

Academic Activists Send a Published Paper Down the Memory Hole Updated Appendix of Supporting Documents

Dr. Theodore P. Hill
September 2018

[**Note:** some typos and formatting mistakes may be present due to copy and pasting from different email and other document formats.]

Correspondence with *Intelligencer* re: improving the paper

From: Marjorie Senechal [redacted]
Subject: Re: three things
Date: March 14, 2017 at 10:00:10 AM EDT
To: Sergei Tabachnikov [redacted]

Hi Sergei,

...

3) Your article with Hill. In principle I am happy to stir up controversy and few topics generate more than this one. After the Middlebury fracas, in which none of the protestors had read the book they were protesting, we could make a real contribution here by insisting that all views be heard, and providing links to them.

If I look at this with reviewer's eyes, I would suggest you consider a few changes:

i) Bring up the Larry Summers brouhaha and link to his remarks. (Every female reader of your article with think of them immediately.) The VH is exactly what he was invoking in his infamous remarks that cost him the presidency of Harvard University. But few people heard that.

Part of the problem was that he failed to explain what that VH says and does not say. That it's not about means is one point to emphasize, which you do. But the other is that the VH does NOT say that there are NO A's (or B's) in the tails, only that there are relatively more of one than the other. This was totally lost on most of the people who got hysterical over Summers' remarks and thought he was saying that women can't do math or science.

ii) . Discussing this issue dispassionately and with a mathematical model will be a positive contribution toward rationality if the model's premises (as distinct from its methods and conclusions) are sound. A lot of newsprint has been wasted on articles purporting to show that this or that is evolution-driven on account of mate-selection-preferences, be for they symmetrical faces or whatever. It's fine to base your argument on that model but state it as a hypothesis, not a fact. On a quick read I didn't think you evince sufficient skepticism.

What do you think?

--

Marjorie Wikler Senechal
Editor-in-Chief, The Mathematical Intelligencer

Acceptance of paper for *Intelligencer*

From: "The Mathematical Intelligencer (TMIN)" [redacted]
 Subject: Decision on your manuscript #TMIN-D-17-00064
 Date: April 3, 2017 at 10:19:51 AM EDT
 To: "Serge Tabachnikov" [redacted]

Dear Dr. Tabachnikov,

I am pleased to inform you that your manuscript, "A Mathematical Theory for the Variability Hypothesis", has been accepted for publication in The Mathematical Intelligencer. It will appear both online and in print.

Once you receive proofs, please follow the instructions and make the appropriate corrections.

Please remember to always include your manuscript number, #TMIN-D-17-00064, whenever inquiring about your manuscript. Thank you.

Sincerely,
 Marjorie Wikler Senechal
 The Mathematical Intelligencer

NSF Acknowledgement

“Acknowledgements

...The second author is grateful for support from the National Science Foundation.”

The Mathematical Intelligencer A Mathematical Theory for the Variability Hypothesis --Manuscript Draft--		
Manuscript Number:		
Full Title:	A Mathematical Theory for the Variability Hypothesis	
Article Type:	Viewpoint	
Corresponding Author:	Serge Tabachnikov Penn State University Park, UNITED STATES	
Corresponding Author Secondary Information:		
Corresponding Author's Institution:	Penn State	
Corresponding Author's Secondary Institution:		
First Author:	Serge Tabachnikov	
First Author Secondary Information:		
Order of Authors:	Serge Tabachnikov Theodore Hill	
Order of Authors Secondary Information:		
Funding Information:	National Science Foundation (DMS-1510055)	Dr. Serge Tabachnikov

Correspondence with Lee Copping of Durham University

From: Lee Thomas Copping [redacted]
 Sent: Monday, May 8, 2017 2:35 AM
 To: Hill, Theodore P
 Subject: A Theory for Gender Differences in Variability

Dear Professor Hill,

I have just finished reading "A Theory for Gender Differences in Variability" and found it to be an excellent summary of the research to date in this field. Is this paper under review/in press for publication somewhere? I would like to cite it in our draft if at all possible.

Best wishes, Lee Copping

follow up email

From: Lee Thomas Copping [redacted]
Sent: Monday, May 8, 2017 11:58 AM
To: Hill, Theodore P
Cc: Sergei Tabachnikov
Subject: RE: A Theory for Gender Differences in Variability

Dear Professor Hill, Thank you very much for this - by the time we come to submit for review, we should be able to cite this.

My current work is actually somewhat of an extension of the Baye & Monseur work you have cited. However, it certainly underpins my earlier work on impulsivity, aggression and general evolutionary theory and it is nice to see an actual theoretical model that can be drawn upon in discussion (which I think the literature, particularly in education, has lacked to date). I think this is a welcome addition to the field.

Thank you for this and I will be sure to send along a copy once we're finished in a few months.
 Thanks, Lee

Lee Copping | Test Developer

Tabachnikov Correspondence with Penn State colleague about paper:

>> On Aug 16, 2017, at 1:30 PM [redacted] wrote: >>

>> Hi Sergei, >>

>> One of our colleagues brought this paper of yours to my attention: >>

>> <https://arxiv.org/abs/1703.04184>.

>>

>> I just browsed it... It seems like you're wading into a big debate here, citing a bunch of literature about the (gender) variance hypothesis (VH), and devoting a whole section to the controversies, but then pretending that your model isn't meant to directly address this issue. Hmmm...

>>

>> As you know, simplified mathematical models can illustrate many phenomena - both real and fictitious. I guess your model is merely meant to illustrate a possible mechanism for differences in variability across genders based on selectivity among sexes. You are right that it doesn't say much about the real-life phenomenon, since the assumptions are so restrictive. As far as explaining, say, differences in the numbers of male and female mathematicians, for example, this explanation also fails many reasonability tests (as I'm sure you know). Here are some examples:

>>

>> 1. Presumably you are talking about genetic variability, since that is what would be affected by sexual selection. However, the population of humans with by far the greatest genetic variability is people of African decent. White Europeans have much less variability. So if variability explained academic performance, you should see many more black people at the top (as well as bottom).

>>

>> 2. There are subpopulations that have had extraordinary success in producing, say, brilliant mathematicians. Russians, of course, but also ... Romanians! How did a country of 20 million people produce so many top mathematicians (and top gymnasts) - male and female? Genetic variability seems not to be a viable explanation here. Like so many highly sophisticated human endeavors, culture and education seem to be the leading order effect when comparing across countries and ethnic groups. Given that within almost every society dramatic differences have existed historically in the treatment of men and women, it seems much more likely that this is the leading order effect for sex differences at the top as well.

>>

>> 3. Men are less variable in some ways - most notably, the expression of emotions. Interestingly, research shows that very small boys (under 5) have at least as big of an emotional range as little girls...It appears, however, that sensitivity to emotions is socialized out of boys. Studies show that parents negatively reinforce emotional expressivity in boys, encouraging anger over sadness, and so on. So here the smaller variability seems culturally-induced. This kind of example makes me wonder if smaller variability in scientific interest/ability is also culturally-induced by things like parental feedback. Who knows? It's a complex question with many, many variables at play.

>>

>> By the way, have you read your reference [11]? I'm attaching it, just in case. I did not check your other references, but I was vaguely familiar with this paper and surprised by the way you referenced it, so I just took another look. Here is what the conclusion states:

>>

>> "Conclusion. Our analysis shows that, for grades 2 to 11, the general population no longer shows a gender difference in math skills, consistent with the gender similarities hypothesis (19). There is evidence of slightly greater male variability in scores, although the causes remain unexplained. Gender differences in math performance, even among high scorers, are insufficient to explain lopsided gender patterns in participation in some STEM fields. An unexpected finding was that state assessments designed to meet NCLB requirements fail to test complex problem-solving of the kind needed for success in STEM careers, a lacuna that should be fixed."

>>

>> Here is how you quote it:

>>

>> 1. Although some of these more recent studies found "inconsistent support for the greater male variability hypothesis" [5, p. 329], and that "greater male variability with respect to mathematics is not ubiquitous" [12, p. 8801], many more (e.g., [1], [2], [6], [8], [9], [11], [13], [14], [16], [21]) have found VH to be valid in different contexts.

>>

>> I don't think it's fair to say [11] supports VH, given that they say they support the "gender similarities hypothesis" and suggest that any differences they do find are weak and insufficient to explain the "gender patterns in ... STEM fields." This makes me wonder if your other references are similarly misleading... I hope you weren't just trusting your co-author on this review of the relevant literature.:(

>>

>> If I were you, I would update that paper and get rid of the sloppy literature review. The model itself might be interesting, but you give it a "spin" that is not well thought-through, and this makes the whole work seem of low intellectual quality, I'm afraid. I hope you take this as a friendly suggestion, from someone who spends most of her time in an "interdisciplinary space" where one must be careful about the interplay between mathematical models and science.

>>

>> Best wishes,

>>[redacted] <gender-variability-science2008.pdf>

follow up

> ----- Original Message -----

> From: "Sergei Tabachnikov" [redacted]

> To: [redacted]

> Sent: Wednesday, August 16, 2017 3:06:13 PM

> Subject: Re: your paper

>

> Dear [redacted], thank you for the friendly suggestions; I shall give them a serious consideration. Of course, there are two authors, so the decision is not entirely mine.

> Hence, a question: may I share (part of) your criticism with him?

>

> There are many things that can be discussed here, but the timing is quite unfortunate: this matter already was politically charged, and it's much more so now, due to the Google events (needless to say, this is purely coincidental: our article was written much earlier than this Google memo). I'd guess that these recent events brought our little paper to the attention of the colleague who talked to you (I doubt that my other papers are read by anyone at our department, except for close collaborators of mine).

>

> The article was written for "Mathematical Intelligencer" and it was accepted for publication after some revision. Btw, the Editor-in- Chief is Marjorie Senechal. She welcomes a scientific discussions of controversial matters (there is an opinion column and letters from the readers in the magazine). If the article appears, you are very welcome to write to Intelligencer with your thoughts.

>

> Now, to the content of the article. We did not mean to take a political stand or to choose sides in the VH debate, and it's quite unfortunate that some people will read this into the article. The point was to present a simple mathematical model that makes VH a consequence of certain simple assumptions; in my opinion, it has a certain mathematical elegance to it. We also did not mean to restrict the considerations to humans only: due to its simplicity, the model may apply to other species. And for the same reason, it cannot explain much of the complex real life phenomena.

> Looking at your items 1-3, they appear to be criticisms of VH's power to explain certain social phenomena (e.g., disproportionally high number of Romanian mathematicians at the top). I agree of course, and I can multiply such examples, but our article was not about another subject.

>

> So, why do you say that we pretend that our model "isn't meant to directly address this issue" (I guess, the validity of VH, right?) Are you reading "between the lines" what is not there? (the authors are mathematicians, not biologists or social scientists, and we do not pretend to be ones).

>

> It will be a very sad state of affairs if reasonable people won't be able to rationally discuss scientific matters, even if these matters are politically charged. I think we should all try to fight this tendency in the contemporary society. The worst thing that can happen to a scientist is self-censorship. As you know, I grew up in the country where many scientific matters were impossible to discuss openly, especially in the humanities (but also in biology: at some point genetics was declared a "bourgeois pseudo-science").

