

"With his usual alacrity and insight, Jonathan Marks demonstrates how we (the human sciences) allow, even enable, misguided racial perspectives and racist research. In showing us our history, he provides an important cautionary tale for present and future scientists. This book is a must read for researchers and students alike. History not learned is doomed to be repeated."

Agustín Fuentes, University of Notre Dame

"Jonathan Marks skillfully guides us through the ignominious peaks and ideological nadirs of scientific racism, revealing race as a science fiction with little more empirical credence than creationism. This most accessible book should be read by anyone seeking to understand how science was, and continues to be, used in the service of racism."

Alondra Nelson, Columbia University

Every arena of science has its own flash-point issues – chemistry and poison gas, physics and the atom bomb – and genetics has had a troubled history with race. As Jonathan Marks reveals, this dangerous relationship rumbles on to this day, still leaving plenty of leeway for a belief in the basic natural inequality of races.

The eugenic science of the early twentieth century and the commodified genomic science of today are unified by the mistaken belief that human races are naturalistic categories. Yet their boundaries are founded neither in biology nor in genetics and, not being a formal scientific concept, race is largely not accessible to the scientist. As Marks argues, race can only be grasped through the humanities: historically, experientially, politically.

This wise, witty essay explores the persistence and legacy of scientific racism, which misappropriates the authority of science and undermines it by converting it into a social weapon.

Jonathan Marks is Professor of Anthropology at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte

Printed in Great Britain

polity politybooks.com



ファアト

ANADKS I common month?

polity

Is science racist?

JONATHAN MARKS

Copyright © Jonathan Marks 2017

The right of Jonathan Marks to be identified as Author of this Work has been asserted in accordance with the UK Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

First published in 2017 by Polity Press

Polity Press 65 Bridge Street Cambridge CB2 1UR, UK

Polity Press 350 Main Street Malden, MA 02148, USA

All rights reserved. Except for the quotation of short passages for the purpose of criticism and review, no part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of the publisher.

ISBN-13: 978-0-7456-8921-0 ISBN-13: 978-0-7456-8922-7(pb)

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

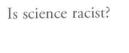
Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Control Number: 2016029623

Typeset in 11 on 15 pt Adobe Garamond by Toppan Best-set Premedia Limited Printed and bound in Great Britain by Clays Ltd, St Ives PLC

The publisher has used its best endeavors to ensure that the URLs for external websites referred to in this book are correct and active at the time of going to press. However, the publisher has no responsibility for the websites and can make no guarantee that a site will remain live or that the content is or will remain appropriate.

Every effort has been made to trace all copyright holders, but if any have been inadvertently overlooked the publisher will be pleased to include any necessary credits in any subsequent reprint or edition.

For further information on Polity, visit our website: politybooks.com



Debating Race series

David Theo Goldberg, Are we all postracial yet? Ghassan Hage, Is racism an environmental threat? Jonathan Marks, Is science racist?

To my parents Richard and Renée, to my wife Peta, and to our daughter Abby



I started writing this book while I was a Templeton Fellow at the Notre Dame Institute for Advanced Study, and probably should have been working on my project, *Tales of the ex-Apes* (University of California Press, 2015). That project came to happy fruition, and now so too has this, and I am very grateful to the John Templeton Foundation and to the Notre Dame Institute for Advanced Study for their stimulation and support.

I have been strongly influenced by the voices of friends and colleagues who have helped me to clarify my own thinking, while sharing theirs. That is a group that includes Troy Duster, Jay Kaufman, Jonathan Kahn, Dorothy Roberts, Duana Fullwiley, Kim Tall-Bear, Alan Goodman, Deborah Bolnick, Susan Reverby, Evelynn Hammonds, Joseph Graves, Richard Cooper, Anne Fausto-Sterling, Pilar Ossorio, Lundy Braun, Terence Keel, and others.

I thank Jonathan Kahn and Julia Feder for their insightful comments on the manuscript, and Karen Strier for long-term wisdom.

CONTENTS

Acknowledgments	viii
1 Introduction	1
2 How science invented race	28
3 Science, race, and genomics	57
4 Racism and biomedical science	84
5 What we know, and why it matters	106
Notes	129
References	131
Index	139

Racism pervades many, if not all, aspects of modern society, in different ways. Like other modern institutions, science can sometimes reflect the subtle and not-so-subtle biases of its practitioners. This book is not about the institutions and practices of science, however, but about its content.

I teach two principal subjects as a biological anthropologist: human diversity and human origins. These are about, respectively, who we are and where we come from. For any other society, this would be considered a sacred origin myth, a domain of kinship, by which people establish their orientation in a complex social universe. In our society, it involves the contested scientific domains of race and evolution, both of which are conceptualized rather differently than they were a few decades ago.

Evolution, for example, used to be conceptualized reductively – without bodies, and without species – as simply genotypes and gene pools. Any contemporary discussion of the subject, however, now considers the

reactivity and adaptability of the body (plasticity), the reciprocal relations between the environment and the species (niche construction), and nongenetic modes of inheritance (epigenetics and culture).

