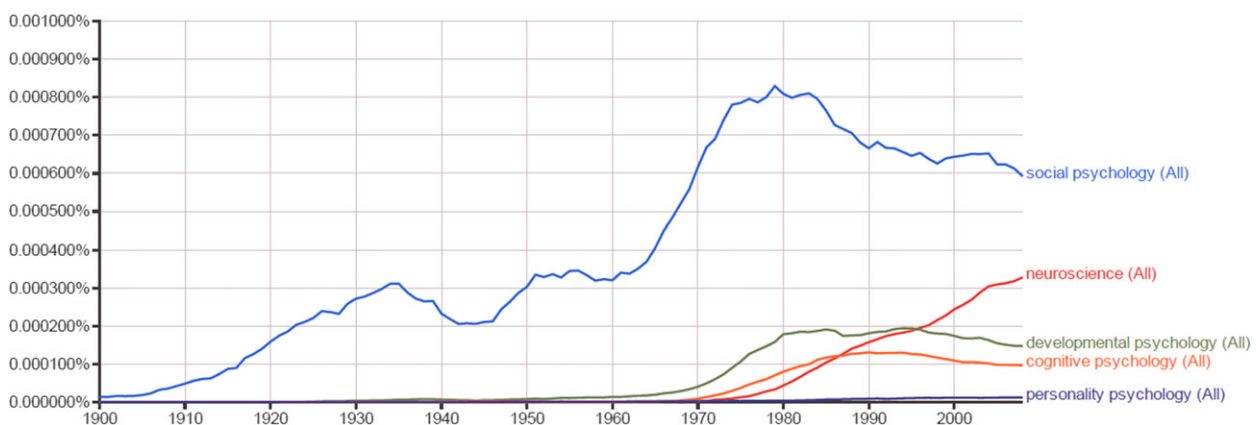


Fig. 2: Searches for the terms "social psychology," "neuroscience," "cognitive psychology," "developmental psychology," and "personality psychology" from 1900 to 2008 (the most recent year for which there were available data) in Google Books Ngram Viewer. [Colour figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]

Science Advocacy and Policy

For the last several decades, social psychology has been involved in intensive advocacy efforts and in activities designed to explain its mission and contribution to the policy community and the society at large. In the United States, major social psychological societies partake of larger federations that provide invaluable representational services to their members. Although these larger consortia and associations are not uniquely concerned with the specific problems of social psychology, we impact their agendas through participation in their managing boards and fulfilling leadership roles in those concerns. The Society of Experimental Social is a member of FABBS (Federation of Associations in Behavioral and Brain Sciences, 2016); the Society of Personality and Social Psychology was a FABBS member from 2005 to through 2014 and is now a member of COSSA (Consortium of Social Science Associations, 2016). FABBS, for example, co-sponsors the Golden Goose Awards, given for federally funded research projects that appear obscure yet turn out to have contributed significantly to society and to science (Walter Mischel won this year for his work with the Marshmallow Test). The Golden Goose Awards are named in clever allusion to late U.S. Senator Proxmire's infamous Golden Fleece Awards, whose intent was to ridicule seemingly trivial scientific research and obliterate its funding base. In this connection too, FABBS helped protect the SBE (Social Behavioral and Economic) Directorate at NSF from significant cuts in 2014 and secured a 3% increase for NSF in Congress; this, of course, benefits the Social Behavioral and Economic directorate as part of the overall NSF budget.

Federation of Associations in Behavioral and Brain Sciences carries out important outreach and education efforts designed to demonstrate to lay audiences and the policy community how behavioral and brain sciences promote human potential and well-being: For instance, it recently launched the *Policy Insights from the Behavioral and Brain Sciences* journal that rotates special issues featuring different FABBS societies including a first issue on social and personality psychology published in October 2014. The articles in this journal review behavioral and brain evidence relevant to policy decisions and policy recommendations.

Finally, social psychologists have been involved in funding and actively supporting the new (formed in the last 3 years) Behavioral Science and Policy Association that holds an annual meeting and publishes a new journal, *Behavioral Science and Policy*, whose unique feature is a joint refereeing of submissions by scientists and policy experts.