...

> Btw, when working on this little project, I discuss the matter with my biology friends; if you are interested, I could try to reproduce what I heard from them.

>

> Best regards, yours Sergei

follow up

> From: [redacted]

To: "Sergei Tabachnikov" [redacted]

> Sent: Wednesday, August 16, 2017 4:32:03 PM

> Subject: Re: your paper >

> Dear Sergei,

>

> Yes, my 1-3 are criticisms of VH's power to explain various phenomena for which it has been invoked as an explanation. Your model just provides a simple mechanism that would give rise to VH, as far as I understand. (And, presumably, the dimensions along which one sex is more selective than another would be the only ones in which the resulting variability differences would emerge. For example, females could be less selective about height, or hair color, etc., and then your model would predict more variability among males in those traits.)

>

> Unfortunately, you begin the paper with a fairly lengthy review of the controversies! Why? If this is not what your work addresses, then there is no need. In contrast, there is very little (if any) review of prior mathematical models of sexual selection, genetic variability, etc. The vast majority of your references are about VH, evidence for and against it, and the resulting controversies. This, I think, is a mistake. And it makes it seem, to the casual reader, that you intend to lend support to VH and some of the controversial conclusions via your model. Otherwise, why immerse the reader in this story right before you present the model? To say, "There seems to be no end to the controversies, and the authors leave the socio-political debates to others." sounds disingenuous.

>

> As a matter of principle, I support people discussing controversial matters openly - and I am not afraid of confrontation. I think Google made a mistake in firing the author of that memo, for example. At the same time, I think it's good to be aware of the effects. The truth is, a lot of women (particularly young women) are insecure about whether they belong in the world of mathematics or other STEM fields, and many men (particularly young men) are overconfident in the idea that their abilities are naturally superior. Care must always be taken not to reinforce these thoughts. You and I can discuss the merits of your paper in a dispassionate manner. I can see the difference between "real evidence for VH" and the mathematical illustration of "a mechanism that might explain VH." But a lot of others will just see someone wielding the authority of mathematics to support a very controversial, and potentially sexist, set of ideas that can be damaging to impressionable young people who are not quite sure of their

own place in the world.

>

> So, in my opinion, you shouldn't censor your mathematics, but there is also no need to link it to a set of controversies that you are not necessarily willing or able to explicitly address. You have no new data and no new interpretation, so you really have nothing new to add to this particular debate (by "debate" I mean the specific discussion of whether or not VH explains differences in cognitive abilities at the "top", and whether those differences in turn explain representation differences in various professions).

>

> Why not just refer briefly to the observation that one sex sometimes has greater variability than another in some trait, and present your model as a mechanism that would explain this as a natural consequence of difference in sexual selectivity (for that trait)? Then it's just a cute mechanism that links sexual selection to genetic variability, and it's a clean story, scientifically. (Not just because it avoids controversy, but because it is more faithful to what your actual contribution. It's just better science.) You could end with a discussion about predictions. Someone studying insects, for example, could force sexual selection differences and potentially see if there are resulting variability differences among the sexes. It's biologically interesting to test such a relationship. But I'm afraid that's totally getting lost in the muddle of your current "spin".

>

> Please, do feel free to share any of my criticisms or suggestions to your co-author. Again, I mean it as friendly advice.

>

> On another note, there is another aspect to this that I think you should be aware of. Hopefully I'll have a chance to talk to you about this soon.

>

> Best wishes,

[redacted]

Invitation to WIM luncheon

From: [redacted]

Subject: WIM lunch?

Date: August 19, 2017 at 3:39:21 PM EDT

To: Sergei Tabachnikov [redacted]

Cc: [redacted], Diane Henderson [redacted]

Dear Sergei,

Your paper, "A Mathematical Theory for the Variability Hypothesis," has recently attracted considerable interest among members of Women In Math (WIM) in our department. Many of us would welcome the opportunity to have a frank and open discussion with you about this work. We thus would like to invite you to attend a WIM lunch. Since [redacted] will be leaving town very soon for her sabbatical, we propose to do this Thursday, Aug 24th, at 12 noon (there is some wiggle room on the precise timing). Any chance you can make that work? If not, are there other dates that would be better?

A possible format for a 1-hour lunch is this:

1. 5-10 minutes for people to get food, find seats, start eating, etc.
2. 15 minutes for you to give a brief presentation on the content of your paper, your view of how it relates to the VH, and a bit of the history of VH (as summarized in your introduction).

We'd also like to hear about your own views on VH (even if not reflected in the literal text of your paper) and whether it has implications for pro-diversity efforts that aim to increase the representation of women in science.

3. 5-10 minutes for others to make some brief prepared statements about your paper.

4. 25 minutes for Q&A, and discussion.

Note: because of the potentially sensitive nature of this subject, we'd like to limit the discussion to faculty, instructors, and postdocs. Please let us know if there are faculty outside of WIM that you'd like us to invite.

My personal view is that your work provides a valuable opportunity for discussion of some viewpoints that are fairly common, but are often kept quiet in front of women and thus spread unchallenged. Since you recently took the time to write a paper on this topic, which everyone can see, we hope you can also take some time to talk to WIM directly. We promise to be friendly, but you should know in advance that many (most?) of us have strong disagreements with what you did.

Please let us know at your earliest convenience if you can accept this invitation.

Best,
[redacted] (on behalf of [redacted] and other members of WIM)

Correspondence about WIM invitation between colleague and Tabachnikov

> On Aug 20, 2017, at 7:04 PM, [redacted] wrote:

>

> As to the other stuff, I have been trying to persuade a group of outraged faculty that we should talk to you directly, and challenge your ideas in an open debate. I think they've finally agreed with me, but if you're not game, it won't work. Such is life.

>

> The thing is, I found out about the whole situation very late (right before I first wrote to you about your paper), and I've been getting more details little by little. The whole thing started when I was in Japan, and they initially didn't tell me because (a) I was out of town, (b) it didn't directly concern me, and (c) they thought I would disagree with their planned response since we are friendly colleagues.

And there has been quite a response, that I hope you will learn about in our meeting with Nate on Wednesday. They were right that I would have done things differently. I am far more willing to confront and far less willing to report things to higher authorities without the person being aware of it. It's not my style, but given how they learned of your paper I can kind of understand why they did things the way they did.

>

> And, for what it's worth, I do agree with them that your paper is offensive, but I don't think you understand and I really wish I could do something to help you (and [redacted], and anyone else who shares your views) to understand...

> From: "Sergei Tabachnikov" [redacted]

> To: [redacted]

> Cc: "Sergei Tabachnikov" [redacted]

> Sent: Sunday, August 20, 2017 9:45:44 PM

> Subject: the other stuff >

> Dear [redacted], you wrote::

>

> "Do you really not see what's wrong with that paper? Even now? How can I help you to understand? I worry you will just go into this WIM lunch doing everything possible to avoid giving your honest opinions, and therefore close your mind to any legitimate challenges to your beliefs. If this is the case, we will all be wasting our time. Maybe the others are right, and it's not worth trying to get you to understand:("

>

> If you really want me to understand something that I don't understand, why don't you come to talk to me as a friendly colleague? Why don't you say explicitly what this "wrong" is? What does "even now" mean?

> "... close your mind to any legitimate challenges to your beliefs" What beliefs are you talking about? Is this religion? What do you know about my beliefs? What are the "legitimate challenges"?

> It seems that you expect me to confess to some sin, but you don't want to name it. Since I didn't commit any sin, this starts to sound like a Kafka novel to me.

>

> You often use the word "honest". This sounds to me as an accusation of dishonesty. Based on what? This is a serious accusation; why?! > I consider this an attack on my character (and, it seems to me now, this situation can be described as harassment).

> Let me ensure you that I have done a lot (deeds, not empty words), perhaps more than many of our faculty, for bringing new talent to mathematics, and this includes all genders, races, and religions. If you are interested, take a look at my cv, for example, in the "service" category. But are you really interested?

>

> It is quite clear that neither you, nor our colleagues involved, are interested in the mathematics of my article (whatever its merits or demerits might be). Instead, you are interested in VH, whose existence, apparently, you find offensive and upsetting. VH is not our invention: it has been there for a long time. We can discuss my opinions on VH, the broad context, etc., but the article is not about it. In my opinion, this must be agreed upon before any further discussion.

>

> I think, it's time for you to see things as they really are. You are participating in a witch-hunt, trying to silence a colleague who addressed the subject out of your comfort zone. I feel intimidated and threatened, especially taking into account the timing (the Google scandal). Is this what you want to achieve? Where is your sense of fairness?

>

> When we started the e-mail discussions of my article, I was under the impression that we shared the goal of diffusing the situation and preventing it from escalation. The way you describe it now, the invitation to the WIM lunch sounds to me as an invitation to some kind of tribunal. And you expect me to engage into purely scientific discussions under these circumstances? Perhaps instead I should be looking for a good lawyer and start seeking help of unbiased colleagues nation- and world-wide. Is another Penn State scandal the goal? >

> I appreciate your attempts to help me, and I'd appreciate it if you explain the cryptic sentence:

> "but given how they learned of your paper I can kind of understand why they did things the way they did."

> My article was publicly available since spring, so what exactly "how they learned" means in this

context?

> Don't you think I have the right to know?

... I am infinitely saddened by these events...

> Yours Sergei >

Follow up and comments about “scientific racism”

From: Sergei Tabachnikov [redacted]

Sent: Monday, September 4, 2017 12:42 PM

To: Hill, Theodore P

Subject: Re: our article: current events and suggestions

Dear Ted,

...The scandal at our department shows no signs of receding....

On the last Thursday, we had a faculty meeting, and the last item on the agenda was “Penn State values”. Our Department Head reminded us of six such values and said that sometimes they may come into a conflict with each other. Namely, the mandate to do research and to make a discovery may come in contradiction with the mandate to be collegial and to maintain a good welcoming climate at the workspace. He also mentioned academic freedom and constitutional rights for free speech.

A female colleague (one of the three who signed an invitation to me to speak at the Women in Math lunch at our department) ...firmly stated that to move forward we must admit and fight our biases, and that believing that women have a lesser chance to succeed in mathematics at the very top end is bias.

I also spent endless hours talking to various people (all of them, generally sympathetic to me, but not necessarily to the article). Some tried to convince me in very strong terms that I must withdraw my name to restore peace at the department and to avoid losing whatever political capital I may still have... and also to avoid a much larger controversy after the article is published.

...

Others explained to me why the article was bad and harmful. As far as I can tell, and omitting lengthy details, there are two points. First: the article gives support to VH, and the latter can be used to justify discrimination and to support bias against women in mathematics. Second: the article may discourage young women from choosing mathematics as their career (since it predicts that they are not likely to excel in the upper percentile). Analogies with scientific racism were made by some; I am afraid, we are likely to hear more of it in the future.

...

