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# A FORMULA FOR ERADICATING RACISM

Debunking White Supremacy

Timothy McGettigan and  
Earl Smith





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# A Formula for Eradicating Racism: Debunking White Supremacy



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A FORMULA FOR ERADICATING RACISM

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Softcover reprint of the hardcover 1st edition 2016 978-1-137-59974-2

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First published in 2016 by

PALGRAVE MACMILLAN®

in the United States—a division of St. Martin's Press LLC,

175 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10010.

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Palgrave Macmillan is the global academic imprint of the above companies and has companies and representatives throughout the world.

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ISBN: 978-1-137-59975-9 PDF

ISBN: 978-1-349-88809-2

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data is available from the Library of Congress.

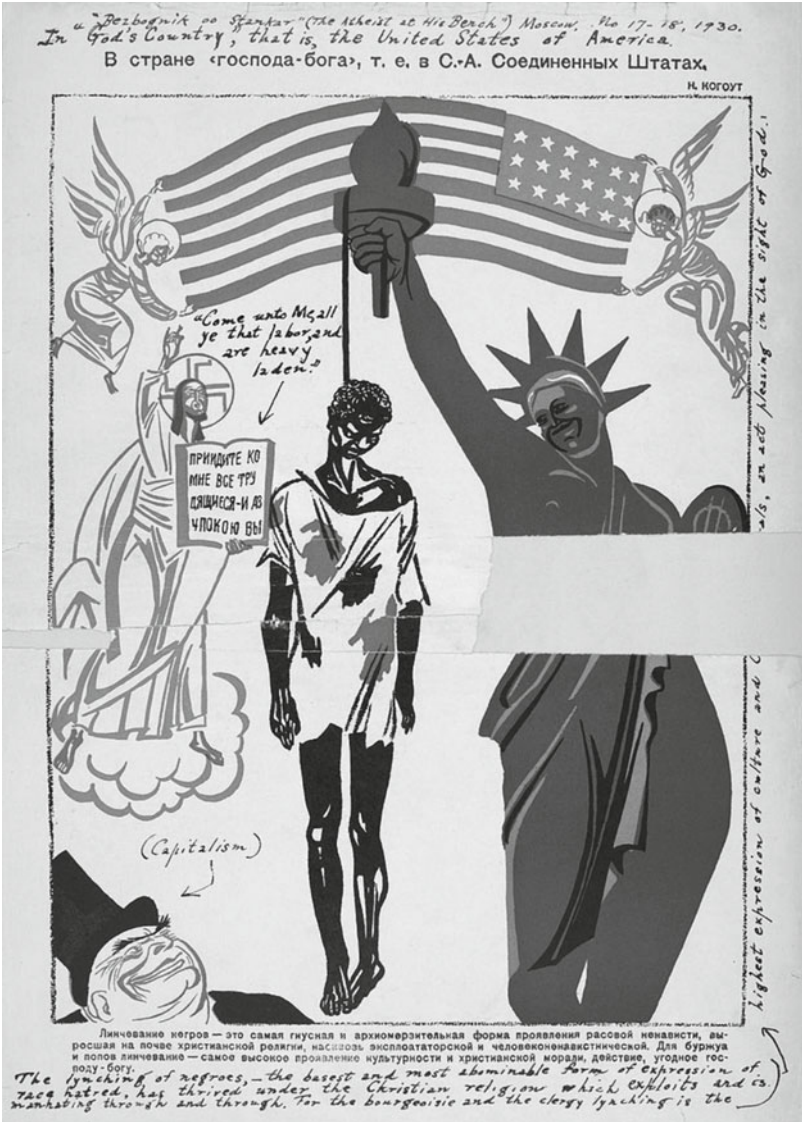
A catalogue record of the book is available from the British Library.

First edition: 2016

[www.palgrave.com/pivot](http://www.palgrave.com/pivot)

DOI: 10.1057/9781137599759

The authors dedicate this book to the billions of poor souls whose lives have been needlessly ravaged by racism



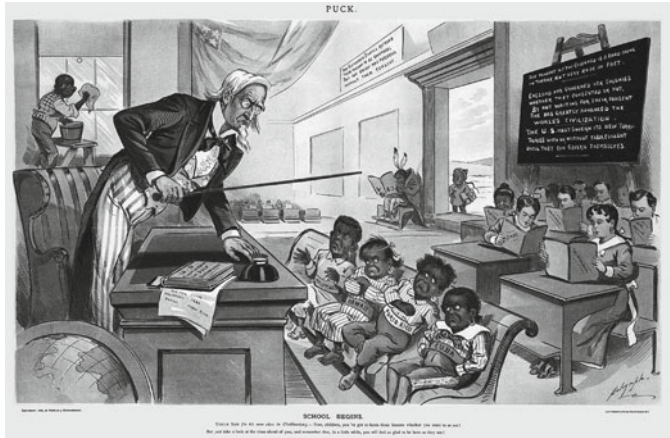
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# Preface

*We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal...*

(Declaration of Independence, 1776)



Q: How do you murder a million people?

A: Convince yourself that they aren't really people.

Democracy is supposed to be a form of government that treats all humans as equals. But does democracy actually do that? When we say all men are created equal, what do we really mean? Do we truly believe that everyone is equal, or do we secretly believe that a select group of Real Men are superior to all Others? From the outset, US democracy has given lip service to the former, but has unabashedly practiced the latter. How can a democracy confer first



class citizenship on a privileged few while withholding Constitutionally guaranteed rights from the majority of Others?

The trick lies in how one defines the word, men.