Race, likewise, has been reconceptualized in the last few decades. Where it was once conceptualized as a fundamental unit of the human species, we now know that the species does not really come partitioned that way. That is a fallacy of primary interest to pedants, like me, and we can call that taxonomic fallacy "racialism." More significant is the recognition that the social and behavioral differences between any two groups of people are far more likely to be due to the processes of history than to those of microevolution. Consequently, the judgment of innate individual properties on the basis of group membership is illegitimate, and we can call that political position "racism."

Nevertheless, when dealing with ancestors and relatives, one never traffics in value-neutral facts. Kinship is invariably bio-cultural. The opposite of evolution – creationism – is so political that its history actually is just a series of court cases in the United States: *Tennessee vs Scopes* (1925), *McLean vs Arkansas* (1982), *Edwards vs. Aguillard* (1987), and *Kitzmiller vs. Dover School District* (2005) are just the most familiar ones. And racism is most familiar as political acts: slavery,

segregation, anti-Semitism, once again, to name only the most familiar examples.

This book is about a paradox in science. Both creationism and racism are considered outmoded ideologies. If you espouse creationist ideas in science, you are branded as an ideologue, as a closed-minded pseudoscientist who is unable to adopt a modern perspective, and who consequently has no place in the community of scholars. But if you espouse racist ideas in science, that's not quite so bad. People might look at you a little askance, but as a racist you can coexist in science alongside them, which you couldn't do if you were a creationist. Science is racist when it permits scientists who advance racist ideas to exist and to thrive institutionally.¹

Consider an op-ed that appeared in the *New York Times* on April 11, 2014, called "Raising a Moral Child," which casually cited "a classic experiment" by "the psychologist J. Philippe Rushton." Sure, why not? He was indeed a respected psychologist at the University of Western Ontario. Herrnstein and Murray's *The Bell Curve*, which notoriously argued in 1994 that IQ is largely genetically determined, sets one's intellectual fate, and differs across large demographic swaths of the American public, cited more than 20 of Rushton's papers. It then went so far as to pre-emptively defend

him in an Appendix - rather an unusual step - calling his work "not that of a crackpot or a bigot" (Herrnstein and Murray, 1994: 662). That obviously raises a few questions, such as: Do other scholars regard him as such? Why? Just what does he think his work demonstrates? The answers to these questions became widely known a few years later, when Rushton mass-mailed an abridgement of his own book to the memberships of several professional societies. The unabridged version had been memorably reviewed in the journal Animal Behaviour in uncompromising terms: "I don't know which is worse," wrote the reviewer, "Rushton's scientific failings or his blatant racism." Methodologically, the reviewer continued, Rushton cherry-picks data of very dubious quality to make his pseudo-scientific argument, which amounts to "the pious hope that by combining numerous little turds of variously tainted data, one can obtain a valuable result; but in fact, the outcome is merely a larger than average pile of shit" (Barash, 1995: 1133).

Rushton believed, and believed that his data showed, that there are three kinds of people associated with the continents of the Old World (a biogeographic scenario that in fact owes more to the biblical sons of Noah than to modern biology). Moreover, the peoples of Africa had undergone eons of natural selection for high

reproductive rate and low intelligence, which he measured via surrogate variables – notably, sex drive, criminality rates, penis size, and brain size; the peoples of Asia had undergone selection for low libido and high intelligence; and the peoples of Europe comprised a happy medium. He believed that the average sub-Saharan African had the IQ of a mentally handicapped European. Yes, he was a racist crackpot. Anybody who ever took the trouble to examine his inane corpus of work could see that.

When Philippe Rushton died in 2012, he had been president of The Pioneer Fund for a decade, a philanthropy that carefully selects its academic beneficiaries, ranging from eugenicists in the 1930s to segregationists in the 1960s, and radical hereditarian psychologists notably Rushton himself - in the 1980s (Tucker, 2002). Clearly this was a man who was utterly incapable of rendering sober, informed, scientific judgments; simply a wacky ideologue with a PhD and the admiration of some wealthy and powerful misanthropes. Yet somehow he had risen to a position of status and authority in certain areas of science. Indeed, the New York Times cited a paper of his in 2014. Sure, the paper wasn't about race per se, but the issue here is Rushton's credibility as a scientist. Every practicing scientist knows that data can be manipulated, and that there is a good

faith expectation between the scientist and the community at large. That's why losing your scientific credibility is such a fall from grace: it represents irrevocable descent from a pristine state of full trust and honesty. We expect you to be able to generate fair conclusions from fair data. Consequently, to cite Rushton's work is to tarnish your own scholarly credibility, because it says that you have no idea what's going on within the mind or oeuvre of the presumptive scholar on whom you are relying.

So, once you know about Philippe Rushton's work and ideas, it becomes difficult to understand why any competent scholar would cite, much less praise, his work. And yet, the journal *Personality and Individual Differences*, published by the academic giant Elsevier, devoted its issue of July 2013 to an admiring memorial of his work. Had Rushton been a creationist instead of a racist, no mainstream scientist or journal would have touched him. Adhering to such a retrogressive ideology would render you effectively friendless in academia. But there was a place for someone who thought he had demonstrated that "Africans" are naturally underendowed intellectually – in academia, in scientific philanthropy, and in ostensibly scientific journals.

Some people feel that psychology is a "soft" science anyway, and that a "real" scientist would easily