Hill Letter to three WIM members who issued WIM luncheon invitation (no replies)

From: Hill, Theodore P

Sent: Tuesday, September 5, 2017 7:57 AM

To: [redacted]

Cc: Sergei Tabachnikov

Subject: Comments on VH

Dear Penn State colleagues,

As you may know, about six months ago Sergei Tabachnikov and I drafted some simple ideas on the variability hypothesis (VH) and posted it on the math arxiv (<https://arxiv.org/pdf/1703.04184.pdf>).

We solicited input from colleagues of both genders, rewrote the paper, submitted it, and rewrote it several more times following the suggestions of the Editor-in-Chief of The Mathematical Intelligencer (a woman, by the way). Our article has now been accepted for publication, and its current version may be found at (<https://www.math.psu.edu/tabachni/prints/VHMar31R.pdf>).

It has come to my attention that our work has apparently offended some of you, and that Sergei has been confronted with various accusations from sloppy literature review to low intellectual quality to promoting harmful ideas.

I am the lead author on this paper, and it is not fair that Sergei alone should take the heat. Up until now I have not had a single complaint or criticism of our article from anyone anywhere; on the contrary, psychology researchers in the UK (Durham University) wrote "I have just finished reading [your arxiv article] "A Theory for Gender Differences in Variability" and found it to be an excellent summary of the research to date in this field... it is nice to see an actual theoretical model that can be drawn upon in discussion (which I think the literature, particularly in education, has lacked to date). I think this is a welcome addition to the field."

That was indeed our intent – to provide a possible mathematical argument that might help explain how any differences in variability between the genders might arise. If you have concrete complaints about our assumptions, logic, conclusions, very brief summary of the literature on VH, etc., I would appreciate it if you brought them to MY attention also.

My understanding is that it might still be possible for us to make small revisions in our article before it appears, but in order to do that effectively we need to know, BY SEPTEMBER 11, exactly what any concrete objections are - we will certainly provide attribution.

If you email me directly, I will try to respond in a timely manner.

Thank you for your understanding.

Respectfully

Ted Hill

Dr. Theodore P. Hill Professor Emeritus of Mathematics
Georgia Institute of Technology
<http://people.math.gatech.edu/~hill/>

Removal of NSF Acknowledgement

From: Sergei Tabachnikov
 Sent: Fri 9/8/2017 10:53 AM
 To: Hill, Theodore P [redacted]

Dear Ted, I have received a request from NSF to delete the acknowledgement of NSF support from the preprint: the content of the article is not related to the funded proposal. There are two electronically available versions, the accepted (and now rejected) one, on my web site, and the arXiv preprint...

I believe this is an important and time- sensitive matter.

...

follow up email (a later clarification of what happened with NSF)

From: Sergei Tabachnikov [redacted]
Sent: Friday, April 6, 2018 3:24 PM
To: Hill, Theodore P
Subject: Re: A quick update

Dear Ted,

...

Concerning NSF. The program director who contacted me was quite sympathetic (as far as I could tell). What happened was as follows.

On Sept. 8th, my program Director, [redacted], sent me a message, cc to [redacted], Deputy Division Director, pointing out that my acknowledgement of NSF support was not accurate because our paper was unrelated to my funded proposal (this is a correct statement). The tone of the message was neutral. I replied that, indeed, he was right, that it was my 'habit' to acknowledge NSF whenever I had a grant, no matter what the subject of the article, and that I shall delete this acknowledgement from the next arXiv version.

The response (again, cc to [redacted]) was:

"Dear Sergei, Thank you very much for your understanding. [redacted]"

After you replaced the arXiv version with the new one, without NSF, I let [redacted] know, and his response was: "THANX!!!"

My reading of all this was that someone complained to a higher authority at NSF, and it trickled down to my program officer, who had to do his job, but didn't enjoy doing it.

...

Henderson and Brown Letter to NSF (received through FOIA)

From: Diane Henderson <dmh9@psu.edu>
Sent: Friday, September 08, 2017 10:11 AM
To: Ulvestad, James S
Subject: concern about NSF-funded research on the VH hypothesis

Dear Dr. Ulvestad,

I copied you on an email, but mis-typed your address. I apologize.
 Here is the email to Drs. Taylor and Roytburd, also copied to Rhonda Davis.

Dear Drs. Taylor and Roytburd,

We are writing about a paper that concerns us greatly and acknowledges NSF support. Our concern is that the paper appears to promote pseudoscientific ideas that are detrimental to the advancement of women in science, and at odds with the values of the NSF. The paper is:

A Mathematical Theory for the Variability Hypothesis
 by T. P. Hill and S. Tabachnikov

The pdf is available here
<https://www.math.psu.edu/tabachni/prints/VHMar31R.pdf>
 and
<https://arxiv.org/pdf/1703.04184.pdf>
 It is in press in the "Mathematical Intelligencer".

We are writing to you, because "The second author is grateful for support from the National Science Foundation."
 We looked up NSF grants by the second author and found

Finite Dimensional Integrable Systems 2017
 Award Number:1707468; Principal Investigator:Serge Tabachnikov; Co-Principal Investigator;;
 Organization:Pennsylvania State Univ University Park;NSF Organization:DMS Start Date:06/01/2017;
 Award Amount:\$12,000.00; Relevance:22.96;

Topics in Geometrical Dynamics and Applications
 Award Number:1510055; Principal Investigator:Serge Tabachnikov; Co-Principal Investigator;;
 Organization:Pennsylvania State Univ University Park;NSF Organization:DMS Start Date:09/01/2015;
 Award Amount:\$213,000.00; Relevance:22.88;

We are wondering if, indeed, the NSF supports the work in this paper. If it does, ok.
 If it does not, we thought you should be aware of the paper that has the name of NSF attached to it.

Sincerely,
 Nate Brown,

Rescinding of *Intelligencer* article

From: Marjorie Senechal [redacted]
Sent: Friday, September 8, 2017 9:50 AM
To: Sergei Tabachnikov; Hill, Theodore P
Cc: Strauss, Marc, Springer US
Subject: A Mathematical Theory for the Variability Hypothesis

Dear Sergei and Ted,

With deep regret, I'm writing to tell you that I'm rescinding my decision to accept "A Mathematical Theory for the Variability Hypothesis" for publication in **The Mathematical Intelligencer**.

As the **Intelligencer** explains at the start of each "Viewpoint" essay, which yours was to be,

**The *Viewpoint* column offers readers of *The Mathematical Intelligencer* the opportunity to write about any issue of interest to the international mathematical community. Disagreement and controversy are welcome. Your topic meets those expectations, and we would have hoped for, and published, responses.*

But our goal in inviting disagreement and controversy is to increase understanding and broaden dialogue. That presupposes that the debate will be expressed and conducted in thoughtful, civil terms, and with mutual respect.

I have received concerned messages from several colleagues, warning of extremely strong reactions to the accepted version of your paper, available at <http://www.math.psu.edu/tabachni/prints/VHMar31R.pdf>. Their concerns include the very real possibility that the right-wing media may pick this up and hype it internationally. There could be a massive fallout that may harm the magazine, the publisher, the editor(s), and, of course, the authors.

Nevertheless, I think that a calm debate on the VH hypothesis remains of interest. Indeed, people have already offered to write rebuttals, from several points of view (statistics, biology, etc).

I propose, therefore, that we and our colleagues (those who've written to us and others) organize a Round Table, in the relatively near future, to discuss and debate your toy model of the VH hypothesis **per se**. (This could be conducted face-to-face, or via Skype, or via email, as funding and circumstances permit.) We would publish the proceedings as a special issue of *The Mathematical Intelligencer*.

I hope you will agree to participate. And that I will hear from you shortly, as this is time-sensitive.

Sincerely, Marjorie

-- Marjorie Wikler Senechal Editor-in-Chief, **The Mathematical Intelligencer**
 <<http://www.springer.com/mathematics/journal/283>>*

Email to colleague Ron Fox asking for feedback on talking points

From: Hill, Theodore P
 Sent: Saturday, September 9, 2017 6:43 AM
 To: Ron Fox

Subject:

If you have a chance to glance at this, feedback welcome. I talk to Marjorie in 20 minutes, and this is my outline.

%%%%%%%%

Thanks for getting back to me so quickly. I'm shocked and disappointed with the current state of affairs and I'd like to hear your take on it. Then I have some comments of my own to make.

I like the idea of a Symposium (Round Table) on VH, and a Special Issue of TMIN on VH. However, the meeting has to be face-to-face, and include all the main critics. We accused deserve the right to see who our accusers are and hear their complaints first hand. The Symposium should be held at Penn State, since it seems that's where the eye of the storm is located, and that's where the world's leading feminist VH critic (a psychologist) is. In light of the current Scientific American issue on Sex and Gender, and especially in light of this week's Internet posting on the Google memo connection to VH. Under those conditions, I will personally donate \$10,000 to help fund the Symposium.

That said, I think it is a HUGE mistake for the Intelligencer to rescind our paper without letting us authors first have a chance to respond to the unknown criticisms from unknown people. Exactly who complained, by name? Exactly what were the complaints? About logic? Tone? If you recall, our original submission was much less controversial, and YOU suggested adding controversy including references to the Larry Summers scandal.

As far as I know only one side has been disrespectful and uncivil. Did either Sergei or I behave like that? Suppose it gets out that if some group does not like a particular line of research, and complains in sufficiently nasty terms, that research will get shit-canned without even talking to the authors. If that tactic succeeds, the same gang of malcontents will stop at nothing.

If you're worried about negative media reactions, rescinding the article under pressure after it was repeatedly revised under the editor's guidance and formally accepted, will make the situation ten times worse - for Women in Mathematics, for Penn State, for Smith, for the Intelligencer's editors, and for Springer. There is already a growing online literature connecting the VH not only to the Larry Summers scandal (as you pointed out), but also the Google incident.

I now have to write international researchers who've asked where the article will appear and tell them it has now been rescinded by the Intelligencer. My guess is that I will be contacted by media within a week - somebody is bound to realize there's a story there. The New York Times already wrote about the Summers and Google incidents, and now it is established that both are connected to the VH. If your decision stands, any journalist that talks to me will get the honest truth - we did some science, submitted it, the editor encouraged a more controversial take, we rewrote it accordingly, and it was formally accepted. Then my coauthor was viciously attacked (low intellectual quality, sloppy literature review, intellectually dishonest, etc.) by members of and speaking for the Women in Math group at Penn State. Unknown persons then complained to the journal Editor-in-Chief, who then rescinded acceptance of our paper. They also complained to who-knows-what other high levels, including the NSF, and the NSF already forced my coauthor to remove its name. He's afraid they may stop his grant. OK, as I said rescinding the paper was a big mistake, but I'm supposed to be creative - so here are three possible ways out of this jam.

First, you immediately un-rescind the acceptance, explaining to the anonymous critics that brand new evidence has been brought to your attention, namely, <https://heterodoxacademy.org/2017/09/04/the->

greater-male-variability-hypothesis that appears to support much of the VH and ties it in to recent international news events. That has convinced you it is best for the Intelligencer and the greater math community to publish the article as accepted. Then you either require the critics to wait until the succeeding issue to respond (i.e., the normal scientific procedure), or to let us see their criticisms and have a chance to respond in the same issue. This first option seems easiest and cleanest, since it is all in-house.