It's not surprising that the notion of racial superiority emerged in the 19th century, after European nations had established colonies in much of the world and sought a theoretical justification of their dominion over others. (Wade, 2014, p. 18)

In the 21st century, we assume that the phrase, "...all men are created equal," is just a rustic way of saying everyone is equal. But that isn't true. Back in the day, "all men" referred a very thin slice of humanity. Instead of promoting equality, the 18th-century definition of men established a pernicious environment of white supremacy for the US's founding patriarchs. To begin with, men meant men. America's founding patriarchs treated women like pieces of property that they were entitled to transfer at a whim from fathers to husbands. It would take 150 years of ferocious political struggle for women to claim their due as full-fledged US citizens. In the early days of US democracy, "all men" were members of an exclusive club.

Another way of limiting access to democracy was to define men as light-skinned descendants of Europeans. Democracy in the United States has always been a bastion of white supremacy. Where people of color are mentioned in the US Constitution they are singled out for disdain. Native American savages and African slaves did not qualify as Real Men and, therefore, did not merit the privileges of US citizenship. The residue of this abhorrent prejudice has persisted into the 21st century. Take, for example, the "birther controversy" (Corsi, 2011).

Birthers insist that they are not racists; however, their inability to perceive Barack Obama as the legitimate occupant of the White House stems from the longstanding racist tradition that Others have no right to claim privileges that are reserved for Real Men. So, as the white supremacist logic goes, if Barack Obama is a person of color, he can't be a Real Man. Further, if Barack Obama is not a Real Man, then regardless of what his birth documents might say, he cannot legitimately serve as the US President. Even though President Obama has taken the unprecedented step of putting his birth documents on public display, many birthers still refuse to acknowledge the legitimacy of Barack Obama's presidency. In the US, white supremacists might tolerate black guys who clean toilets, but they refuse to accept a black man as their leader.

Unabashedly exclusionary democracy has a long history in the US. In 1857 the state of Oregon went so far as to ban people of color from residing in its territory:

No free negro, or mulatto, not residing in this State at the time of the adoption of this Constitution, shall come, reside, or be within this State, or hold any real estate, or make any contracts, or maintain any suit therein; and the Legislative Assembly shall provide by penal laws, for the removal, by public officers, of all such negroes, and mulattoes, and for their effectual exclusion from the State, and for the punishment of persons who shall bring them into the state, or employ, or harbor them. (Novak, 2015)

It took until 2002 for Oregonians to remove the despicable racism from their state Constitution (Moreland, 2013), yet even at that late date a staggering 29% of Oregonians voted to retain Oregon's white supremacist ban on people of color.

It hardly needs to be stated, but America's white supremacism has routinely made life a living hell for members of any ethnic group that deviates from the Real Man archetype: white, masculine, aggressive, stoic, prosperous, English-speaking, educated, heterosexual, Protestant, and so on. It takes little more than a glance at the US's historical immigration policies to confirm that, from its inception, the US has aggressively pursued a white supremacist agenda. Just one year after the US Constitution came into effect, the US adopted the Naturalization Act of 1790, which specified that only "free whites" could aspire to US citizenship:

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America, in Congress assembled, That any Alien *being a free white person*, who shall have resided within the limits and under the jurisdiction of the United States for the term of two years, may be admitted to become a citizen. (LeMay and Barkan, 1999, p. 11, emphasis added)

So, right from the outset, a nation that proclaimed itself as a democracy disqualified its native inhabitants from enjoying rights of citizenship in their own territorial homeland. This Machiavellian legal maneuver empowered "the world's greatest democracy" to commit continent-wide genocide and property theft without technically violating any of its own laws. Democracy was for Real Men. Then as now, *dispossession* is nine-tenths of the law.

Many subsequent immigration policies have been explicitly designed to obstruct access to US citizenship for people of color (Fitzgerald and

Cook-Martin, 2014), while simultaneously advancing the preposterous myth that light-skinned Europeans were the US's true natives (Montserrat, 2007, p. 155).

The American Colonization Society (Kanstroom, 2007) was a 19th-century initiative that advanced the cause of white nativism by encouraging African Americans to, à la Mitt Romney, self deport. Far from operating on the fringes of the US's political establishment, the American Colonization Society boasted some of the 19th century's most influential luminaries, including Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, James Monroe, John Marshall, Andrew Jackson, Daniel Webster, Henry Clay, Francis Scott Key and, believe it nor not, Abraham Lincoln.

Should anyone doubt that Abraham Lincoln would stoop to anything as indecorous as membership in the American Colonization Society; here's a quote from the Great Emancipator speaking to a "negro delegation" in which he sounds more like a KKK spokesman than a beacon of 19th-century ethnic enlightenment:

You and we are different races. We have between us a broader difference than exists between almost any other two races. Whether it is right or wrong I need not discuss, but this physical difference is a great disadvantage to us both, as I think your race suffer very greatly, many of them by living among us, while ours suffer from your presence. In a word we suffer on each side. If this is admitted, it affords a reason at least why we should be separated. (Gates, Jr., 2015)

Of course, American-style racism has never been limited to white hatred of African Americans. Almost uniformly, white nativists have treated Native Americans and Hispanics, the vast majority of whom have ancestral roots that long predate Columbus, as unwelcome aliens in their own homeland. Also, in spite of earning the backhanded compliment of "model minority," Asians have faced unremitting hostility from the US's pervasive climate of white supremacy. The Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 and WWII internment of Japanese Americans provide only two examples of the appalling injustices that Asians have experienced as unwelcome Others in a white supremacist society.<sup>1</sup>

In America's early days, white supremacists were at liberty to dispose of sub-human Others in any way they saw fit. Enslaving, torturing and murdering Others did not qualify as crimes because democracy promoted the rights of Real Men, not sub-human Others. Instead of being a crime, Real Men treated exterminating Others as a virtue—like

killing rats, mice and other vermin. Democracy heaped privilege on White Men and inflicted horror upon Others.

Racism can be understood as a form of sadistic self-deception that equips the powerful with a convenient justification to terrorize the powerless. Racial dominance hierarchies are usually predicated on two scientifically invalid assumptions:

- 1 The members of different racial groups are biologically distinct.
- 2 Deviation from dominant racial norms (i.e. whiteness), no matter how trivial, implies inferiority.