In summary, compared with its historical past, social psychology seems to be much less insular than before and much better connected and integrated with various aspects of science and society: Our research is informed by and contributes to kindred social, behavioral, and biological disciplines; our findings and analyses are commonly featured in popular media and trade books; and

we are closely attuned to the politics of science and society, vigilantly standing on guard to ensure that our work is properly understood and appreciated.

The "Bad News"

Competitive Pressures

The increased connectivity of contemporary social psychology could stem in part from our numerical growth and increased diversity of interests that growth promoted. But our growth may have had other, less desirable, effects as well. It increased the competition for journal space, grants, and faculty positions. These developments are not unique to social psychology or even psychology as a whole, but their impact on our field seems to have been particularly notable.

Tenure-track jobs in academia have become hard to find, due to the shrinking funding resources at universities and federal agencies. As combined with the numerical growth of our research community, this created an untenable supply to demand ratio, hence, a severe scarcity. In consequence, academic institutions have implemented various cost-cutting measures including visiting professorships, contract positions, and part-time appointments. According to the U.S. Department of Education, in 1975, 57% of faculty at all US degree-granting institutions held tenured or tenure-track positions. By 2009, that number had shrunk to just 30%. In parallel, the per cent of part-time faculty grew from 30% in 1975 to 51% in 2009. Moreover, it appears that the economic recession caused a delay of retirement for many older, tenured professors, thus further reducing the number of job openings for qualified candidates (Weir, 2011).

The competitive pressures on academic careers may have (indirectly) elevated to unrealistic heights the standards of publishable and fundable contributions, perhaps more so in social psychology than in other fields. One study looked at the average accomplishments of individuals recently hired for a new professorship in social psychology and found that these were not only very high but also appreciably higher than in other psychological fields: Individuals hired for social psychology posts right after grad school had roughly 10 publications to their name, some in top journals, and about 50% first authored. By comparison, PhDs in cognitive psychology hired out of grad school had produced about five publications on the average, and developmental PhDs, around two to three papers (Valla, 2010).

Does the inflated number of publications by graduating PhDs reflect a surge in intellectual quality? Perhaps not entirely. In part, it may be indicative of students' and faculty's attempts to adjust to the increased publication pressures, to do whatever it takes to remain competitive in the ever tightening job market these days. One concern this raises is the criterion for authorship inclusions on scientific publications. By APA guidelines, to merit inclusion as co-author, the individual should have "been involved with initial research design, data

collection and analysis, manuscript drafting, and final approval." In contrast, "contributing research but not helping with the publication itself" is not seen to merit authorship (American Psychological Association, 2016). Given the inflation in graduate student publications in recent years, it seems possible that these have resulted in part from team work and that faculty may have loosened somewhat the requirements for authorship inclusion, so as to increase their students' competitiveness in the market place.

Quantity over Quality

The numeric increase in graduate student publications is but one symptom of a more general pattern of the quantification of scientific excellence. The various evaluative indices of faculty research contributions are also largely quantitative: The hallowed h-index reflects the author's set of most cited papers and the number of citations those papers have received; it is thus inevitably correlated with the number of publications, although it is determined also by their popularity. Other indices of excellence are quantitative as well, of course: the sheer number of publications, of first authorships, and so forth (Cacioppo, 2008).

The "quantity heuristic" and the reliance on the prestige of outlets have to an extent "mechanized" the academic evaluation and selection process. Hardly anyone these days reads candidates' publications. Rather, we count their number and consider where they appear, thus relying on others' (editors' and reviewers') opinions rather than bothering to form our own. One consequence of this is homogenization of research around the current Zeitgeist, and the discouragement of "risky" forays into the unknown; these might not pay in the short term yet ultimately might lead to breakthroughs and revolutionary insights.