Here's the second idea. The Intelligencer formally announces the Special Issue and that it will appear this Fall, and you formally accept our paper as it stands for the Special Issue. That will give other authors something concrete to focus their venom on, and in turn give us a chance to actually see the criticisms and defend ourselves in writing. And I mean formal written acceptance of our paper now essentially as is.

The third idea is for me to appeal your decision in writing to a higher authority – e.g. Springer Math. Then if you feel you were forced into rescinding and tell them that, they could override your decision, and reinstate the acceptance but send the paper back to us for consideration for minor revision based on input from your sources, but publish it one way or the other. On the other hand, if your superiors agree with your decision, then Springer can deal with the potential media fallout too.

We have been treated very unfairly here, and being overridden by emotional political gangs should not be not the way science works.

 Dr. Theodore P. Hill
 Professor Emeritus of Mathematics Georgia Institute of Technology
<http://people.math.gatech.edu/~hill/>

Wilkinson father letter to Marjorie Senechal

From: Marjorie Senechal [redacted] Sent: Sunday, September 10, 2017 10:38 AM
 To: [redacted]; Hill, Theodore P
 Subject: Fwd: Hill and Tabachnik

Dear Sergei and Ted,

Leland Wilkinson, Amie's father, has given me permission to forward his message on to you. (I've since explained to him that we are now planning to hold and publish a round table discussion.) I think he identifies some issues pertinent to that discussion, which will be helpful as we consider how best to structure it.

Let's discuss that structure in the coming days (as well as the when, where, and who).

To be continued, Marjorie

----- Forwarded message -----
 From: Leland Wilkinson [redacted]
 Date: Fri, Sep 8, 2017 at 10:43 PM
 Subject: Hill and Tabachnik
 To: [redacted]
 Cc: Amie Wilkinson [redacted]

Hi, Professor Senechal,

Amie asked me to respond to you directly. It's not my business to make judgments about mathematical topics, so I should only point out what the reputation of this sort of stuff is in the social sciences. It is not highly regarded. This article oversimplifies the issues to the point of embarrassment.

Hill and Tabachnik's argument is not novel. The heterogeneous variance hypothesis concerning human abilities dates back to the eugenicists Pearson and Galton in the early 20th century. What is novel about their argument (as far as I can tell) is an evolutionary psychology explanation based on sexual selection for how this heterogeneity could have evolved in subpopulations (Actually, Galton and Pearson did come up with similar plausible post-hoc explanations themselves; plausible but wrong.) As you know, however, post-hoc explanations are often susceptible to bias. Evolutionary biologists have randomized experiments to support their claims. Hill and Tabachnik do not. In fact, they are indulging in amateurish psychological theorizing.

The issues here aren't really mathematical, despite Hill's and Tabachnik's use of elementary statistics to buttress their arguments. The primary weakness of what they are trying to do is in the logic behind the traits they imagine to be measurable. Despite more than a century of psychometrics, we still don't know much about measuring mathematical ability. As I explained to Amie, underlying their hypothesis is the question of what is being measured. I don't doubt that researchers have found increased variability in many measures (more in males than females). But there is a huge bias underlying this work: development of psychometric measures has had more of a century of being shaped by male populations. Just as there has been a well-documented bias in medical research caused by the over-use of male subjects, the major psychometric measures were shaped by male researchers and male subjects for more than a century. So the relative dearth of items derived on female populations would, it seems to me, carry over into the relatively smaller variance in responses to these tests.

In any case, I'm afraid I have to agree with Amie that a mathematical journal could risk harming its reputation by publishing an article like this. The mathematical argument is so simple that even someone like me (a psychometrician and statistician) can understand it. As I have taught my students in data analysis, models are worthless without a grounding in solid scientific theory and observation. To take one of Amie's examples, statistical models of global warming are worthless without the underlying chemistry and atmospheric science. We can invent mathematical explanations for lots of phenomena, but that doesn't make them valid.

Good luck with your decision. I understand it's not an easy one. And if you do decide to go with this article plus commentaries, I would suggest you consult with people like Donald Rubin at Harvard or John Hartigan at Yale (emeritus) or Steven Stigler at Chicago or Andrew Gelman at Columbia, all of whom have far more experience with the statistical and mathematical issues underlying this hypothesis than Hill and Tabachnik.

Best wishes,
Leland Wilkinson www.cs.uic.edu/~wilkinson

--

Marjorie Wikler Senechal
Editor-in-Chief, **The Mathematical Intelligencer**

Wilkinson involvement

From: Marjorie Senechal [redacted]
Sent: Monday, September 11, 2017 2:23 PM
To: Sergei Tabachnikov; Hill, Theodore P
Subject: Re Leland Wilkinson's message

Dear Sergei and Ted,

FYI here's the background to the message I forwarded to you yesterday.

Amie Wilkinson is one of the women who wrote to me about your article, and we corresponded back and forth a few times. In the course of that she said she had shown it to her father, an expert in psychometrics, and that he was very critical.

I told her that if we publish the paper together with rebuttals, he would be welcome to write one. And that we would be glad to consider an article from him on psychometrics more generally. It's probably at that point she asked him to write to me directly, which I think was appropriate.

Since then I have explained to them that we are planning the RT. He says does not wish to be a discussant because others are more expert on this than he is.

Nevertheless I think his message is useful. By pointing to the problem of measurement, he situates this war in the broad, contentious question of the use or misuse of metrics to judge teacher effectiveness <<http://www.ams.org/notices/201105/rtx110500667p.pdf>>, rank colleges, and so much else. See also the recent book "Weapons of Math Destruction." The RT could provide context (historical, scientific, methodological, etc).

Best wishes, Marjorie

-- Marjorie Wikler Senechal Editor-in-Chief, *The Mathematical Intelligencer
 <<http://www.springer.com/mathematics/journal/283>>*

On Tue, Sep 12, 2017 at 3:32 PM, Hill, Theodore P [redacted] wrote:

> Dear Marjorie and Sergei, >

>

> When one professional trash-talks another (an "embarrassment",
 > "amateurish", etc.), and then agrees that his arguments and name may be
 > sent to the other, that is an implicit challenge to the other to either
 > respond with counterarguments, or to admit they accept the trash-talker's
 > logic. As a personal favor to both of you, I will (temporarily) hold off
 > sending my response, but I want to ask two favors in return. >

> >

> I ask that you Marjorie send us the exact wording and basic credentials of
 > the people who convinced you to rescind our accepted paper (e.g.
 > Wilkinson's graduate degrees were in theology and psychology, with no
 > publications as far as I know on either VH or STEM). As you wrote us, "I
 > agree, it's important to know the arguments against the article". >

>
 > I also ask you both to suggest the names of a handful of experts on
 > VH/STEM who have published anything reasonable on the subject (pro or con)
 > in the last 10 years, and I will try to do the same. >
 >
 > Without these, it is difficult for me to envision organizing a balanced RT. >
 >
 > Ted

From: Marjorie Senechal [redacted]
 Sent: Tuesday, September 12, 2017 1:40 PM
 To: Hill, Theodore P
 Cc: Sergei Tabachnikov
 Subject: Re: criticisms of the article

Dear Ted and Sergei,

I'm sorry, but I will not send Ted the messages that persuaded me to take the action I did*, or the names of their authors.

These messages were private. They concerned not the substance of your article but the very real possibility of extremely damaging fallout.

I told you in my letter informing you of that action exactly why I took it:
 I have received concerned messages from several colleagues, warning of extremely strong reactions to the accepted version of your paper, available at
<http://www.math.psu.edu/tabachni/prints/VHMar31R.pdf>. Their concerns include the very real possibility that the right-wing media may pick this up and hype it internationally. There could be a massive fallout that may harm the magazine, the publisher, the editor(s), and, of course, the authors.

Nevertheless, I think that a calm debate on the VH hypothesis remains of interest. Indeed, people have already offered to write rebuttals, from several points of view (statistics, biology, etc).

I propose, therefore, that we and our colleagues (those who've written to us and others) organize a Round Table, in the relatively near future, to discuss and debate your toy model of the VH hypothesis *per se*. (This could be conducted face-to-face, or via Skype, or via email, as funding and circumstances permit.) We would publish the proceedings as a special issue of The Mathematical Intelligencer.

As I told you (Ted) in our phone conversation, I grew up in Lexington, Kentucky and have been following closely the current debate over what to do about the Confederate-hero statues on the courthouse lawn. They can't stay there. The only options are a) to tear them down, or b) move them to a park amid plaques etc that put them in context. The mayor chose (b) and so do I.

Unfortunately, your paper became a hot-button issue. But the Round Table, properly structured, will be a calm and rational debate.

Best, Marjorie

* Leland Wilkinson's message did not play any role in my decision: it arrived after I wrote to you. Because it addressed the substance of your paper, I asked his permission to forward it to you, and he

gave it.

Hill Letter to Amie Wilkinson

Subject: Fw:Hill and Tabachnik
 From: "Hill, Theodore P" [redacted]
 Date: Sun, Sep 24, 2017 2:25 pm
 To:[Amie Wilkinson] [redacted]
 Cc: [redacted]

Dear Amie (if I may),

It is my understanding based on the email below that you communicated with the Editor-in-Chief of the Mathematical Intelligencer who had accepted an article of mine for publication. As you know, after receiving your (and others') input, she rescinded acceptance of our paper, not based on any substantive issues, but solely on the complaints of you and others. We could easily have revised the paper before publication, but were not given that consideration.

In the future, I would request that you contact me directly if you have any concerns about work of mine.

In particular, if you have any concrete suggestions about the substance or tone of the current version of the paper on <https://arxiv.org/pdf/1703.04184.pdf>, please let me know.

Thank you.

Sincerely
 Ted Hill

P.S. I see that you also asked your father to write the Editor-in-Chief with criticisms of our paper (from the perspective of someone whose graduate degrees are in psychology and theology?). I will soon send my rebuttal to your father about his reasoning, and will copy you. The Editor also told me that she invited your father to defend his arguments in person at a round table discussion, but he declined. However, since you have endorsed his arguments, perhaps you will agree to present them in a public forum.

 Dr. Theodore P. Hill
 Professor Emeritus of Mathematics
 Georgia Institute of Technology
<http://people.math.gatech.edu/~hill/>

Hill response to Leland Wilkinson

From: Hill, Theodore P
Sent: Tuesday, September 26, 2017 4:44 PM
To: [Leland Wilkinson] [redacted]
Cc: [Amie Wilkinson] [redacted]
Subject: Response to your comments on our variability paper

Dear Dr. Wilkinson,

Thank you for giving the Editor-in-Chief of *The Mathematical Intelligencer* your permission to send us your criticisms of our paper on an elementary mathematical theory for the variability hypothesis. My responses are in the attached pdf document (with your comments indented), and for your convenience I have copied them in the email text below.

I am revising the paper for submission elsewhere, and any additional feedback from you, including ones about my responses below, will be most helpful.