We will demonstrate that, persistent as they may be, both of the above assumptions are false. Though science has resoundingly debunked each of the above assumptions, many people still cling to the unscientific myths that perpetuate racism. Why?

In this discussion, we will demonstrate that it takes little more than a suggestion from respected authorities to relegate enormous numbers of people into the category of “despised Others.” Even Americans who take special pride in their individuality have repeatedly demonstrated an alarming capacity to submit mindlessly to the voice of authority. If an authority figure asserts that right-minded citizens should treat the members of an ethnic group as despised Others—take, for example, the US’s condemnations of Native Americans and wartime internment of Japanese Americans—right-minded citizens will often march in lock-step with the voice of authority. Racism is, therefore, a consequence of constructing false, but authoritative beliefs that Others, who, according to a popular political philosophy are all created equal, are nonetheless biologically inferior. That is what makes racism an exercise in sadistic self-deception: Real Men treat Others, who are demonstrably equal in all important respects, as reprehensible sub-humans:

Galton tried to prove a couple of things. First, that the notion of “race” is real, and second, that there is such a thing as racial differences. Or, more precisely, that there is a hierarchy among “races”. Residents of ancient Greece had, Galton claimed, a higher intellectual standard than “Anglo-Saxons”. This reprehensible way of evaluating individuals and groups of individuals was not limited to intellectual abilities via IQ tests, but also included inter alia character, personality, gregariousness, longevity, craving for drink and gambling, and proclivity to pauperism and crimes of violence. (Sussman, 2014, p. 50)

Once Real Men establish self-serving beliefs that dehumanize Others, such as by impeding access to full-fledged democratic citizenship, Real

Men often succumb to their own racialized delusions and cultivate a sense of sadistic revulsion for Others. The sad case of Ota Benga (Newkirk, 2015), an African man whom the Brooklyn Zoo put on display in its primate house on September 9, 1906, provides a shining example of the type of dehumanization to which people of color are routinely subjected in the US. Also, as Philip Zimbardo (2007) discovered in his infamous prison experiment, even simulated dominance hierarchies can inspire frightful forms of sadism between the powerful and those they perceive as inferiors. Power corrupts.

In the eyes of Real Men, Others are not merely different, they are nauseatingly inferior. Even worse, Others pose a threat of polluting Real Men with their abominable inferiority (Phillip, 2015). If one operates on the false assumption that Others are sub-human, then, somewhat counter-intuitively, the more similar that Others appear, the more loathsome they become to Real Men, "...just because they breathe we hate the filthy bums" (Brummel, 1998). On many occasions, Real Men have resorted to horrific violence in order to purge the corrupting influences of Others from the social spaces and opportunities that Real Men covet. Perhaps the most grandiose illustration of such turpitude-in-action was the US's systematic extermination of Native Americans under the banner of Manifest Destiny.

Hypocritical exercises in racialized double-think—Others may be created equal, but we all know (*wink, wink*) that they are revoltingly inferior—make it possible for Real Men to abuse Others without the inconvenience of being charged with crimes. Take, for example, the endless parade of white police officers who have murdered people of color and who have subsequently been absolved of all wrongdoing (Carrié, 2015). Because their appearance "deviates" from the white supremacist ideal, racists often treat people of color as incorrigible criminals for no greater crime than being themselves. People of color are vastly overrepresented in the US's criminal justice system (Alexander, 2013) because, simply by appearing in public, people of color commit a grave offense against white racist sensibilities (Griffin, 1961). Having unwisely invoked the ire of white racists, people of color, regardless of how scrupulously law-abiding they may be, are much more likely to attract unwarranted suspicion for criminal misdeeds. For example, in 1999, four New York police officers annihilated Amadou Diallo in a hail of 41 bullets for the capital crime of being black in public (Roy, 2009). All four officers were subsequently exonerated of all wrongdoing. In this case, as in countless others, white

racists have enjoyed unqualified vindication for ridding the streets of undesirable menaces to white hegemony.

Some might object to the idea that racial differentiation boils down to little more than a sadistic celebration of white supremacy. However, most of the worst crimes in history have been committed by white guys who are in a frenzy to purloin Others' valuables. Examples include European colonialism, the genocidal consequences of the Terra Nullius designation in Australia (Lindqvist, 2007) and the barbarity that precipitated from the Three-Fifths Compromise in the US (Hattery, and Smith 2008):

Representatives and direct Taxes shall be apportioned among the several States which may be included within this Union, according to their respective Numbers, which shall be determined by adding to the whole Number of free Persons, including those bound to Service for a Term of Years, and *excluding Indians not taxed, three fifths of all other Persons.* (Article 1, Section 2, Paragraph 3 of the United States Constitution, emphasis added)

History often treats the Three-Fifths Compromise as an inspired feat of political wizardry. Against long odds, the Three-Fifths Compromise enabled America's founding fathers to forge a lasting union out of a disordered collectivity of self-interested states. In a more objective light, by justifying slavery for millions of Africans, while also paving the way for continent-wide extermination of "Indians not taxed," the Three-Fifths Compromise transformed an otherwise democratic political constitution into an unrepentant declaration of white supremacy:

Democracy + 3/5 Compromise = White Supremacy

The words and meanings that we build into our legal foundations have undeniable consequences. With a simple turn of phrase we can either privilege or decimate entire peoples. By officially fractionating the value of Africans and designating Indians as political non-entities, the US Constitution declared unconditional war against people of color. Via a protracted campaign of genocidal butchery white supremacists ultimately secured uncontested possession of the lower 48 states. It is going to take a lot of effort to remove such an enormous legacy of white supremacist abuse. To be fair, the US has taken a few steps to correct historical injustices, but there is much more to accomplish. As long as the US Constitution contains language that explicitly celebrates skin pigment racism, white supremacy and the horrific violence that it instigates will continue to thrive in the United States.

