Taboo Issues in Social Science
Questioning Conventional Wisdom

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Critical Perspectives on Social Science
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Preface

This book is a politically incorrect expedition into the fantasies, falsehoods, and folderol infecting social science and humanities departments in our universities. A disturbing feature in academia that provided the primary impetus for writing this book is the efforts to censor research on "taboo" topics. An article in the prestigious journal *Nature* featured four such areas—race, sex differences, intelligence, and violence that are taboo if they do not subscribe to the liberal orthodoxy and if they tie those things to biology.¹ According to the article, these topics are said to be red lined by editors, university review boards, and granting authorities if researchers dare probe their biological roots. Although many researchers successfully cross the line, they are said to risk career and reputation for doing so. We are not talking Josef Mengele and his monstrous medical experimentation on concentration camp inmates, the unconscionable Tuskegee Syphilis experiment, or even Stanley Milgram’s experiment on obedience, but rather research in which subjects freely participate and are left entirely unscathed by the experience.

The argument against touching these hot topics biologically most often cited is that findings can be "misused." Of course, anything can be misused—guns, knives, cars, alcohol, chemistry, physics, sexuality, the law, religion, and the Oracles of Delphi, but, with the exception of guns, no one calls for a ban on these things. It's only a matter of seconds after a person brings up biology when discussing taboo topics that some would-be censor brings up Hitler. Hitler can be loosely tied to all these tabooed phenomena because he used the terms “race,” “defectives,” and “perverts” to consign millions of Jews, mentally ill or retarded individuals, and homosexuals to the gas chamber as biologically inferior types. Biology is thus in the minds of some guilty by association with Hitler’s agenda.

It is too often forgotten that similar nightmares have bedeviled humanity throughout history, none of which waited for biology to sanctify them. Nazi notions of racial superiority rested on quasi-mystical Teutonic nationalism and had nothing at all to do with the science of biology in any real sense. Human history is a sad catalogue of inquisitions, gulags, pogroms, genocides, and wars fought in the name of religious and secular ideologies far removed from any whiff of biology. The communist terror was quantitatively
more heinous than the Nazi terror, lasted much longer, and is based on a theory of human nature which was purely environmental and which explicitly repudiates biology. The Marxist terror rested on myths of egalitarianism and was energized by class resentment, not by myths of racial superiority.

Biologist Bernard Davis has fought to counter censorial propositions being bandied about as “socially dangerous” since the 1970s. He notes that the notion of “forbidden knowledge” has a long history, but that: “It is a difficult notion for scientists to accept, since all knowledge can be used in various ways, and it would seem better to restrain the bad uses rather than to deprive ourselves of the good ones.”² Surely this is a position that all true scientists would hold. A number of folks even become attracted to taboo ideas simply because they are taboo. My first published research was on hypertension, and my first book was on love, both of which are safe and non-ideological topics. I was drawn to taboo topics initially by witnessing the brouhaha surrounding sociobiology and the topic of intelligence in the 1970s and found them fascinating.

To be sure, there is a lot of good social science serving useful purposes, but there is also an awful lot of research with transparent agendas better described as advocacy research in which conclusions precede inquiries. Researchers with an apparent pathological aversion to clarity dress up their work in pretentious language in their efforts to appear profound. These folks belong to exclusive clubs whose members are overwhelmingly liberal and who feed incestuously on each other’s work to the point that very little not supporting the liberal agenda is carried out. This situation was addressed in the prestigious journal *Behavioral and Brain Sciences* in 2015³ and summarized by Lee Jussim, one of its authors, in an article titled *Political diversity will improve psychological science*.