Thank you.
Sincerely
Ted Hill

Dr. Theodore P. Hill
Professor Emeritus of Mathematics
Georgia Institute of Technology
<http://people.math.gatech.edu/~hill/>

From: Leland Wilkinson [redacted]
Date: Fri, Sep 8, 2017 at 10:43 PM
Subject: Hill and Tabachnik
To: [Marjorie Senechal [redacted]]
Cc: Amie Wilkinson [redacted]

Hi, Professor Senechal,

Amie asked me to respond to you directly. It's not my business to make judgments about mathematical topics,

but you proceed to do exactly this

so I should only point out what the reputation of this sort of stuff is in the social sciences. It is not highly regarded. This article oversimplifies the issues to the point of embarrassment. Hill and Tabachnik's argument is not novel. The heterogeneous variance hypothesis concerning human abilities dates back to the eugenicists Pearson and Galton in the early 20th century.

In writing such a scathing report as this, you should at the very least take the trouble to get the names of the authors correct. We never claimed or even hinted that the variability hypothesis is our idea, and give ample credit to those who studied it earlier.

What is novel about their argument (as far as I can tell) is an evolutionary psychology explanation based on sexual selection for how this heterogeneity could have evolved in subpopulations

Which is it then? Above you say explicitly that our "argument is not novel" and here you clearly identify exactly "What is novel about their argument"

(Actually, Galton and Pearson did come up with similar plausible post-hoc explanations themselves; plausible but wrong.) As you know, however, post-hoc explanations are often

susceptible to bias.

Thus Darwin's theory of evolution and Newton's theory of gravity were also susceptible to bias since they were "post-hoc explanations"?

Evolutionary biologists have randomized experiments to support their claims. Hill and Tabachnik do not.

We are not evolutionary biologists nor even applied mathematicians, and perhaps your daughter can explain that many mathematical papers, even those with simple mathematical ideas, are not supported by "randomized experiments" or empirical data

In fact, they are indulging in amateurish psychological theorizing.

We fully admit we are not psychologists, even amateurish ones, but our theory has absolutely nothing to do with psychology – as stated, it applies to all species.

The issues here aren't really mathematical,

I find this opinion curious, since your graduate degrees are in psychology and theology.

despite Hill's and Tabachnik's use of elementary statistics to buttress their arguments. The primary weakness of what they are trying to do is in the logic behind the traits they imagine to be measurable.

We do not claim any "logic behind the traits we imagine" – ours is a simple model based on traits such as "fitness" that are commonly used by evolutionary biologists.

Despite more than a century of psychometrics, we still don't know much about measuring mathematical ability.

We never pretended we knew anything about measuring mathematical ability, and are not making any claims about it beyond reporting research some of which has tried to tie VH to STEM.

You may be interested to hear what psychometricians working on the VH at the University of Durham said about our work: "I have just finished reading [your arxiv article] "A Theory for Gender Differences in Variability" ... it is nice to see an actual theoretical model that can be drawn upon in discussion (which I think the literature, particularly in education, has lacked to date). I think this is a welcome addition to the field."

As I explained to Amie, underlying their hypothesis is the question of what is being measured. I don't doubt that researchers have found increased variability in many measures (more in males than females). But there is a huge bias underlying this work: development of psychometric measures has had more of a century of being shaped by male populations. Just as there has been a well-documented bias in medical research caused by the over-use of male subjects, the major psychometric measures were shaped by male researchers and male subjects for more than a century. So the relative dearth of items derived on female populations would, it seems to me, carry over into the relatively smaller variance in responses to these tests.

Of course there has been bias of many sorts in science and we do not claim otherwise or condone it. Many if not most gender differences in humans appear to be (recall we are not psychologists) the result

of both nature and nurture factors, and how much of each is anybody's guess. We would expect that the more contemporary studies rely on more balanced measures. I suggest you take a look at [hPps://heterodoxacademy.org/2017/09/04/the-greater-male-variability-hypothesis/](http://heterodoxacademy.org/2017/09/04/the-greater-male-variability-hypothesis/)

In any case, I'm afraid I have to agree with Amie that a mathematical journal could risk harming its reputation by publishing an article like this. The mathematical argument is so simple that even someone like me (a psychometrician and statistician) can understand it.

We clearly stated, "The basic idea in this article is very simple". Simplicity in and of itself is not an indictment, and perhaps you have not had the opportunity to review the contents of *The Mathematical Intelligencer*. It is not a research journal and explicitly invites a wide variety of ideas and opinions, including controversial ones in its *Viewpoint* section.

As I have taught my students in data analysis, models are worthless without a grounding in solid scientific theory and observation. To take one of Amie's examples, statistical models of global warming are worthless without the underlying chemistry and atmospheric science. We can invent mathematical explanations for lots of phenomena, but that doesn't make them valid.

But that also doesn't make them invalid and unworthy of publication. Einstein's theory of relativity was published before there were corroborating observations.

Good luck with your decision. I understand it's not an easy one. And if you do decide to go with this article plus commentaries, I would suggest you consult with people like Donald Rubin at Harvard or John Hartigan at Yale (emeritus) or Steven Stigler at Chicago or Andrew Gelman at Columbia, all of whom have far more experience with the statistical and mathematical issues underlying this hypothesis than Hill and Tabachnik.

The examples above concerning Darwin and Einstein and Newton are only to illustrate those points – we are not comparing our work with those of such august scientists. We never claimed to be experts on VH, nor to have done any empirical studies or statistical analyses of data. In particular, we never claimed that our theory applies to humans, let alone gender disparities in STEM.

In closing, I would like to add that the Editor-in-Chief to whom you wrote this report has told us that she invited you to defend the above arguments in public at a round table, but that you declined. Apparently your daughter agrees with these arguments (otherwise she would not have had you send them to the journal). Perhaps she will have the courage and professional courtesy to defend them in public.

New York Journal of Mathematics (NYJM) solicits article

From: IGOR RIVIN [redacted]
Sent: Friday, October 13, 2017 10:09 PM
To: Hill, Theodore P
Subject: Your paper on gender differences

Dear Professor Hill,

I saw your paper (ok, to be honest, I heard about it first from Sergei T, who told me a bit of the history), and I was wondering if you might be interested in publishing it in the New York Journal of Mathematics (the Editor in Chief is very positive, we can have it refereed quickly).

With best regards,
Igor Rivin

NYJM Referee Report

From: IGOR RIVIN [redacted]
Sent: Sunday, October 15, 2017 7:30 AM
To: Hill, Theodore P
Subject: Fwd: Your paper on gender differences

Dear Ted,

Here is the referee's report. You will note that the referee has a couple of questions - it is not necessary to address these for publication, but if you could add a couple of lines, that would be great!

Igor

Referee report on An elementary mathematical theory for the variability hypothesis (Theodore P. Hill)

The paper under consideration is interesting for a variety of reasons; I believe it is both appropriate and important for New York Journal of Mathematics to publish it. Below I will briefly describe why it should be published if correct, and then discuss the mathematics.

Too often nowadays issues are politicized and one cannot even begin a discussion without being saddled with a negative label. The paper here is very carefully written. It is not advocating a position, it is not making value judgements. It is trying to introduce mathematics into the conversation. For an example of how dangerous even mentioning this topic can be, one simply needs to recall the furor when Harvard president Lawrence Summers advanced the VH hypothesis as an explanation as to why there are more men than women on the faculty in the natural sciences at universities. For another example, one can recall the Climategate scandal, where emails were uncovered about papers being desk rejected solely for having a conclusion against global warming.

Turning to the mathematics, the author is a leading expert in areas related to the computations done here. The math is straightforward and correct; the issue is whether or not the model proposed is a good model for the real world. The author is clear in several places, stating this is a model meant to start a more mathematical conversation. It might be worth having a mathematical biologist look at the proposed model and provide comments. I can say, though this is not my field, that the consequences of the model are correctly derived.

Below are some questions the author should address. · A critical threshold is introduced for each population (i.e., will only mate with someone at that level or better). What happens if someone cannot find a person of that threshold? Are we assuming that such a person is comfortable being unmated? Or would they find a mate in a secondary market? · Does the number of offspring depend on the satisfaction level with one's mate? · A lot of the discussion is on certain preferences leading to greater variability. Are offspring distributed the same way as the population they came from, or from the subset? In other words, say you are an individual at an extreme, and thus were classified with a 'highly variable' label. Would your offspring be fluctuating about your value, or would your offspring be as likely as any other offspring to have a given value?

NYJM paper is published

From: Mark Steinberger [redacted]

Sent: Monday, November 6, 2017 4:34 PM

To: Hill, Theodore P

Subject: Re: Galleys and copyright agreement for "An elementary mathematical theory for the variability hypothesis"

Thanks, Ted.