Why should this matter to citizens of the 21st century? Here's a quote from the outspoken musician, Ted Nugent, after a Native American-owned casino canceled one of his performances:

I take it as a badge of honor that such unclean *vermin* are upset by me and my positive energy . . . By all indicators, *I don't think they actually qualify as people*, but there has always been a lunatic fringe of hateful, rotten, dishonest people that hate happy, successful people. (ICTMN Staff, 2014, emphasis added)

Nugent uttered the quote on July 24, 2014, but the white supremacist sentiments that he articulates come straight out of the Indian Wars. Old prejudices die hard. If you think that, thanks to Barack Obama's post-millennial presidency the US has become a post-racial society (Byrd and Hughey, 2015), you need to think again.

Debate continues to rage about the veracity of human races. More than a few concur with Ted Nugent's conviction that humanity is bifurcated into hierarchical sub-groups: Real Men vs. Vermin. History has demonstrated that, whenever people have concocted ranking systems for human sub-groups, the outcome has produced augmented privilege for Real Men and disaster for Others. So long as The Few can gain at the expense of The Many race will remain a sadistic means to an unpleasant end.

In this book, we will argue that all humans are biologically equal. Not identical, but equal. The racial sub-groups that humans have invented are not based on real biological distinctions; they are social constructions that are woven out of malice, calculated self-deception and archaic superstition. Europeans concocted the modern notion of race in the same climate of superstition that gave rise to belief in witches, werewolves and vampires. The periodic outbursts of hysteria that have promulgated mass witch hunts are very similar to the irrational hatreds that fuel racism and genocide.

Though racism may seem endemic to human society, we will argue that racism is as curable as the sporadic insanity that incites witch hunts: humans construct the convenient lies that inflame racist antipathies and humans can also discredit those lies. When people permit authoritative lies to cloud their thinking they are capable of hideous injustices. During WWII, the majority of Germans succumbed to Hitler's anti-Jew hysteria. Before they returned to their senses, the obsessively law-abiding Germans had murdered six million people. Racist myths can transform angels into demons. Fortunately, the mania that inspires witch hunts is a curable form of temporary insanity. So is racism (Goldhagen, 1996):

White Supremacy - 3/5 Compromise = Democracy

The key to curing racism is to destroy the anti-democratic lies that distinguish Real Men from Others. When nations declare war, they enact policies that officially reclassify their enemies as sub-human Others. Othering enemies creates a climate in which morally upstanding people will, at the urging of respected authorities, unabashedly commit atrocities against enemy-Others, such as bombing cities full of civilians into oblivion. So long as the officially sanctioned wartime delirium remains in place, otherwise fair-minded people—who have guzzled the Kool-Aid that their calculating leaders have concocted—will think nothing of murdering Others. Bizarrely, conscientious objectors who refuse to be duped by convenient wartime reclassifications of enemy-Others are often reviled as gutless criminals (Ellsworth-Jones, 2007).

When wars end, nations declare peace and officially rescind the policies that conveniently Othered their wartime enemies. After D-Day heroes murdered Germans. After VE Day only murderers murdered Germans. This is but one example of the kind of remediable delirium that underlies racism. Nations construct racism by officially Othering the sub-groups that they wish to terrorize, and nations also have the power to destroy racism by officially ceasing hostilities against enemy-Others.

In the US, the Three-Fifths Compromise officially Othered people of color and institutionalized a hateful environment of white supremacy. Even though Abe Lincoln may have emancipated America's slaves in 1863, Lincoln was anything but an enlightened thinker when it came to ethnic justice:

I will say then that I am not, nor ever have been in favor of bringing about in any way the social and political equality of the white and black races [applause]—that I am not nor ever have been in favor of making voters or jurors of Negroes, nor of qualifying them to hold office, nor to intermarry with white people, and I will say in addition to this that there is physical difference between the white and black races which I believe will for ever forbid the two races living together on terms of social and political equality. (Digital History, 2014)

Nor was The Great Emancipator above making disgraceful racist jokes if doing so tickled the funny bones of his racist supporters:

I do not understand that because I do not want a Negro woman for a slave, I must necessarily want her for a wife. [Cheers and laughter] ... I have never had the least apprehension that I or my friends would marry Negroes if there was no law to keep them from it, (laughter) but as Judge Douglas and his



friends seem to be in apprehension that they might, if there were no law to keep them from it, (roars of laughter) I give him the most solemn pledge that I will, to the very last, stand by the law of this state, which forbids the marrying of white people with Negroes. (Continued laughter and applause) (Digital History, 2014)

Lincoln's admirers will no doubt protest that it is unfair to judge Lincoln's 19th-century racism in the light of 21st-century ethical standards. Perhaps so, but it is difficult to view the sentiments above as the convictions of a crusader for ethnic justice.

For Lincoln, emancipation was a ploy to bedevil southern rebels. If freeing the slaves hurt the Confederacy, then Lincoln was only too happy to poke his southern enemies in the eye. However, when it came to issues of Real Men versus Others, Lincoln embraced the founding patriarchs' white supremacism. It is hardly surprising that a century of Jim Crow (Woodward, 1974) ensued after the Emancipation Proclamation became law. With friends like Abe Lincoln, people of color did not need enemies.

The 13th Amendment may have abolished slavery more than 150 years ago, but the Three-Fifths Compromise remains an integral component of the US Constitution. Those words continue to wield an unpleasant power over the American psyche, and not only among racists like Ted Nugent. Why else would lawmakers refuse to recite Article 1, Section 2, Clause 3 when they read the entire text of the Constitution from the House floor in 2011 (Fahrenthold, 2011)? The white supremacist thinking that inspired the Three-Fifths Compromise will continue to undermine life and liberty for despised Others as long as the Three-Fifths Compromise remains an integral part of the US Constitution. If we want to end racism in the United States, then the US will have to officially cease hostilities against people of color just as it officially ceased hostilities against the Germans and Japanese at the conclusion of WWII.

Impossible as it may seem, when sufficient public pressure is brought to bear even the most racist regimes can destroy the convenient lies that Real Men use to terrorize Others. For example, when the world called Germans to account for the Holocaust, German anti-Semitism dramatically changed (Schroeder, 2013). Similarly, a global tsunami of outrage helped bring about the end of apartheid in South Africa (Waldmeir, 1997). By contrast, racism thrives in the US because the white supremacy inspired by the Three-Fifths Compromise still holds sway over the hearts and minds of Americans. The US still treats people of color as enemy-Others because that's what the US Constitution says they are.

The way to cure racism—and this is true not only in the US, but everywhere in the world—is to formally terminate hostilities against despised enemy-Others. Formally rescinding hostilities involves publicly countermanding every policy, statement, hint or intimation that people who have been classified as enemy-Others are anything but 100% bona fide Real Men.

It is our contention that many of the sadistic pathologies that are associated with racism emanate from suggestion-induced status inequities that Real Men implement to exploit Others. We will cite classic studies, including John H. Griffin's *Black Like Me* (1961) experiences, Stanley Milgram's (2004) obedience experiment, Jane Elliot's "blue eye—brown eye" classroom exercise (Peters, 1987), and Philip Zimbardo's prison experiment (Zimbardo, 2007) to illustrate that racist antipathies are an emergent property of suggestion-induced inequalities. Because we tell ourselves that Real Men are better than Others we perpetuate environments in which we idolize Real Men and vilify Others.

Racism incubates in any context wherein the more powerful members of a society assert that Real Men are innately superior to Others (Richwine, 2009). As Milgram, Griffin, Elliot and Zimbardo each separately discovered, even in simulated environments suggestion-induced inequities tend to inspire alarming expressions of sadism; the powerful revel in their ability to treat perceived inferiors like garbage. Not only are such tendencies anathema to democracy, wherein all men are presumably created equal, but they are also highly unscientific. Modern science supports the contention that all humans are created equal: humans are all conceived via the union of sperm and eggs and are all composed of the same biological stuff. The argument that Others are inferior to Real Men is a tenacious vestige of pre-scientific superstition. Just as scientists have an obligation to debunk groundless beliefs in witches, warlocks and goblins, scientists have a similar obligation to debunk racist hate-mongering.

Twenty-first century scientists would not stand idly by if the residents of Salem, Massachusetts announced plans to persecute witches. Modern science has laid such medieval absurdity to rest. We now realize that "the problem" is not the people who stand accused of being semi-human monsters. Rather, "the problem" is the delusional people who want to punish Others for imagined offenses. A society that fails to protect those falsely accused of groundless wrongdoing cannot call itself a democracy (See Smith and Hattery on wrongful convictions, 2010a).

Though the modern concept of race was born in the same intellectual cesspool as superstitious beliefs in witches, werewolves and vampires, science has not been as proactive in vanquishing race-inspired irrationality. In part, this is because, in both the past and present, charlatans have appropriated the trappings of science to create a smokescreen for eugenics. The American Sociological Association has acknowledged the irretrievably destructive effects of racial classifications. But because people have become habituated to racist ignorance the ASA has concluded that it too should honor that reprehensible habituation:

The question of whether to collect statistics that allow the comparison of differences among racial and ethnic groups in the census, public surveys, and administrative databases is not an abstract one.

“Race” shapes the way that some people relate to each other, based on their belief that it reflects physical, intellectual, moral, or spiritual superiority or inferiority. *However, biological research now suggests that the substantial overlap among any and all biological categories of race undermines the utility of the concept for scientific work in this field.*

How, then, can it be the subject of valid scientific investigation at the social level? The answer is that social and economic life is organized, in part, around race as a social construct. When a concept is central to societal organization, examining how, when, and why people in that society use the concept is vital to understanding the organization and consequences of social relationships. (American Sociological Association, 2003, emphasis added)

If biologists have concluded that race is a scientifically invalid concept, doesn't it follow that further use of the concept would be patently unscientific? As the above quote reveals, the ASA commits the same crucial error as their colleagues at the US Census: they argue that the only way to study *race and ethnicity* is to continue studying race. But that is false. The ASA does not seem to appreciate the all-important differences between race and ethnicity.

Also, the ASA freely admits that race is a scientifically invalid concept because it purports to correspond with non-existent biological facts. Even if the ASA is untroubled by the endless atrocities that have been carried out in the name of race, the ASA should repudiate the concept of race simply because it is scientifically misleading. Truth-seekers should not advocate thinking that obfuscates rather than clarifies the truth.

Ethnicity, on the other hand, is an eminently scientific concept. Ethnicity differs from race in that it refers to real, socially significant phenomena—such as cuisine, clothing, culture, technology, norms,

values, beliefs, religion, language, and so on—that scientists can employ to study real empirical distinctions between clearly definable groups. Scientists could easily rectify many grievous errors in theory and method by terminating their habitual misuse of race and replacing that execrable concept with ethnicity.

The ASA claims that it wishes to alter the status quo by perpetuating its misuse of race. But that's like curing smallpox by supplying Native Americans with smallpox-ridden blankets: it is a solution that encourages a known pathogen to do its worst. We believe there are other, better solutions.

In the pages that follow, we will propose a new “agentic” means of evaluating human merit. We will argue that the long history of correlating human merit with biological traits has never produced much besides pseudo-scientific rationales for racism and genocide. Our agentic definition of human merit is based upon the truism that all humans are biologically equal. Not identical, but equal. We acknowledge that biology is important, but, because humans are agents, biology is not deterministic. For humans, biology is just a starting point. It is what agents choose to do with the biological cards that they have been dealt, whether advantageous or disadvantageous, that is the truest measure of human merit.

Finally, it is our hope that the enlightened peoples of the world will treat this discussion as a departure point. Race is an ill-conceived concept that does little more than perpetuate ignorance and injury. We would all be well advised to treat race as the intellectual garbage that it is and dispose of it once and for all.

The following is a list of three steps that, starting now, everyone can and should employ to eradicate the myth of race:

- 1 *Quit Shilly-Shallying*: Beginning now, responsible people should follow the American Anthropological Association's example and repudiate the concept of race. (Refer to Appendix 2 for the complete text of the AAA's Statement on Race.)
- 2 Replace race with ethnicity. Too many people use the terms race and ethnicity interchangeably. They are not interchangeable concepts:
  - i. Ethnicity is a scientifically valid empirical phenomenon.
  - ii. Race is a destructive myth.
- 3 The US must delete the Three-Fifths Compromise from its Constitution and officially terminate all remaining white supremacist hostilities against people of color.

We will provide additional background on these calls to action in the pages that follow.

Scientists can and should take the lead in eradicating the anti-democratic myths that have nurtured white supremacy, but everyone is welcome to join this worthwhile cause. If we want to live in a world where the phrase, “all men are created equal,” is more than a disingenuous platitude, then we need to annihilate racism the same way that we have terminated every other ignorance-engendering superstition.

The bogeyman is dead. Long live science, truth and democracy.

## Note

- 1 Sadly, white supremacy in America has inflicted far too many injustices on far too many Others to make a full accounting of such outrages possible in this book. In the current discussion, the authors will attempt to specify the source of uniquely American racism and articulate a solution to that most undemocratic of villainies. In future, it is our sincere hope that we and others will be able to employ the formula that we develop in this book to eradicate every form of racism in the US and, for that matter, all over the world.

# Acknowledgments

## Timothy McGettigan

While the authors have chosen to place particular emphasis on the practical challenges of eradicating racism in *A Formula for Eradicating Racism*, the authors would like to articulate special appreciation for the pathbreaking theoretical work of Duke sociologist Eduardo Bonilla-Silva in his *Racism without Racists: Color-Blind Racism and the Persistence of Racial Inequality in America* (2014). Eduardo Bonilla-Silva's theoretical insights are invaluable to any effort to understand 21st-century racism. Instead of diminishing, racism in the US has taken on new and alarming dimensions since Barack Obama's ascendancy to the White House. In a nation where we openly debate whether black lives matter, unrest over outrageous acts of racial injustice continue to boil over in communities all across the US.

Hempstead. Ferguson. Baltimore. North Charleston. New York. Los Angeles...

The unrest will continue until the problem is solved. The authors would like to thank Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, Emile Durkheim and W. I. Thomas for providing invaluable conceptual tools for the solution to American-style racism that we detail in this book.

This book is the product of a lengthy dialogue. In 1990, I (TM) first encountered the core issues that comprise this book as a student in one of Professor Earl Smith's graduate courses at Washington State University. Until I connected with Professor Smith, graduate school was largely a disappointment. Most of my fellow students seemed more

intrigued by department gossip than pushing intellectual envelopes. That all changed when I met Earl Smith.

Earl Smith is a public intellectual of the first rank. He peers into post-industrialism's deepest mysteries and sheds light where there was naught but darkness. Earl Smith is one of the rare academics who understands the true importance of transformative ideas. The United States did not become a global leader of the information society by devaluing education or disparaging its brightest minds. In spite of the incalculable debt that America owes to its rich intellectual heritage, the tenor of public debate in the US has grown increasingly hostile to hard-earned wisdom. The most profligate celebrations of ignorance usually involve politicians who are vying for ownership of the pointiest dunce cap. *Mexicans are rapists...*<sup>1</sup>

There was a time when the US was proud of its brightest minds. Lincoln and Douglas used to debate for hours and the throngs they attracted hung on their every word. Democracy thrives on intelligence. Ignorance is its undoing.

This book is a product of a committed dialogue that Earl Smith and I have sustained for more than a quarter of a century. Anyone who says that the best kind of thinking is rapid or short-term thinking has never thought long and hard about really difficult problems.

The world is full of problems. At least to the present, humans have enjoyed unprecedented evolutionary success by finding clever ways to solve our most urgent problems. If one considers the sheer number of people involved and the extremity of the injuries that they have suffered, it is not unfair to blame racism for the worst crimes in human history. Under what other circumstances—apart from a demented fog of racism—would people casually plot to annihilate the residents of entire continents? How does one even begin to calculate the enormity of the atrocities committed under the banner of Manifest Destiny?

Racism is the world's biggest and ugliest problem. It's also one of the most difficult problems that humans have ever confronted. Earl Smith and I believe that the more dangerous and difficult the problem, the more urgently it needs to be solved. Time and again, humans have demonstrated the incalculable benefits of solving major problems. Is there any way to put a dollar figure on the benefits of solving medical problems like tuberculosis or polio? By contrast, the dangers of leaving critical problems unsolved is catastrophic. How much human potential has been decimated by racist violence?

Solving the intractable problem of racism is, in more than one sense, an act of self-preservation. Humans have not ascended to tenuous dominance of the earth's biosphere by getting dumber each step of the way. For all of its imperfections, it is intelligence that sets humans apart. Dopey politicians who pander to the lowest common denominator may not agree, but ignorance has never been the key to enduring success. If humans want to stick around for a while, then we'll have to take advantage of every opportunity to get smarter and do better.

Racism is a social disease that thrives on willful ignorance. The ignorant sods who foment racism are not heroes. They are villains. In countless circumstances, racists have slaughtered innumerable innocents who have committed no greater crime than being themselves. That has to stop. We can make it stop, but to do so we'll have to put on our thinking caps *and take pride in doing so*. Being smarter than ignorant racists is not something to be ashamed of. Life is full of crossroads and fateful decisions. Here's a word to the wise: If you don't want to be led off a cliff, then choose your leaders with care. Our advice is simple. In all matters concerning humanity's health and well-being, it's better to follow a sage than a stooge.

TM would also like to thank Susan, Claire and Ruby for being the best friends an absent-minded professor could ever hope for.

## Earl Smith

I am grateful for the friendship, collegiality and co-authorship of my good longtime friend Professor Timothy McGettigan. Many years back I encountered a young man eager for learning and eager to understand this complex world.

Across these many years I have grown to know Tim as a great scholar, thinker, husband and father. And while our journey has taken us from Pullman, Washington in the Pacific Northwest to Winston-Salem in the south and then out to Pueblo, Colorado in the west. We stood tall in all these places pursuing both our dreams of accessing the truth as it pertains to the human condition and sharing this learning with not only each other but also with our students and via publication with our colleagues.

This book *A Formula for Eradicating Racism: Debunking White Supremacy* is a kind of culmination of all our efforts and we are happy to see this finished product.



I (ES) carefully and kindly dedicate my contributions to Tim, Angela and to all the citizens who are fighting for racial justice in this supposed “post-racial” America.

The authors would like to thank the US Census Bureau for its permission to reprint Question 6 from the 2010 US Census [http://2010.census.gov/2010census/pdf/2010\\_Questionnaire\\_Info\\_Copy.pdf](http://2010.census.gov/2010census/pdf/2010_Questionnaire_Info_Copy.pdf), in this book. See Figure 1.

The authors would also like to thank the American Anthropological Association for its permission to include the complete text of the AAA’s Statement on Race, <http://www.aaanet.org/stmts/racepp.htm>, in this book. See Appendix 2.

Last, but not least, the authors would also like to thank the United Nations for its permission to reprint The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, by the UN General Assembly © (1948) United Nations. Reprinted with the permission of the United Nations.

## Note

- 1 Donald Trump uttered this infamous denunciation during his 2015 run for US President (Ye Hee Lee, 2015). Tellingly, Trump’s polling numbers spiked upward as a consequence. Clearly, the US has not yet become a colorblind Promised Land. Ye Hee Lee, Michelle, 2015. “Donald Trump’s False Comments Connecting Mexican Immigrants and Crime.” *Washington Post*, 08 July 2015, Washington, DC.

# Introduction

**Abstract:** *In the Introduction, the authors explain the research question (“What is excellence?”) that motivated them to compose *A Formula for Eradicating Racism*. Throughout history, racism has been based on two false assumptions:*

1. *There are stark biological boundaries between races.*
2. *The relative merits of different races are hierarchical: Real Men are better than Others.*

▶ *Arguably, the worst crimes in human history have been perpetrated as a result of ranking social groups into arbitrary hierarchies: Real Men vs. Others. The authors put forward a new definition of “excellence” that is based on human agency rather than biology. Doing so enables the authors to define exceptional human achievement in sociological terms without creating a set of arbitrary criteria for race hatred.*

McGettigan, Timothy, and Earl Smith. *A Formula for Eradicating Racism: Debunking White Supremacy*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016.

DOI: 10.1057/9781137599759.0004.

We are the Ku Klux Klan. We hate niggers, we hate Jews, we hate faggots, and we hate spics. We don't have to have reason to hate them, just because they breathe we hate the filthy bums.

(Brummel, 1998)

In this book we will argue that racism is a social-psychological disorder with an extremely high mortality rate. Pathological as it may be, we will also argue that racism is curable. Curing racism depends on achieving two interdependent objectives: terminating the policies that dehumanize and advocate hostility against despised sub-groups, and banishing white supremacy to the dustbin of history. When we eliminate the anti-democratic myths which assert that Real Men are superior to Others, we will also eliminate the convenient self-delusions that motivate racist misanthropy.

Racism is a social-psychological malady that incubates in a specific form of ignorance: the erroneous belief that arbitrarily delineated groups, or races, are biologically distinct and hierarchical. Contrary to the irrational assumptions on which racism is based, science has demonstrated that all humans are biologically equal. To emphasize: there are no objective biological criteria which demonstrate the innate superiority or inferiority of any particular group of humans. Evolution does not create better or worse life forms, only well- or ill-fitted. The sole criteria for biological success is survival. If you are alive, then, regardless of what hate-addled racists may say, you've got the right stuff.

Biologically speaking, all humans are created equal. Not identical, but equal. Value judgments concerning the genetic merits of one human group and the demerits of others are purely a product of irrational prejudice. We will demonstrate that the presumptive biological justifications for racist antipathies are naught but remediable misanthropic delusions.

## A very intriguing question

In an email exchange that he initiated on May 29, 2012, Prof. Earl Smith posed a deceptively simple question: What is excellence?<sup>1</sup> At issue was whether or not there was a scientific means to distinguish between outstanding vs. legendary athletes. Legendary athletes are those whose talents seem to soar a cut above mere mortals, such as Jim Thorpe, Pele,

Wayne Gretzky, Michael Jordan, Venus and Serena Williams, Tiger Woods, and so on. In other words, Prof. Smith wondered if excellence was a definable human property, and, if so, what specific characteristics distinguished good from great athletes. This monograph represents our attempt to answer Prof. Smith's very intriguing question: What is excellence?

It is not possible to analyze the good without giving some thought to the bad. Perceptions are highly subjective and socio-cultural biases cannot help but intrude upon assessments of human merit. Too often, humans esteem those who personify their favorite flavor of ethnocentrism and execrate those that differ. Eugenicists of the 19th and 20th centuries sought rational justifications for irrational hatreds. Whenever racists have sold others on their criteria to rank human merit, they have often employed those criteria to inflict atrocious violence. Hitler provides but one example of this brand of genocidal mania. Most modern democracies are founded upon atrocities of equal or greater magnitude (Moses, 2005; Goldhagen, 1996).

So, there is a danger in specifying the parameters of excellence. We do not want to supply the next in a long tradition of hate-based justifications for genocide. The logical errors that racists usually make are to assert that (1) real biological differences exist between distinguishable human groups, and (2) those differences are hierarchical. Worse, racists often insist that they must purge humanity of genetic inferiors in order to enhance the purity of the human race (Rattansi, 2007). Balderdash!

Our analysis takes a fundamentally different approach. Whereas racists look upon human diversity and see naught but repugnant difference, we embrace the biological reality that all humans are genetically equal (Shipman, 1994). Not identical, but equal. That is what it means to be members of a species. There is one human genome and all humans share it (Ridley, 2010a). Racists may find this difficult to stomach, but that is the bedrock biological reality from which this discussion will proceed.

Because humans are all genetically equal it would be nonsensical to argue that excellence derives from genetic differences between people. We will argue that every human on the planet has the *potential* to achieve some form of excellence. What distinguishes the greatest achievers from their competitors is the extent to which individuals cultivate their agency. We define agency as the capacity to creatively transcend the status quo. Those who perform the greatest feats of excellence are those who activate their agency to the fullest.

The degree to which history is kinder to one agent than another is also influenced by six “sociological success factors.” We will leave it to others to debate whether or not history has been sufficiently charitable to their heroes. Our point is that humans are vastly more united in commonality than they are distinguished by difference. The most important differences between people boil down to ingenuity, attitude, effort, the vicissitudes of history, and dumb luck.

The final point that we wish to reiterate is that racism is a social-psychological disorder with an appalling mortality rate (Berg and Wendt, 2011). The good news is that racism is a curable malady and we hope that the following discussion will help remedy this dreadful social disease before it destroys too many more innocent lives.

## Note

- 1 See Appendix 1 for the email exchange that instigated this project.

# 1

## Aesthete Apes

*Abstract: The authors argue that what sets humans apart from other life forms is aesthetic discontent. Other species are determined by their biology and environmental constraints. Aesthetic discontent has motivated Homo sapiens to perpetually endeavor to improve upon the human condition. Varying levels of achievement among humans are not determined by biology, but by “agentic” motivation.*

McGettigan, Timothy, and Earl Smith. *A Formula for Eradicating Racism: Debunking White Supremacy*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016.

DOI: 10.1057/9781137599759.0005.

What is excellence? For reasons that scientists do not yet fully understand *Homo sapiens* evolved a pronounced aesthetic sensibility (Schellekens and Goldie, 2011). Not only has *Homo sapiens* developed more sophisticated technologies than any other species, but *Homo sapiens* has also cultivated the most elaborate artistic tastes (Diamond, 1992, 2012). Mere survival has never been enough for *Homo sapiens*. Humans have also hungered for aesthetic satisfaction: beauty, poetry, art, love, invention, progress, and so on. Other species are content with the mundane and mediocre. Cows do not complain about eating grass, nor do they dress their salads to be as pleasing to the eye as they are to the palate.

Discontent with the status quo is a uniquely human phenomenon. Among all living species chimpanzees share the highest percentage of genes with humans (Gibbons, 2012). While chimpanzees exhibit an impressive capacity for tool use (Lonsdorf, et al., 2010), they remain content to manipulate found objects. One of the most important distinctions between chimps and humans is that humans have never been content with anything. *Homo sapiens* has always been intent upon improving everything: cooking tastier food, building more commodious housing, making better fitting clothing, accumulating more and better information, improving means of transportation, seeking a better quality of life, and so on. In sum, *Homo sapiens* is unwilling to accept the world as it is. Humans are imbued with an insatiable passion to change the world for the better.

Aesthetic discontent is the motivation that impels mountaineers to climb previously unconquered peaks because “they are there” (Green, 2005) and it is the sensibility that drives Olympic athletes to excel in sporting competitions where there is little potential for monetary payoff, such as trampolining, competitive walking, archery and synchronized swimming. The pursuit of aesthetic excellence is also what drives scientists to seek maddeningly elusive truths, such as “elegant” physical theories, and it is also what motivates artists to produce masterpieces.

Why are humans plagued with endless aesthetic discontent? Thanks to Darwin (1859) the most straightforward answer to any question concerning life on earth is “evolutionary adaptation.” Humans are discontented aesthetes because, at least so far, it has been evolutionarily advantageous for humans to be agents of change (McGettigan, 2013). Most creatures survive by randomly evolving biological traits that either enhance or compromise their fitness within a given environment; thus, environmental constraints determine the fate of non-agents. Humans, however, have

reversed that relationship by drawing upon a special form of cognitive agility, or what we define as agency, to tweak the environment to accommodate their whims (McGettigan, 2011). For example, instead of being at the mercy of the world's harshest deserts, agents transform those deserts into 24/7 carnivals like Dubai and Las Vegas.

## **The right stuff**

History is a celebration of remarkable human achievements. The vast majority of humans fly beneath the radar of historical record keeping. It is only a rare few who distinguish themselves sufficiently to become more than historical footnotes. So, what is it that separates the few from the many? Is it mere chance, the fickle winds of fate, or are history's outstanding achievers truly special? Do history-makers have more of "the right stuff" than their contemporaries? And, if so, what is the right stuff?

We will argue that, contrary to widespread opinion, humans are all made of the same stuff. From the smallest to the tallest, the strongest to the weakest, and the smartest to the most uncultivated, humans are all, biologically speaking, cookie-cutter copies of each other. Thus, what distinguishes average achievers from legends is not genetics but agentic inspiration (Carli and Eagly, 1999). The most exceptional achievers are those who activate their agency sufficiently to accomplish boundary-breaking feats of innovation.



# 2

## Nature vs. Nurture

**Abstract:** *The authors consider the implications of the longstanding nature vs. nurture debate. