Dangerous Ideas and Safe Zones

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2 Questions

1. How (not why) is conduct & dissemination of intelligence suppressed?

2. What can we do about it, qua scientists?
Premises:
• Research on intelligence differences “highly controversial” for non-scientific reasons
• Public confusion & false claims feed controversy
• Science of intelligence has advanced, but with reduced cadre

Claim:
• Non-PC conclusions suppressed mostly by special taxes, not open bans, on “dangerous” ideas

Recommendations:
• Individually: identify, expose, & reduce taxes
• Collectively: create more tax-free zones
Protected Speech?

1. USA—First Amendment to the Constitution
   a. Freedom of speech is to be protected (including in state-funded universities)

2. Many USA universities
   a. Contractually guarantee academic freedom
   b. Have speech codes prohibiting “offensive” speech

3. EU countries—Race Directives
   a. Theory of biological races is explicitly rejected
   b. Offensive and demeaning behavior is prohibited

Academics tend to assume that 1 and 2a provide effective protection and that 2b, 3a, and 3b pose no real threat
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Claim: Suppression is By Degrees, Not Decree

- Humans are social animals, sensitive to social reinforcement & social facilitation

- Academe is reputational system—one advances only with approval from professional peers

- One-trial learning when burned, even if vicarious

- Much suppression is self-suppression to avoid disapproval
Head Examined

Scientist’s Study of Brain Genes Sparks a Backlash

Dr. Lahn Connects Evolution in Some Groups to IQ: Debate on Race and DNA

‘Speculating Is Dangerous’
Layers of Differential Reinforcement

- Political regulations and rights
- Media controversy, confusion
- Academic institutions: Editorial review, hiring & tenure, awards
- Professional recognition
- Social approval

Differences-exist view

No-differences view
Special Taxes Pile Up

- Political regulations and rights
- Media controversy, confusion
- Institutions: Editorial review, hiring & tenure, awards
- Professional recognition
- Social approval

- Must actively seek enforcement
- Drains time and energy, noxious
- Held to double standards
- Others conspicuously disassociate selves
- Snubs, insults in personal & work settings

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Accolades

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Bad News Is Also Good News

• Acts of suppression/deterrence are ubiquitous but diffuse, small but cumulative, so—
  – Small acts of scientific integrity can, likewise, cumulate to block or reverse them
  – A few go a long way

• Many come in guise of promoting scientific rigor and responsibility, but with lazy justification, so—
  – Analyze illogic and error, and respond; silence is tacit assent

• Just reasserting the evidence is not enough to persuade when it’s already thought “discredited,” so—
  – Identify & answer the sophistry creating that illusion

We differ in what we can do, but we can all play a role. Think “small but consistent.”
Recommendations
(Or, What I’ve Seen Work)

1. Preempt predictable confusion & error with clarification (see Handout)
2. Pin down sophistries; answer illogic with logic (see Handout)
3. Enlarge safe zones
   a) Provide safe cover for good science, good ammunition for consumers: e.g., group symposia, collective statements
   b) Hold non-scientific “science” to account, scientifically
   c) Via ISIR: student support, collegial exchange, Intelligence, website with user-friendly info for public

Three cheers for Doug Detterman!
Thank you.