It's published: <http://nyjm.albany.edu/j/2017/23-72.html>

Best,

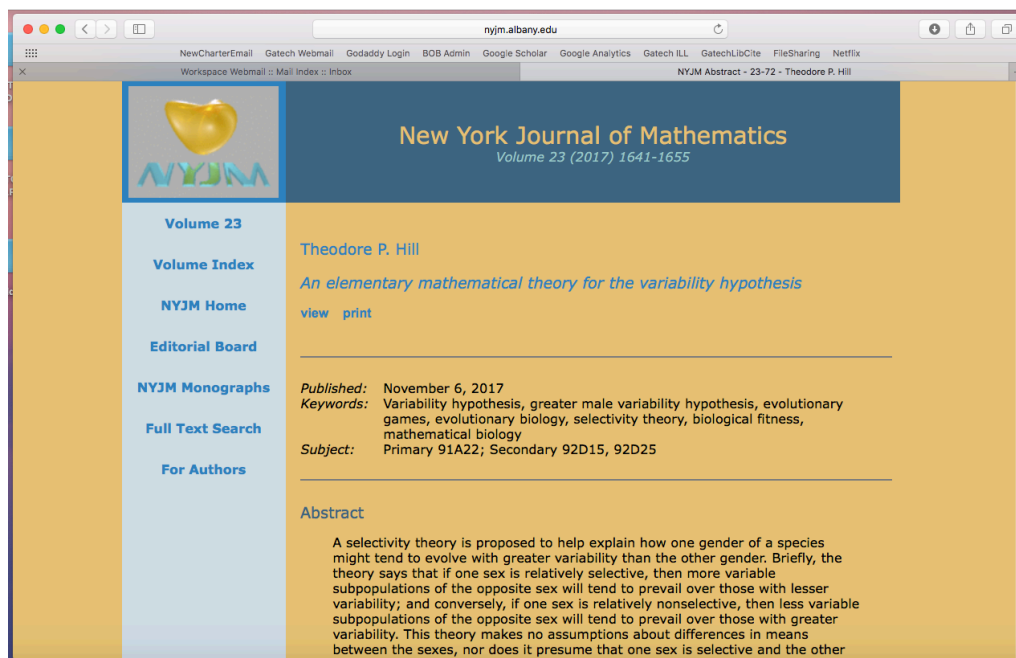
Mark

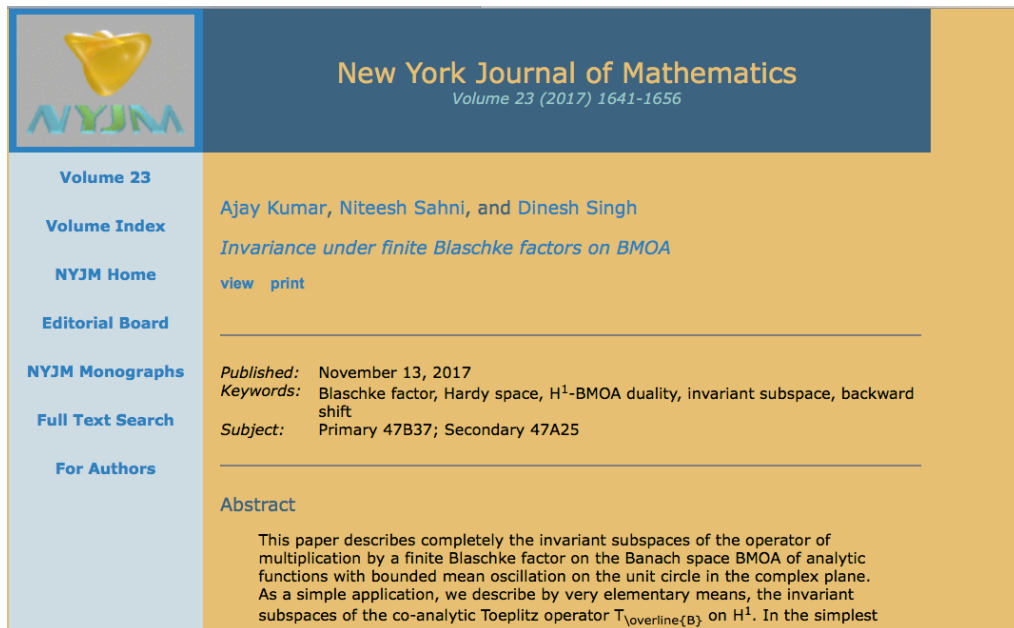
Mark Steinberger

editor-in-chief

New York Journal of Mathematics

NYJM online publication of article and subsequent “disappearance” of article – see dates and page numbers:





Email from BF to NYJM editor-in-chief (forwarded to IR)

On Thu, Nov 9, 2017 at 10:41 AM, Benson Farb [redacted] wrote:

Mark,

1. Please note that Igor is not on the list of people to whom I sent the email. It was only a subset of the board.
2. Rivin (who is an old friend of mine) is well-known as a person with extremist views who likes to pick fights with people via inflammatory statements. I am pretty sure that you already know this. He has the right to do this. However, taking this step of railroading a politically charged paper filled with pseudo-science (and, more importantly, having nothing to do with math) goes against everything that is sacred about the editorial process. So the "individual editors have sole discretion" thing doesn't really cut it. The pertinent thing is violating a scientific duty for purely political ends. To me this should be met with a swift dismissal of the editor in question.
3. My father-in-law, Leland Wilkinson, a famous statistician (e.g. a Fellow of the American Statistical Society, and chair of several committees of the National Academy of Sciences) already poked many holes in the ridiculous paper. Forgetting the complete lack of math content, even the "science" is completely flawed.

Whatever your policy at NYJM, this is a case where you need to pull this paper ASAP. I am sickened by this, having to apologize for my participation, and apologize to the authors of the great papers I solicited

that now appear next to this non-math piece of crap. passing the buck to Igor.

Benson

NYJM Editor-in-chief Correspondence with Hill

On Tue, Nov 14, 2017 at 4:11 PM, Hill, Theodore P [redacted] wrote:

Dear Mark and Igor,

There seems to be a mistake. My paper was officially published in NYJM Nov 6 (see attached), but on Nov 9 the link was taken down “temporarily”. The underlying code was still there, simply “commented out”. Now it appears that the code has also been deleted, and a different paper starting with exactly the same page has replaced my paper. Apparently my article has been simply erased from the scientific record.

Hopefully this situation is only temporary, and if I can help in any way, please let me know. (The Science article that Igor sent was excellent evidence that this is a bona fide area of scientific research, and I have plenty more if you need them.)

On the other hand if the deletion of my NYJM article is permanent, then you have placed me in a very difficult position. I will not be able to publish my paper anywhere else, since it has actually already been officially published in NYJM and I can't sign a copyright form saying it has not been published elsewhere.

Please remember that you asked me to submit this to NYJM.

Thank you for your interest and support.

Ted

Dr. Theodore P. Hill
Professor Emeritus of Mathematics
Georgia Institute of Technology
<http://people.math.gatech.edu/~hill/>

From: Mark Steinberger [redacted]
Sent: Tuesday, November 14, 2017 1:41 PM
To: Hill, Theodore P
Cc: IGOR RIVIN
Subject: Re: NYJM Variability hypothesis

Ted, my board made it clear that half of them would walk if it stayed up and that, moreover they would harass the journal until it died.

A publication in a dead journal wouldn't help you.

My cell number is [redacted] if you want to talk.

Best, Mark
Mark Steinberger
editor-in-chief
New York Journal of Mathematics

Subject: Re: further confusion
From: "Hill, Theodore P" [redacted]
Date: Mon, Nov 20, 2017 5:57 pm
To: MarjorieSenechal [redacted]

Hi Marjorie

I hope this finds you well!

Just wanted to fill you in - the variability hypothesis saga continues. A respected math journal (NYJM) SOLICITED my article, had it refereed and revised, and actually published online. Several days later, it was replaced by a different paper - simply erased. Editor told me he was threatened with having his journal "harassed until it died" by some of the same group who harassed you and the Intelligencer.

I told the editor that I'd heard that you were harassed even after you rescinded our paper, and he got kind of quiet. Did that really happen? If so, and he is made aware of it, it could help change his decision.

Everyone I talk to says your idea for a Round Table is excellent. Still game? You willing to be the referee? Interesting times.

I'm beginning to think that the AMS director's ideas to write an OpEd or LTE, and to contact the Committee on Professional Ethics might well be the way to go. We've got to at least TRY to bring back civil discourse. Well, I always did like adventures...

Happy Thanksgiving
Ted

From: Marjorie Senechal [redacted]
Sent: Tuesday, November 21, 2017 7:38 AM
To: Hill, Theodore P
Subject: Re: further confusion

Dear Ted,

Many thanks for the update, though I'm sorry that the update is what it is. I saw your paper on the NYJM website, and hadn't realized it had been removed.

You can tell its editor that after I rescinded your and Sergei's article and called for a Round Table, opinion divided (among the people writing to me). Several wrote that this was a good solution under the circumstances. But others insisted that there's nothing to talk about.

The outrage that reached me peaked after my decision to rescind. I say "that reached me" because I learned about some of it from third parties, who'd read it on Facebook and such; I didn't see that directly because I'm not in those "friend" circles. I have no idea what else was said, or who else was saying it. What I did hear, directly and indirectly, was unworthy of the speakers/writers, whom I had previously respected.

Will you be at the JMM? If so, let's continue this in person.
Happy Thanksgiving,
Marjorie

On Thu, Feb 8, 2018 at 12:47 PM, Hill, Theodore P [redacted] wrote:

Dear [redacted],

...

Do you have any concrete evidence that AW told people that Marjorie violated confidentiality by giving me her name? As I told you, that is absolutely false. I asked Marjorie if she could tell me who complained. She told me that was confidential, and I asked if I could see the substance of the complaints. Apparently she then asked LW for his permission to send me his criticisms, he gave it, and then Marjorie sent me his letter, which expressly mentioned AW's involvement.

Ted

From: [redacted]

Sent: Thursday, February 8, 2018 10:02 AM

To: Hill, Theodore P

Subject: Re: thanks for call + new arxiv

Dear Ted,

Yes, I do have evidence.

ere's the post: "Don't bother submitting to Math Intelligencer. That place is a mess. "Update: I posted some (but not all) details in the comments below."

Here's her first comment:

"Briefly, this article was accepted in MI and to appear:

<https://arxiv.org/abs/1703.04184>

"It was an 'opinion' article and was not refereed at all. When I found out (a few weeks ago), I wrote to the editor-in-chief (Marjorie Senechal) complaining, as did many others, apparently.

"She ended up rescinding the acceptance (good, although why did she accept in the first place) and revealing my identity to the authors without my consent (bad). I received an obnoxious email from one of the authors, which is how I found out. No apology from editor. Shabby."

Amie Wilkinson on facebook re: Igor Rivin

From: Igor Rivin [redacted]
Sent: Tuesday, April 3, 2018 2:21 PM
To: Hill, Theodore P
Subject: Re: Simple request

Dear Ted,

Here are some further facebook feedback (the names are for your consumption only - they can be shared if needed, and the point is that these are all prominent people, all of whom have Wikipedia pages): (the names are the file names, except in the case of [redacted], whose whole name is the file name.)).

Igor

Dear Igor. You probably know the reason and I don't really want to be in the middle of this; nonetheless, below is my view of the situation. I know that politically we don't agree, but I have enjoyed following your thread because I think it is important to hear many sides of a political argument and on a number of issues I think you have interesting opinions (although some of the posts you make I find generally offensive and have blocked links from a number of those sites). Amie sent me (and a number of others) a message indicating that she and Benson felt deeply hurt by something you did, although it was not disclosed what the issue was. As Amie and Benson are two people I speak to regularly in real life (as opposed to just on FB; moreover, on FB I interact with Amie far more often than I do with you) and since it was important to her that I make a choice of which of the two of you I was FB friends with, I made a choice. I should add that, although I've found many aspects of the "FB Igor Rivin" to be distasteful, I've enjoyed the various times that, in real life, we've talked and I've really enjoyed reading a number of your papers; so, while I imagine the FB you might be irritated at me for choosing sides, I hope those feelings are limiting to the social media persona and not taken as a personal affront.

Last night she posted an insane statement implying that she was going to unfriend anyone who didn't unfriend you. I ignored it, of course. Today I went to her timeline to see if she had unfriended me, and I see that she has taken down the post. But now there's a message from her. Let me look and see what it says.

Hi Igor. Do you know you are being excommunicated?

SAT 7:47PM

hi igor,

i'm writing you using my company's email, not connected to my employer.

this is a friendly note that once again, someone's got a social-media campaign going against you.

this time it's amie w. she's sent spam messages to all her friends on fb, declaring that she is about to unfriend anyone who remains friends w/you, because of... (basically hurt feelings).

not to trouble you... just thought you would like to know.

oh, in the ensuing maelstrom of an unwanted large-group spam, with lots of arguing, she has decided to relent from unfriending those who still follow you. fyi.

at this point, i'd rather be unfriended than have to suffer through more junior-high antics.

ah well.

Hill Letter to NYJM Editorial Board

Subject: Note to NYJM Editorial Board
 From: "Hill, Theodore P" [redacted]
 Date: Thu, Mar 15, 2018 2:14 pm
 To: [NYJM Editorial Board, including Benson Farb] [redacted]
 CC: [redacted]
 Attach: NYJM.pdf

Dear NYJM Editors,

As you may know, three days after the formal publication of my article on the variability hypothesis (NYJM Vol 23, p 1641-1645) last November 6, my article was expunged from the journal's official scientific record and later replaced with a different paper at the exact same location. I understand that you members of the NYJM editorial board have now voted to approve that action, which as far as I know is unprecedented.

