

JOIBS: April 2024. ISSN 2992-9253

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Review of Lauritsen (2024)

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Funding: None.

Competing interests: None.

Citation: Ferguson, C. (2024). Review of Lauritsen (2024). *Journal of Open Inquiry in the Behavioral Sciences*. <https://doi.org/10.58408/issn.2992-9253.2024.02.02.0002>

I very much enjoyed reading this article by Matthew Lauritsen as I believe it points to an important corrective to some established and presumably popular literature. Indeed, the issue inherent to the research in question...that male and female coded items should be balanced in tests of sex bias...seems rather obvious, it is a wonder how seldom this appears to have been acknowledged in previous literature.

Dr. Lauritsen has presented a fairly straightforward and convincing demonstration of how failure to balance items on designs such as this can, essentially, create the results scholars may need to support any narrative. I suspect this is an issue for research beyond that focused on sex bias in management. As such, I find this data to be compelling.

My suspicion is that, at present, social science is too often acting on a kind of bias treadmill. That is to say, we are no longer curious about whether and where bias may exist (and few people would suggest that bias, sexism, racism, etc., is absent from the world), but are determined to find it *whether or not it exists* particularly in support of preexisting narratives. Our political left has convinced itself that bias is widespread and ever enduring, particularly as relates to certain groups favored by the left (whereas bias toward unfavored groups is met with a dismissive eyeroll). That political leftism enjoys broad dominance in academia is now beyond any reasonable dispute. Yet this can create perverse inducements wherein scholars are incentivized to perpetually find evidence of bias, even though the reality of modern industrialized nations such as the United States, is that they represent a greater degree of egalitarianism than has been present at any other point in human history. In other words, to be published, to receive accolades, to be praised by colleagues, to get grants, one *must* find evidence of bias, again, particularly against favored groups, whether or not it truly exists.

One need not believe we live in an absolute utopia to acknowledge that social science's obsession with finding bias has itself become unhealthy. At present, almost certainly, social science is an origin point for considerable misinformation, such as occurred after the murder of George Floyd in 2020, wherein organizations such as the American Psychological Association (2020) spoke of an "racism pandemic" that was largely ephemeral in the data and which ignored considerable

evidence to the contrary (see McWhorter, 2020 for an early rebuttal of these claims). Once again, we need not believe that we live in a Star Trek racial utopia, or deny that individuals experience racism, to also acknowledge that systemic racism is largely a relic of our past, and the achievements of the modern US on race, sex and other issues of diversity and inclusion represent a remarkable historical high point. Nor need we be blind to the modern far-left's proclivity to tokenize certain groups, and disparage others in pursuit of a morally grandstanding, but ultimately regressive and aggressive identarian worldview. This proclivity has, in many cases, merely inverted past sexism and racism issues, and in complicating power dynamics, making claims to power and oppression more complex and nuance than in our 1950s past.

In this sense, bad science is reified because there is little incentive for the average scholar to do otherwise. *The Narrative* must be preserved and genuflected to as a member of academia in good social standing, no matter whether the data is good or poor, or whatever other data may complicate it.

In Dr. Lauritsen we can see the problem of deck-stacking in social science research. Keith Stanovich has demonstrated similar issue for social science research, where the careful selection of questions that favor progressives have been used to make conservatives look stupider, more bigoted, and more authoritarian than progressives (Stanovich, 2021). That an undeniably progressive group (scholars) would declare their conservative opponents to be less valuable than themselves as part of "science" is something that should always have given us pause, but it largely did not.

My only quibble with Dr. Lauritsen's work is his own brief and perhaps unintentional dalliance in the same form of myside bias when he speaks of "...the opponents of inclusive diversity..." This statement worried me as it appears both strawman and ad hominem, casting such opponents as enemies of an undefined good (after all, one of the main concerns about the use of the terms "inclusivity" and "diversity" is that they have become distorted from their original purpose, now used to force ideological conformity). Undoubtedly, as there is good faith in promoting values of inclusion and diversity (certainly, at least, in the ways that normal people rather than scholars, activists and DEI administrators understand these terms), there are good faith objections to how these terms have come to be used in practice. We need not assume every critique is in good faith (certainly there are still racists, sexists, and bigots on the right, just as it is becoming clearer there are also racists, sexists, and bigots on the left). But it is best to avoid painting with too broad a brush, nor engaging in too much throat-clearing to demonstrate our own moral worth.

In closing, I hope that this study will help to improve methods in the field.

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