Inflated Standards

The competition for journal space has led to the criteria for publication becoming increasingly stringent and demanding. One indicator of that trend, and a proxy for effort invested in a publication, is number of studies included in an average social psychology paper. Although an article published in *EJSP* included an average of 1.23 studies in 1971–1972 and 1.55 studies in 1993–1994, it currently (2015–2016) contains 1.95 studies per paper. This trend is even stronger in U.S. social psychological journals. We sampled 40 articles published in each of three time periods in *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*: 1965–1966, 1990–1991, and 2015–2016 (120 papers in total). This analysis showed that although a psychological article published in *JPSP* contained an average of 1.25 studies in 1965–1966 and 1.75 studies in 1990–1991, the current average is 4.43 studies per paper, with some papers including as many as 11 studies. To better examine content more clearly related to social psychology, we looked closely at each of the three sections in *JPSP*: *Attitudes and Social Cognition*, *Interpersonal*

Relations and Group Processes, and *Personality and Individual Differences*. The distinction was introduced in 1980, and therefore, we decided to sample 25 papers from each of the sections in each of three time periods: 1985/1986, 2000/2001, and 2015/2016 (225 papers in total). In 1985/86, the number of studies per paper was below 2 and relatively similar for all three sections: 1.92 for the *Attitudes and Social Cognition* section, 1.16 for *Interpersonal Relations and Group Processes*, and 1.48 for *Personality and Individual Differences*. All of the numbers increased over the next 30 years, with the number of studies per paper in the *Attitudes and Social Cognition* section reaching particularly high levels (2000/2001: 3.64 vs. 2.44 vs. 2.28; 2015/2016: 6.08 vs. 4.28 vs. 4.28) in *JPSP*'s *ASP*, *IRGP*, and *PID*, respectively. Although those numbers are only estimates, and certainly tap only one aspect of research standards likely to vary somewhat between journals, they do suggest that the effort investment necessary to match academic standards in our field has appreciably increased over time. An analysis conducted by Reis and Stiller (1992) revealed a similar pattern, although their paper obviously did not include data from the past two decades.

In principle, there should be nothing wrong with stringent criteria and lofty standards. After all, do not they elevate the quality of reported research, and showcase the best of our science? Perhaps not quite, if the criteria are unrealistic, hence often reached by questionable practices for which the field has been recently castigated: suppression of uncooperative data (the file drawer problem), *p*-hacking, capitalizing on chance by under-powering our studies, and so forth (Button et al., 2013; Nosek, Spies, & Motyl, 2012; Simmons, Nelson, & Simonsohn, 2011; Spellman, 2012).

Consider that a typical article in our leading U.S. journals (like *JPSP*, *PSPB*, or *JESP*) contains multiple studies (as noted earlier), all unexceptionally confirming the hypothesis and also providing compelling evidence for the mediating process underlying the phenomena. In our experience, such predictive precision is unlikely in the messy domain of human cognition and behavior; hence, the insistence of obtaining it in all published research is excessive and unhelpful.

Superficiality

The "Wow" and the "How". The considerable publication stress combined with increased public attention to social psychological findings may have introduced another questionable trend into our scientific practices, namely, the tendency to privilege research that presents surprising, unusual, or hilarious findings rather than ones that make substantive contribution to knowledge. The criticism that social psychology tends to favor "cutesy" studies because of their attention-grabbing power is not exactly new; during the crisis of the 1970s, such criticism was rampant as well (Ring, 1967; Rubin, 1970). The image of psychology suffered at that time and so, arguably, did governmental support for our research. It is this image that may have

prompted the late U.S. Senator William Proxmire to award some social psychological studies (such as research on romantic love) the infamous Golden Fleece Award mentioned earlier.

Nonetheless, the penchant for unobvious, difficult to predict findings seems to have remained “in our blood.” Combined with the media thirst for sensationalism and our growing appetite for media attention (encouraged by major academic institutions!), this led to increased emphasis in the field on studies that claim “magical” findings that would seem highly surprising and counterintuitive to intelligent lay readers. As Strack (2012, p. 5) aptly noted, “in many publications, the intended recipient of the persuasive communication is not the sophisticated, critical colleague but the journalist who formulates the headline in the newspaper. Journalists, however, are rarely interested in complicated methodological or conceptual issues. What they want is to get news that they can sell. And this is mostly the simple, spectacular, surprising, bizarre, counterintuitive result. Man bites dog.”