If an electronic journal can be retroactively altered (e.g., as in this case by a simple majority vote of the current editors), that will do significant damage to NYJM and all other electronic journals. Our colleagues worried about that 20 years ago, and it didn't come to pass, but now it has. (That and the threat that the site could be destroyed altogether.) The permanent damage to free speech and academic freedom would be irreparable, and certainly more than any damage one little article could cause. Please note that I am NOT advocating that NYJM re-publish my article, but merely pointing out the harm to our profession if it remains deleted.

Here are some facts I think you should know:

First, my article was solicited by NYJM (not vice versa), was refereed, checked by at least two editors, revised, and formally published.

If some of you had simply written to me directly at the time the controversy started and complained that it did not look like a good fit for NYJM, I might well have agreed (it was solicited, recall), and I might have found some compromise to revise it substantially or might have requested it be removed for submission elsewhere.

Instead, one of you, behind my back, sent out email to other editors attacking my paper and calling it a "pseudo-science...piece of crap". That editor claimed that his "famous" father-in-law (a psychometrician) had "already poked many holes in the ridiculous paper".

The truth is your co-editor knew that his father-in-law had criticized a different paper on the same topic, a paper with different authors, different title, different exposition, and essentially no mathematics. That paper had been accepted by the Mathematical Intelligencer for publication in their Viewpoint section, which explicitly welcomes controversy. I'm guessing that your co-editor also failed to tell you that his father-in-law had even conceded that the main result was "novel".

Nor did your co-editor tell you his father-in-law had refused the Intelligencer editor-in-chief's cordial invitation to defend his arguments in a public forum. When I received those criticisms of that different article, I sent polite emails to the father-in-law with rebuttals of each of his points. I told him (and your co-editor's wife, who had already successfully conspired to have the Intelligencer paper rescinded and was also conspiring to rescind the NYJM paper) that I was revising the paper for submission

elsewhere, and I asked for their suggestions or criticisms or responses to my counter-arguments. Neither ever replied to me.

I am surprised and disappointed that your board did not allow an opportunity for me, the author, to provide any input at all. Is that the way you would like to be treated? Is due process in our beloved mathematics going the same direction it is in the greater arena of social media and national politics? I feel that my professional reputation is in jeopardy. The greater mathematical community will naturally assume that my article was removed because I could not defend its contents scientifically, or worse yet, for reasons of priority and/or plagiarism. I want my name to be cleared among the greater academic community, and this should include published explanations and apologies at the very least by your co- editor and the NYJM editor-in-chief.

Thank you for your time and understanding.

Ted Hill

Hill also writes to the following (no investigations or actions taken):

- **American Mathematical Society (AMS) Committee on Professional Ethics (COPE)**
- **Association for Women in Mathematics (AWM)**
- **Committee for Women in Mathematics (CWM) of International Mathematical Union**
- **Foundation for Individual Rights in Education (FIRE)**

Hill files complaints with University of Chicago

Subject: Complaint against two University of Chicago Professors
 From: "Hill, Theodore P" [redacted]
 Date: Fri, Feb 09, 2018 12:56 pm
 To: [President Zimmer] [redacted]
 Attach: UCPresFeb8.pdf

Dear President Zimmer,

Attached is a pdf with a formal complaint against two mathematics professors at the University of Chicago. As I state there, I am writing you directly, since if our roles were reversed, that is what I would have appreciated from you as a fellow mathematician.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully yours
 Ted Hill

 Dr. Theodore P. Hill
 Professor Emeritus of Mathematics
 Georgia Institute of Technology
<http://people.math.gatech.edu/~hill/>

Hill Formal Complaint Letter

Dr. Robert J. Zimmer, President University of Chicago
Dear President Zimmer,

I am writing directly to you since, if our roles were reversed, that is what I would have appreciated from you as a fellow mathematician.

I hereby file a complaint against University of Chicago mathematics professors Drs. Amie Wilkinson and Benson Farb for unprofessional, uncollegial, and unethical conduct damaging to my professional reputation and to the reputation of the University of Chicago. I have been in the math professor business now for over forty years and nothing like this has ever happened before to me or to anyone I know.

BACKGROUND

In early 2017, I discovered a simple mathematical theory based on biological principles to explain the controversial “variability hypothesis”. (In particular, an article in the 2007 *Notices* claimed, “If true, [the variability hypothesis] could account for the fact that all Fields medalists have been male.” For further details, see Appendix B in <https://arxiv.org/pdf/1703.04184.pdf>). I enlisted two colleagues to help, wrote it up, and ran it by the editor-in-chief of *The Mathematical Intelligencer*. She liked it, said it should generate healthy debate, helped us revise it, and officially accepted it for publication in their *Viewpoint* section, which explicitly welcomes controversy.

The actions of Drs. Wilkinson and Farb that are the subject of my complaint are these:

1. Dr. Wilkinson, after learning of the accepted article, conspired with others to censor it. A collegial response would have been to contact me directly with criticisms, or to first let me publish it and then publish a response herself. Instead they made repeated complaints behind my back to *The Intelligencer’s* editor-in-chief, who later confirmed the complaints had nothing to do with substance – instead they warned her “the right-wing media may pick this up and hype it internationally.” Under threats of repeated complaints by Dr. Wilkinson and others, the editor-in-chief rescinded acceptance of that paper.
2. Dr. Wilkinson conspired to have her father (a psychometrician) send criticisms of the paper, not to us authors, but directly to the editor-in-chief. When I later was sent his arguments with his permission, I discovered Amie Wilkinson’s participation, and I then replied to both her and her father in polite emails with rebuttals of each of his points. I told them I was revising the paper for submission elsewhere, and asked for their suggestions or criticisms or responses to my counter-arguments. Neither ever replied to me.
3. Even after my article was rescinded, Dr. Wilkinson made false and defamatory statements on social media attacking both the *Intelligencer* as being a “mess” and its editor-in-chief as “Shabby”. Dr. Wilkinson advised colleagues not to submit articles there, and to convince them, she falsely claimed that the journal had accepted a different arxiv article of mine. Dr. Wilkinson also accused the editor-in-chief of revealing her identity to us authors without her consent, when in fact she knew it was her own father who revealed her identity to us. (I had asked the editor-in-chief if she could tell me who complained so I could contact them directly for concrete criticisms. The editor-in-chief told me the names were confidential, and I asked if I could see the substance of the complaints. The editor-in-chief got permission from Dr. Wilkinson’s father to send me his letter, and that explicitly mentioned Dr.

Wilkinson's involvement.) Since I had published several articles in the *Intelligencer*, these attacks on the journal thus also indirectly harmed my own professional reputation.

Subsequently, editors at the *New York Journal of Mathematics* learned about my work on this topic and solicited a paper from me (no coauthors this time) for publication. After a very positive referee's report and praise by an editor and the editor-in-chief, I made several revisions under their supervision and the *NYJM* published my article online November 6, 2017.

4. When she learned of this, Dr. Wilkinson conspired with Dr. Benson Farb, another editor of *NYJM*, to censor this paper as well. He contacted a select group of his co-editors calling my paper a "pseudo-science...piece of crap" and told them that his "famous" father-in-law had poked many holes in the paper. Both Dr. Wilkinson and Dr. Farb knew this was not true – they knew that her father had criticized a different paper on the same topic, a paper with different authors, different title, different exposition, and essentially no mathematics. Moreover Drs. Wilkinson and Farb misrepresented the status of her father's objections to my paper by not telling the other editors that I had written detailed rebuttals to her father's criticisms, that her father had refused the editor-in-chief's invitation to defend his arguments in public, and that her father had in fact conceded that the result was "novel".

5. Dr. Wilkinson continued conspiring with her husband Dr. Farb to harass the *NYJM* editor-in-chief until he deleted the already-published paper. Without warning, my paper simply disappeared from the scientific record. The editor-in-chief later told me he had received threats that the journal (which he had founded some 25 years ago) would be "harassed until it died" unless he removed the paper immediately. The greater mathematical community will naturally assume the article was removed because I could not defend its contents scientifically, or worse yet, for reasons of priority and/or plagiarism.

These actions of Drs. Wilkinson and Farb – conspiring to denounce and censor my work behind my back, and conspiring to use false and misleading allegations to attack my work and two journals that had accepted my work – not only damage my own professional reputation, but also bring discredit upon the University of Chicago and the mathematical community.

I therefore request that you reprimand both Dr. Amie Wilkinson and Dr. Benson Farb, and have them make public apologies for conduct unbecoming University of Chicago professors.

Respectfully yours,
Ted Hill

Dr. Theodore P. Hill
Professor Emeritus of Mathematics
Georgia Institute of Technology
<http://people.math.gatech.edu/~hill/>

follow up

Subject: U. Chicago Statement on Principles of Free Expression
From: "Hill, Theodore P" [redacted]
Date: Mon, Mar 26, 2018 1:57 pm
To: [President Zimmer] [redacted]

Dear Dr. Zimmer,

Geof Stone suggested I contact you directly with this.

It has now been more than six weeks since I filed my free speech complaint against Professors Wilkinson and Farb, and with the exception of acknowledgement of it (which I requested) no one has contacted me or asked me a single question. It appears that either they are doing nothing, or are only getting one side of the story.

In my view, the actions outlined in my complaint are in direct violation of the University of Chicago's official Statement on Principles of Free Expression that Professor Stone authored, in particular:

"For members of the University community, as for the University itself, the proper response to ideas they find offensive, unwarranted and dangerous is not interference, obstruction, or suppression. It is, instead, to engage in robust counter-speech that challenges the merits of those ideas and exposes them for what they are. To this end, the University has a solemn responsibility not only to promote a lively and fearless freedom of debate and deliberation, but also to protect that freedom when others attempt to restrict it."

My allegations may easily be confirmed by contacting the two editors-in-chief. Copied below for your convenience are two relevant emails with their addresses.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely

Ted Hill

Dr. Theodore P. Hill

Professor Emeritus of Mathematics Georgia Institute of Technology

<http://people.math.gatech.edu/~hill>

From: Jason Merchant [redacted]

Sent: Wednesday, March 28, 2018 4:24 PM

To: Hill, Theodore P

Subject: Your complaint

Dear Prof. Hill,

Thank you for your email of March 26 to President Zimmer, which was forwarded to me after he read it. As I mentioned, my office is responsible for handling these matters. I am awaiting the results of the initial inquiry, which is handled within the relevant Division. The inquiry has been slowed this month by the end of the quarter and spring break; we just started spring quarter again this Monday, and several parties have been traveling since classes ended on March 9.

I apologize for the slowness, but assure you that your allegations are being handled in the usual way and have not been forgotten.

Sincerely,

Jason Merchant

Vice Provost for Academic Affairs

Lorna P. Straus Professor, Department of Linguistics and the College University of Chicago

Subject: Re: Your complaint

From: "Hill, Theodore P" [redacted]
 Date: Fri, Mar 30, 2018 5:32 pm
 To: JasonMerchant [redacted]

Dear Prof. Merchant,

Thank you for your update - I am not sure that "handled in the usual way" inspires much confidence in the University of Chicago's commitment to free speech, but time will tell. Sounds like the famous line in Casablanca...

Respectfully
 Ted Hill

P.S. I just learned today that Prof. Wilkinson recently announced on Facebook that she would unfriend anyone who did not unfriend one of the editors who supported publication of my paper.

 Dr. Theodore P. Hill
 Professor Emeritus of Mathematics Georgia Institute of Technology
<http://people.math.gatech.edu/~hill/>

More follow up and subsequent response letter

Subject: Documents for Hill Complaint
 From: "Hill, Theodore P" [redacted]
 Date: Wed, Apr 18, 2018 5:01 pm
 To: JasonMerchant [redacted]
 Attach: Add-onsApr18.pdf

Dear Vice Provost Merchant,

It has now been nearly ten weeks since I filed my complaint, and I have not been contacted once by "the Dean who is conducting the inquiry". I know someone is talking to the Drs. Farb and Wilkinson, since I was told they are trying to take some "corrective" action.

Just in case the inquiry into my complaint gets wrapped up without anyone ever contacting me, attached are a few documents I would like to be part of the official record of the inquiry. Could you please confirm receipt of these?

Thank you for your time.
 Sincerely Ted Hill

 Dr. Theodore P. Hill
 Professor Emeritus of Mathematics Georgia Institute of Technology

From: Jason Merchant [redacted]
 Sent: Thursday, April 19, 2018 8:54 AM
 To: Hill, Theodore P
 Subject: Re: Documents for Hill Complaint

Dear Prof. Hill,

Thank you for this additional material. The Dean conducted an inquiry, and our office made a determination, which we sent in a letter to your office. (You did not supply a mail address that I could find in any of your correspondence, so I used your departmental address at the Georgia Institute of Technology. If there is another address we should use, please let me know, and I will have a copy of the letter sent there as well.)

Sincerely,
 Jason Merchant
 Vice Provost for Academic Affairs

 <p>THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO</p> <p>17 April 2018</p> <p>Theodore P. Hill Professor Emeritus of Mathematics School of Mathematics Georgia Institute of Technology 686 Cherry Street Atlanta, GA 30332-0160 USA</p> <p>theodore.hill@math.gatech.edu</p> <p>Dear Prof. Hill,</p> <p>I am writing with regard to the charges you made concerning Profs. Wilkinson and Farb; specifically, that they acted in their professional capacities as mathematicians, and in the case of Prof. Farb, as editor of the <i>New York Journal of Mathematics</i>, to recommend against publication of two of your papers..</p> <p>In accordance with the University of Chicago's Policy on Academic Fraud, an inquiry into those charges was conducted, and the determination was made that there is no reason to believe academic fraud may have been committed. Accordingly, the charges have been dismissed.</p> <p>Respectfully,</p>  <p>Jason Merchant Vice Provost for Academic Affairs</p> <p>Cc: Daniel Diermeier, Provost Edward Kolb, Dean of the Division of Physical Sciences</p>	<p>Office of the Provost</p> <p>Jason Merchant Vice Provost, Academic Affairs Levi Hall 432 5801 South Ellis Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60637</p> <p>merchant@uchicago.edu T 773.702.8523</p>
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Appeal of Vice-Provost Merchant's Decision

Subject: Appeal of Decision on Censorship Complaint
 From: "Hill, Theodore P" [redacted]
 Date: Thu, Apr 26, 2018 4:00 pm
 To: [President Zimmer] [redacted]
 Cc: [Geof Stone] [redacted] "fire@thefire.org" <fire@thefire.org>
 Attach: HillApr26E.pdf

Dear President Zimmer,

On 9 February 2018 I filed a complaint with you against Professors Wilkinson and Farb “for unprofessional, uncollegial, and unethical conduct damaging to my professional reputation and to the reputation of the University of Chicago.”

My complaint centered on research I had done on the topic of greater male variability, and although there had been very positive reaction to the scientific content of the research per se, Professors Wilkinson and Farb reacted in a manner that is emotional and inappropriate (even having her father weigh in with the Editor-in-Chief!), and succeeded in having the research censored.

Having heard nothing from you about my complaint, three weeks later I again wrote you specifically explicitly emphasizing that Professors Wilkinson and Farb had “repeatedly conspired with others behind my back to censor publication of research on a topic they do not approve of.”

You passed my complaint to a Provost, who passed it to a retiring Vice Provost, who passed it to another Vice Provost, who passed it to a Dean, who then eventually passed it back up to the Vice Provost.

The “inquiry” lasted more than two months without anyone ever asking me for any evidence or further details. On 17 April 2018 Vice Provost Merchant wrote me that an inquiry into my charges concerning Profs. Wilkinson and Farb “was conducted, and the determination was made that there is no reason to believe academic fraud may have been committed. Accordingly, the charges have been dismissed.”

I never made any charges of academic fraud - unless making false statements in order to get research censored is considered academic fraud. Attached is a summary including emails, social media postings and letters documenting these acts of censorship (and false statements).

I hereby formally request an appeal of Vice Provost Merchant's decision.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely

Ted Hill

 Dr. Theodore P. Hill

Professor Emeritus of Mathematics Georgia Institute of Technology

<http://people.math.gatech.edu/~hill/>

Second response letter from Vice-Provost Merchant



THE UNIVERSITY OF
CHICAGO

Office of the Provost

Jason Merchant
Vice Provost, Academic Affairs
Levi Hall 432
5801 South Ellis Avenue
Chicago, Illinois 60637

merchant@uchicago.edu
T 773.702.8523

29 April 2018


Theodore P. Hill
Professor Emeritus of Mathematics
Georgia Institute of Technology
theodore.hill@math.gatech.edu

Dear Prof. Hill,

I understand that you disagree with the University's decision not to "reprimand" Prof. Farb and Prof. Wilkinson and "have them make public apologies", as you requested in your letter of February 9 to President Zimmer. You accused them of "unprofessional, uncollegial, and unethical conduct" and provided a litany of alleged actions on their part that led the editor of the *New York Journal of Mathematics* to decide to rescind publication of your paper there. You also complained that Prof. Wilkinson was using Facebook to "attack" *The Mathematical Intelligencer* and its editor-in-chief, in the course of which postings Prof. Wilkinson appeared to confuse two papers of yours (one co-authored, and one not) and to claim incorrectly that the paper she linked to (the single-authored one) was the one that the *Mathematical Intelligencer* had accepted for publication (which had in fact accepted the co-authored one).

Your complaint asserts that Profs. Farb and Wilkinson acted to prevent the publication of your papers. While Profs. Farb and Wilkinson exercised their academic freedom in advocating against the publication of the papers, it was in fact the respective editors-in-chief of the two journals, not Profs. Farb or Wilkinson, who made the editorial judgments regarding the papers. You are certainly within your rights to appeal those independent editorial decisions, but those decisions were not made by University of Chicago faculty, and the University takes no stance on the correctness of those decisions. I have served as editor or associate editor of two major journals in my field, and continue to serve on the editorial boards of several others. Advocacy, pro and con, for submitted papers and for papers that are in the pipeline under the management of other editors, is not unheard of. It is not, in our judgment, unethical or unprofessional.

Respectfully,



Jason Merchant
Vice Provost for Academic Affairs

Cc: Daniel Diermeier, Provost
Edward W. Kolb, Dean of the Division of Physical Sciences

Appeal of the Appeal process

Subject: Status of Appeal
From: "Hill, Theodore P" [redacted]
Date: Sat, May 19, 2018 3:09 pm
To: [President Zimmer] [redacted]

Dear President Zimmer,

On February 9 I sent you an official complaint against Professors Wilkinson and Farb listing five concrete numbered complaints, four of which expressly concerned their conspiracy to censor publication of my research related to Darwinian evolution. In one case, the paper was solicited, reviewed, accepted, and actually published in an online journal. Dr. Farb conspired with others to bully the editor-in-chief (including threats to "harass the journal until it died"), until the editor-in-chief capitulated by deleting the previously published paper from the journal.

In repeatedly conspiring with others behind my back to censor publication of research on a topic they do not approve of, Drs. Wilkinson and Farb clearly violated the University of Chicago's official Statement on Principles of Free Expression:

"For members of the University community, as for the University itself, the proper response to ideas

they find offensive, unwarranted and dangerous is not interference, obstruction, or suppression...To this end, the University has a solemn responsibility not only to promote a lively and fearless freedom of debate and deliberation, but also to protect that freedom when others attempt to restrict it."

After an inquiry into my complaint by the Dean (is it common for you to allow line administrators to conduct such inquiries?) Vice Provost Merchant wrote me on April 17, not disputing a single one of my five claims, but concluding that the "charges [of academic fraud] have been dropped." Academic fraud was not the subject of my complaint, and on April 27 I formally appealed that decision to you. I have not yet received an answer to that appeal.

Instead, Vice Provost Merchant wrote me a 300-word explanation of his own decision, contending that Dr. Wilkinson may have been "confused". It appears that the Vice Provost is also confused – his reference to "the paper she linked to (the single-authored one)" is factually incorrect. More importantly, Dr. Merchant's statement "Advocacy, pro and con, for submitted papers and for papers that are in the pipeline under the management of other editors, is not unheard of" is absolutely misleading. As my original complaint had stated, Dr. Farb bullied an editor-in-chief into deleting an already-published paper, not one that was "in the pipeline". As far as I know, this is unprecedented in mathematics and threatens the integrity of all online journals.

Vice Provost Merchant blames the editors-in-chief instead, stating "those decisions were not made by University of Chicago faculty, and the University takes no stance on the correctness of those decisions". Really? The editor-in-chief they pressured into deleting the published paper is a graduate of their own department - a University of Chicago math PhD!

This action has now been condoned and defended after-the-fact not only by Vice Provost Merchant but also by Dean Kolb, who copied me on an email indicating his enthusiastic approval of Dr. Merchant's explanation – whether that was a mistake on Dr. Kolb's part or an attempt to intimidate me is not clear. My appeal of Vice Provost Merchant's ruling stands, and I respectfully request a notification (preferably by email) on its status.

Sincerely,
Ted Hill

Dr. Theodore P. Hill
Professor Emeritus of Mathematics Georgia Institute of Technology
<http://people.math.gatech.edu/~hill/>

Conclusion

From: Daniel Diermeier [redacted]
Sent: Sunday, May 20, 2018 7:58 AM
To: Hill, Theodore P
Cc: Jason Merchant
Subject: your message

Dear Professor Hill,

President Zimmer forwarded me your recent email. When you brought a potential case of academic misconduct to our attention, the University followed its regular process for investigating such allegations. This process is led by the Provost Office in consultation with the respective Dean. Our investigation was concluded a few weeks ago, and you were informed of the outcome. There will be no

further review or consideration of this matter.

Sincerely,

Daniel Diermeier

Daniel Diermeier
Provost | The University of Chicago
[redacted]