You advocate for diversity and yet you are a political monoculture. Vanishingly few of your members identify with any ideological perspective to the right of American liberal or European social democrats (conservative, libertarian, moderate). You have created a hostile environment for nonliberals. Many of you endorse and justify discriminating against conservatives. The few nonliberals in your midst feel beleaguered by your hostility. Too much of your science is riddled with confirmation biases and distortions that
create the appearance, but not the reality, of “scientific sup-
port” for the moral and intellectual superiority of liberals,
and for liberal values and narratives. It is time that you took
proactive steps to make your field less hostile and more in-
viting to nonliberals, and to upgrade the quality of your
science in order to limit the role of political biases in distort-
ing your conclusions.4

This brings me to my secondary motive for writing this book. The
political asymmetry of the liberal monoculture corrupts social
science, and is the reason that the kinds of politically correct non-
sense spewed from the ivory towers can thrive. Journalists jump on
this stuff reflexively as gospel because it comes from people with
PhDs and is so exciting. What makes it exciting, and thus a good
story, is that much of it defies common sense and may contain
sensationalized accounts of the damage the evil American white
male power structure supposedly inflicts on racial and sexual mi-
norities, and on women. All kinds of isms are dreamed up such as
postmodernism, relativism, and multiculturalism, among other
things, to justify the left’s position on so many issues that they have
difficulty defending scientifically. The writings of academics enth-
ralled by such approaches moved William F. Buckley, the preemi-
nent public intellectual of the 20th century, to say in one of his
Firing Line programs: “The academic community has in it the big-
gest concentration of alarmists, cranks and extremists this side of
the giggle house.” Having spent 31 years in the ivory tower, I find
much in this to agree with. Although I have many wonderful col-
leagues who are serious scientists and who are far from alarmists,
cranks or extremists, too many social scientists provide fodder for
mockery and outrage that it is easy to mistake them for refugees
from the funny farm.

I didn’t always feel this way. In another episode of Firing Line,
Buckley stated that he would rather be ruled by the first 500 people
in the Boston phonebook than by the faculty of Harvard. I loved
Buckley’s debates and admired his immense intellect and sparking
vocabulary, but was struck dumb by this statement. As an under-
graduate biology major at this time, I had taken intro to just about
everything and came away thinking my professors were brilliant. If
my professors were brilliant, then Harvard professors just had to be
more so. It didn’t take me long after getting into academia to realize
just how right Mr. Buckley was, however. I have heard more pure nonsense on social issues from PhDs than from all other people combined in my 28 years work experience prior to entering academia. As an ex-marine, police officer, and probation officer, I have engaged the real world that most academics have never entered to test their ideology against reality. So many of them want to “protect” students from ideas other than those from the left, and provide “safe spaces” against “micro-aggressions,” which may be as innocuous as calling someone by the wrong gender pronoun, or having the temerity to wish them a Merry Christmas.

Chapter 1 looks at the current politically correct state of academia and how modern leftists have reconnected with Herbert Marcuse, the 1960s guru of the left. Marcuse’s goal was to tolerate only leftist ideas, to banish rightist ideas, and to “turn illusion into reality and fiction into truth. This goal is being achieved in the social sciences and humanities where there reigns a deadening fog of political correctness. It is difficult to oppose leftist orthodoxy in academia, although some who are trying. I also look at why many intellectuals tend to have such a jaundiced view of traditional Western values and why they feel resentful.

Chapter 2 examines the various claims and agendas of gender (radical) feminism, the kind of feminism that predominates in academia. One of its agenda items is to “desex” culture and to turn us into androgynous beings. I look at this through the lens of massive state efforts to do the same thing in the 20th century in the USSR, China, and the Israeli kibbutzim. I also look at feminist attitudes toward science, and the various spectacular claims they have made in order to paint men in the worst possible light.

Whiteness studies is the topic of chapter 3. Whiteness studies exist not to promote and celebrate white identity in the same way as black, women’s, Chicano, ethnic, or queer studies course are designed to promote and celebrate those human categories, but to vilify whites and to hold them responsible for all the evils of the world. Those who offer these courses take pride in calling themselves race traitors who want to abolish whiteness. Their claims about slavery and racism, particularly in the context of poverty, are examined.

Leftist social scientists tend to disparage the idea of human nature because it militates against their vision of social perfection. In chapter 4 I engage Thomas Sowell’s concept of "visions" to differentiate modern liberal and conservative views of the human nature and
how these views color their ideological stances to the world. I make the claim for a universal human nature while acknowledging wide cultural and individual variation from philosophical and scientific viewpoints. I look at how countervailing "instincts" that appeal to liberals and conservatives to different degrees, whether human nature is good, bad, or selfish, and how sexual selection has forged somewhat different male and female natures.

Chapter 5 looks at social constructionism, a theory of knowledge that asserts the socially created nature of truth, knowledge, and sometimes facts. I differentiate between the valuable weak form of social constructionism and its strong form, which can be truly bizarre. Social constructionism is popular in sociology, and particularly among feminists who long for an androgynous society. It has a seductive appeal for them because of its insistence that everything is arbitrary, relative, and made up. I look at Margaret Mead’s claim to prove gender is arbitrary in her ethnography of three New Guinea tribes.

Chapter 6 engages the most tabooed of all topics according to the Nature article mentioned earlier. The only position on race with the liberal seal of approval is that it is a social construct and does not exist as a biological entity, a position underscored by placing the term in scare quotes every time it appears. It is an axiomatic belief in social science that studying race as a biological reality is dangerous and anyone who does is ipso facto racist. I look at the various reasons for why this is believed, and then look at what advances in the genomic sciences have to say about race, and why perhaps it is a helpful concept as well as a real one.

Chapter 7 begins with Samuel Coleridge’s belief that we are all born Platonists or Aristotelians. I look at liberal and conservative personalities and what the genomic and neurosciences have to say about Coleridge’s dichotomy. I then look at the literature on happiness and ideology and the Big Five personality traits to explore personality differences between liberals and conservatives. Who gives more of their time, money, and other resources and why are discussed next. I then address how liberals and conservatives look at equality, fairness, and opportunity, which are quite different and often lead to contentious debates.

Chapter 8 assesses the relative merits of capitalism and socialism, and why the latter’s emotional pull is so potent for some. I spend some time looking at how recurring conflicts between crony capi-
talism and socialism have devastated the economy of Argentina, which was once the seventh richest economy in the world. I then explore socially positive and negative outcomes derived from selfish and altruistic motives and the interrelatedness of self-interest, altruism, and capitalism, and conclude the chapter by looking at personal and corporate welfare.

Chapter 9 looks at the hard leftist notion that one’s socioeconomic position in society is the result of white privilege and not at all about talent plus effort. Numerous attempts have been made (such as the Chitling test) to show that IQ is a biased and racist measure of talent despite what the American Psychological Association’s task force and thousands of people working with IQ assert. I look at the genetics and neurobiology of intelligence with the distinction between fluid and crystallized intelligence in mind. Environmental effects on IQ (the Flynn effect) are also examined, as well as the literature on the relationship between IQ and various personality measures on socioeconomic success.

Chapter 10 takes a jaundiced look at the liberal icons of cultural relativism, diversity, and multiculturalism. I look at the claim that all cultures deserving of equal respect in terms of the barbaric practices of some cultures that defy the notion of universal human rights, and at multiculturalism in terms of the destructive influence it has had on many European nations, and increasingly on America. I examine why the left is so keen on multiculturalism despite the numerous instances of its destructive nature. Research on the effects of racial/ethnic diversity on social capital is also examined. The nature of violence is also examined in terms of nature, nurture, and social context.

Chapter 11 examines the “lies, damn lies, and statistics” that many criminologists use trying to demonstrate that the criminal justice system is racist and how the media love to pick up on their advocacy research and exaggerate it. I examine the racism claim in terms of arrest, conviction, the death penalty, and hate crimes. It is shown in very simple fashion how statistics are misinterpreted and by those who report the news, and misused (intentionally or not) by researchers who generate them.

The “wrap-up” chapter looks at how the culture has been degraded by leftist ideas since the 1960s and how that degradation has seeped into government. Leftist ideas strongly emerged in the early 1930s with the men of the Frankfurt school and have been disseminated across the generations by the disciples of these men. I look at
the mangling of the Constitution by activist judges, and how admin-
istrative agencies aid and abet the leftist goal of Big Brother
government and the goals of crony capitalists. I wind up by asking if
there is anything at all good about socialism, and conclude that
there is.

Endnotes

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3. Duarte et al., Political diversity will improve social psychological
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4. Jussim, L. Political diversity will improve psychological science.
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