Neglect of theory and the replication crisis: the curious case of bodily feedback. The emphasis in social psychology on unobvious, counterintuitive, and surprising findings may have contributed to the production in our labs of highly specialized, even if valid, effects apparent only under unique circumstances. This may have fed the acute replication crisis that is currently roiling our field. In many cases, the general psychological mechanisms governing those effects are quite robust and readily demonstrable, and what are fragile (and hence refractory to replication) are the specific instances of those mechanisms cloaked in somewhat rarefied and surprising operationalizations.

Consider the “power posing” effects (Carney, Cuddy, & Yap, 2010; Carney, Cuddy, & Yap, 2015) or the “facial feedback” effects (Strack, Martin, & Stepper, 1988), both of which recently came under criticism on grounds of non-replicability. We happen to believe that these effects could be quite real rather than made up, albeit detectable only under some narrowly circumscribed conditions. Our beliefs derive from what (we believe) is the core psychological mechanism mediating these phenomena. It is the mechanism whereby people infer conclusions from (information that they treat as) relevant evidence for these conclusions (Kruglanski *et al.*, 2006; Kruglanski & Gigerenzer, 2011; Kruglanski, Pierro, Mannetti, Erb, & Chun, 2007; Kruglanski & Thompson, 1999).

Now, facial feedback or power posing could serve as evidence for a variety of inferences, concerning, for example, one’s mood, confidence, assertiveness, or the funniness of cartoons. To serve that function, however, a given facial contortion or a bodily pose (X) should figure as an antecedent in an “if X then Y” rule in which the consequent (Y) is the conclusion at issue. Consider now that not all individuals might subscribe to a rule that connects a power pose to the inference of confidence, say, or a given facial grimace to the inference of

good mood. Mind you, even those who do might not uphold the rule with the same assurance that is being equally certain that Y follows from X.

Consider furthermore that inferences may be determined by different types of evidence (i.e., different antecedent Xs may imply the same Y), some of which may afford the conclusion with greater assurance than the rarefied X at issue. Under those conditions, the link between X and the conclusion would not be observed, defining a “failure of replication.” This strongly suggests that although facial feedback and bodily posture can serve as evidence for various inferences, they may not do so invariably, as often the inferences in questions will be determined by other, more subjectively relevant evidence. In short, replication failures may often stem from superficiality: focusing on glitzy and surprising effects (the “Wow”) while neglecting the mechanisms (the “How”) that produced them in the first place.

Cross-cultural psychology, too, can offer some insight into the circumstances under which psychological findings can and cannot be expected to replicate. A primary focus of cross-cultural psychology is on differences in thought and behavior across cultures (Kitayama & Cohen, 2010). Given the prevalence of such differences, it is logical to conclude that experimental findings that were validated in one cultural context may not necessarily hold true in an entirely different context. In line with this notion, Kitayama, Snibbe, Markus, and Suzuki (2004) demonstrated that the classic cognitive dissonance effect, which has been replicated many times in Western countries (Festinger, 1964), functions differently in Japanese participants. More specifically, Japanese participants exhibited the typical dissonance effect only when self-relevant others were primed, whereas European participants showed the dissonance effect regardless of social-cue manipulations. In a similar vein, Mu, Kitayama, Han, and Gelfand (2015) found that Chinese participants exhibited neurobiological responses to social norm violations (presumably because they live in a culture that places strong emphasis on social norms), whereas American participants did not (presumably because their culture places less of an emphasis on such norms). In short, cross-cultural psychology can help social psychologists address the replication crisis by reminding researchers of the importance of context. The fact that a given finding does not replicate in a different lab, country, or culture is not necessarily a sign that the original result was unequivocally false; rather, it may simply indicate the presence of contextual or cultural moderators that influence how invariant psychological principles are manifested in individuals’ thoughts and behaviors.

