

July 3, 2018

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing in my capacity as founder and co-moderator of PsychMAP, an online Facebook discussion group devoted to constructively critical, open-minded, and civil scientific discourse about research methods and practices in psychological science. PsychMAP was founded in 2015 to provide a venue for psychologists to engage in conversations and debates about pressing issues in our field without fear of the personal attacks, bullying, and vitriolic arguments that can sometimes characterize online fora. As such, PsychMAP has several clear and simple ground rules that members must agree to follow when they join the group, including (a) focusing on the shared goal of improving science (rather than singling out specific individuals with personal attacks) and (b) assuming that others are smart, well intentioned, and open-minded.

Our group has over 8,500 members from around the world in a variety of career stages. To my memory, in the history of the group, we have only had to revoke the memberships of four individuals. There are two ways that this can happen: (1) if three separate individuals flag a single post as inappropriate, and (2) if all moderators agree that a member has repeatedly violated the ground rules of the group despite being warned about doing so. Each of these happen very rarely, despite the large nature of the group and the often contentious issues discussed on the page.

James Coyne may have the rare distinction of having been banned from PsychMAP, in November of 2016, for both of these reasons: More than three people complained about his posts, and he repeatedly ignored the moderators' warnings on this issue and persisted in violating the ground rules of the group.

Dr. Coyne's comments in PsychMAP were often hostile and focused on specific individuals rather than broader issues. For example, in one thread, he stepped into a friendly back-and-forth between two scholars with comments of escalating hostility, ultimately focusing on a particular scholar's comments. He later asked members of the group to weigh in on whether they thought he or the other person was being unreasonable; everyone seemed to agree that Dr. Coyne was the one who was out of bounds (see Appendix for screenshots).

I will also note that Dr. Eiko Fried would often wade into these kinds of altercations with a calm and respectful plea for civility (see Appendix for examples). Historically, Dr. Fried's contributions to PsychMAP have always been thoughtful and constructive, and he has been a model "citizen" of a group devoted to civil, inclusive, and respectful discourse. Although I have never met Dr. Fried face to face, I have the utmost respect and appreciation for the strong role he has played in not only promoting better scientific methods in our field, but also in championing

civil and constructive scientific discourse in all venues, including Facebook, Twitter, and his blog. Dr. Fried is widely respected in the field for these very reasons.

Please let me know if there is any further information I can provide that may be useful.

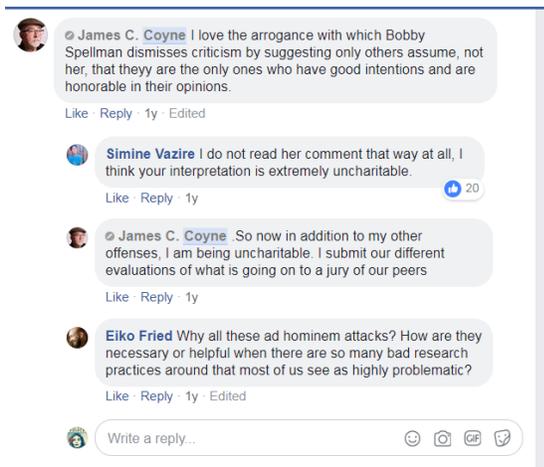
Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Alison Ledgerwood". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "A" and "L".

Alison Ledgerwood
Professor and Chancellor's Fellow
University of California, Davis

Appendix

The screenshot below illustrates the kind of comments that Dr. Coyne would often make in the group. You can see that in this comment, he focuses on a specific individual rather than a broader scientific issue. You can also see that he asks others to weigh in on their sense of who is the wronged party in this particular altercation that he is in; the 20 “likes” on Dr. Vazire’s post seem to indicate that those who read this far in the subthread agreed with Dr. Vazire’s interpretation rather than Dr. Coyne’s.



I too agree with Dr. Vazire’s interpretation of this altercation. Here is what happened earlier on the thread. Dr. Spellman and Dr. Klonsky appear to be having a friendly back-and-forth; Dr. Coyne steps in with comments that come across as quite hostile:

