Brett Anderson, author of “Ethnic group differences in the general factor of personality (GFP) are opposite to that which would be predicted by differential-K theory. *Personality and Individual Differences, 152 (2020)*.

I published that when I was an undergraduate. I start graduate school this fall. That paper came on the tail end of about 6-8 months where I spent my free time doing almost nothing but reading the literature on population differences. I basically stumbled across that finding and decided to publish it, but I am not going to be doing this kind of research in graduate school. It's not something I'm particularly interested in for its own sake. The reason I decided to familiarize myself with the literature on population differences is because this topic really bothered me.

My assumption had been that anyone who posited racial differences in IQ or personality traits or anything like that were racist (almost by definition) and probably motivated by some deep seeded racist beliefs/values. Listening to Sam Harris' podcast with Charles Murray made me doubt this assumption, at least a little bit, since neither Charles Murray nor Sam Harris seemed like the buffoons I imagined would entertain such hypotheses. This conflict (between my belief that these hypotheses were racist and my observation that neither Charles nor Sam could be easily put into the *merely*'racist bad guy' box) motivated me to get to the bottom of the issue so I could have an informed opinion rather than uninformed assumptions. I've read enough books and papers on both sides of the debate that I feel fairly comfortable with the following conclusions:

1) Positing population differences on some socially desirable traits is not pseudoscience. There are fairly convincing theoretical and empirical reasons to believe that such differences might exist, and might be genetically mediated. While I have no doubt that there are no shortage of people on 'this side' of the debate who are motivated by racism, and there are certainly people who would use this literature to buttress their racist beliefs, I do not believe that you can safely put everyone who believes this into the 'racist bad guy' box. I have to imagine that I'm not the only person who has been surprised by this literature and the fact that there are reasoned arguments on this side of the debate. I imagine that somebody like Bo Winegard falls into this category as well.

2) While there are some people who oppose the idea of population differences for what are clearly ideological reasons, there are also legitimate reasons to doubt the extent to which genetic factors play a role. There are some serious inequalities (the education system comes to mind) that could produce population differences in the US, for example, that have nothing to do with genetics. James Flynn is a good example of somebody who takes this side of the debate in a way that is not moralistic or (seemingly) ideologically motivated.

3) Given 1 and 2, my contention is that there is room for legitimate scientific debate on this topic, and given how much of a rift it has created in our society, I think it's important that this debate takes place, preferably within the scientific journals. Whatever the truth is (and I make no claims to know what that may be) we will not get closer to it by name-calling and shaming (or worse, getting fired) anyone who disagrees with us. Whatever the truth is, everyone ought to be judged on the basis of their individual characteristics rather than their arbitrary membership in some fuzzy category like race, ethnicity, etc.

I am not particularly thrilled that my paper is being used in this way (to call people racist who have the 'wrong' opinion on this subject). I have no doubt that many or most racists do take this position, but I also have no doubt that there are people who take it (or at least refrain from having a strong opinion about it) because they've carefully read the scientific literature. As I said in my paper, the findings I reported could be interpreted as evidence against the 'population differences' position, or it could be interpreted as evidence against the validity of self-report personality tests. The finding I reported is merely one piece of a very large and complicated puzzle, and being good Bayesian reasoners, we should not take it as 'proof' of either position, but instead use it to update the weight of the evidence.

Best,
Brett