Disregard for History

Related to its neglect of theory is social psychology’s disregard for the intellectual history of our field. Europe seems to differ in this respect from the United States. Whereas a symposium on the history of social psychology enjoyed near record attendance at a major

European meeting, two consecutive U.S. program committees at a highly significant social psychological convention turned down a proposed symposium on this topic (with a lineup of stellar presenters!). Quantitative analyses further support this claim. We created a list of all of the years cited in papers published in the *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* and the *Personality and Social Psychology Review* in 2015. We then estimated the total number of psychology articles published in a given year by searching the PsycInfo database for each year with no keyword selected. We divided the number of times the articles from a given year were cited in either *JPSP* or *PSPR* in 2015 by the total number of psychology articles published in that year (see Figure 3). This analysis revealed that, even taking into account the greater overall quantity of psychology articles that have been published in recent decades, the articles in *JPSP* and *PSPR* nonetheless cited a considerably greater proportion of newer articles (i.e., articles from the past two decades) as compared with older articles. Likely, the pressure to publish large numbers of innovative papers discourages an in-depth study of past contributions that might have already discovered the same principles long ago.

Hardly any social psychologist does historical research. As one example, the myth that Triplet's (1898) research constituted the first social psychological study was repeated in all textbooks, which simply copied from each other. Moreover, the study itself was incorrectly described (Stroebe, 2012). Allport's chapter on the history of social psychology in the 1954 edition of the *Handbook of Social Psychology* was simply reprinted in the third edition in 1985, as if the accounts of history

did not change over the years, and so on. Obviously, disregard of the history of ideas, like hiding one's head in the proverbial sand, is counterproductive and inimical to scientific progress: It removes the opportunity to improve on prior theories and to refine past knowledge in light of novel findings and techniques.

Toward a New Dawn in Social Psychology: We Shall Survive!

In these days of "methodological crisis," dark clouds gather on our horizon that threatens to disempower and belittle our field. Colleagues feel alarmed and discouraged by the merciless criticism to which social psychology (and some investigators personally) are subjected (e.g., Fiske, in press; Gelman, 2016; Simmons & Simonsohn, in press). Nonetheless, it is important to peer beyond the distressing current context and see the "silver lining" that the menacing clouds may contain.

For one, the methodological critiques may actually inspire improvements likely to strengthen the rigor of our research and reduce the error rate of our findings. Secondly, some of the proposals described above, albeit with some tweaking, may actually remove the need to produce the unrealistic "picture perfect" results that our major journals have been requiring so far. Specifically, we find promising the suggested publication of papers based on their theoretical rationale and their methodology rather than on their results. This might mean either pre-approval of research for publication on that basis or the result-blind review of submitted papers. Each of these two approaches has its advantages

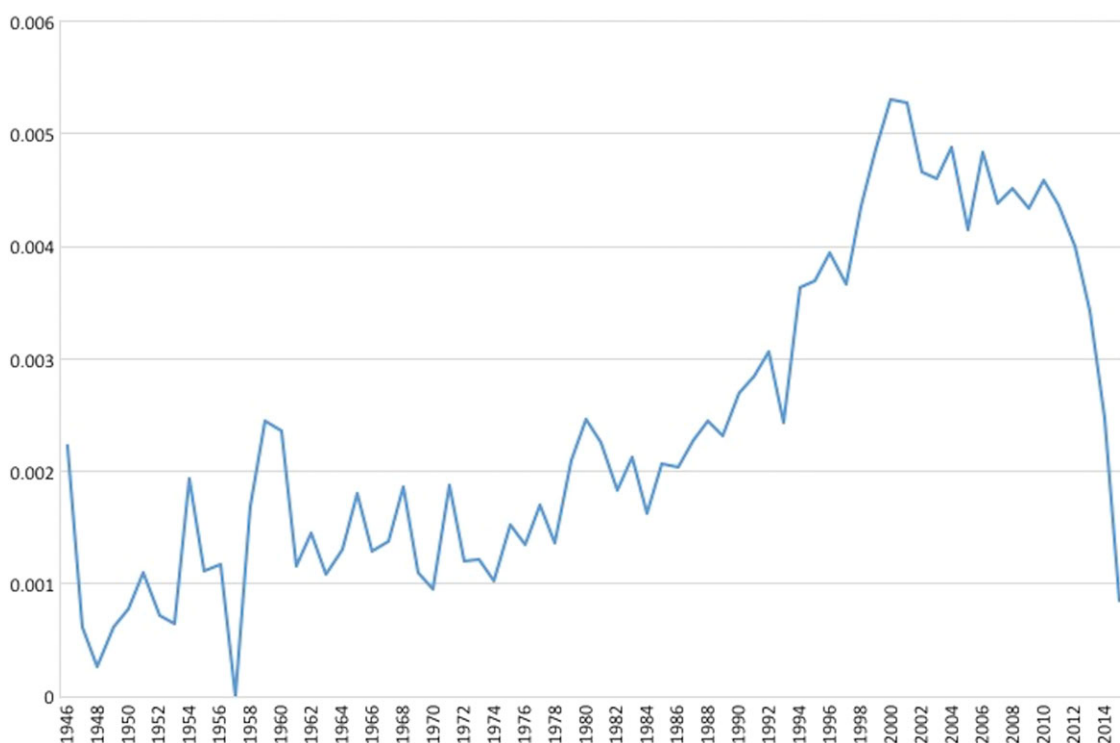


Fig. 3: The number of times the articles from a given year were cited in either *JPSP* or *PSPR* in 2015, divided by the total number of psychology articles published in that year. [Colour figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]

and disadvantages; common to both, however, is avoidance of the outcome-bias that may unduly sway reviewers' judgment, and removal of the unrealistic insistence on "immaculate" data patterns possibly at root of our present methodological ills.

One example of a journal committed to publishing preregistered papers, regardless of their final results, is the recently launched *Comprehensive Results in Social Psychology*. A wider use of such a policy could shift the current perception of null results as "failures" to seeing them as valuable information. From a signal detection perspective, correct omissions have the same informational value as hits. Therefore, assuming the use of powerful and reliable tests, knowledge about what does not work may be as valuable as knowledge of what does. As long as the research question is worth asking, and the methods used to investigate it are adequate and robust, the scientific body of knowledge would benefit from an updating of hypotheses, regardless of its specific direction.

Furthermore, a renewed emphasis on theory and method, rather than predominantly on results, may sharpen our theoretical acumen and the attention paid to the theoretical and historical justification of our research. The recent "fury" about non-replication will, hopefully, subside, through the realization that what should replicate are the invariant psychological principles rather than sensationalized effects likely to manifest only under esoteric circumstances.

Critiques leveled against our field might hopefully curb our enthusiasm about the quantity of our publications, citations, and so forth and refocus our attention on the quality and depth of our work. We may want to enrich our graduate training with courses and workshops on theory construction (Kruglanski & Higgins, 2004), thus encouraging students to develop substantive theoretical frameworks rather than simply carrying out "fun" or "cutesy" experiments with no theoretical basis.

Lastly, hiring, promotion, and tenure committees should do their part to decrease the focus on quantity of publications and/or citations and refocus our attention on the quality and depth of scientists' work. Rather than relying on the "counting heuristic" in its various forms, these committees should consider actually reading a limited number of a candidate's best contributions, which reflect the logic, coherence, and programmatic nature of her or his oeuvre, its theoretical insight, and its place in the historic progression of our field.

The domain of phenomena we study and our unique level of analysis, at the interface of the individual and society, are of great importance and have the potential to benefit society. Our field should play a pivotal role in deliberations about disturbing trends in the world today, for example, violent extremism, the rise of xenophobia, and the refugee crisis. We should continue and deepen our outreach to other scientific disciplines, the popular culture and the policy community. We need to build on our successes and to learn from our mistakes. In so doing, we may do well to remember that

good science is not a numbers game or a popularity contest. Good science is erudite and appreciative of the history of ideas, it is not about the "Wow" but rather about the "How" and "Why" of phenomena, and it treats empirical findings as a means of theory testing rather as an end in and of themselves. The current crisis must be addressed for the betterment of our enterprise. If we do so, we will weather the current "storm" and usher a new and hopeful age for our science.

Acknowledgements

We are indebted to Wolfgang Stroebe, Michele Gelfand, and the editors for comments on a former version of this paper.

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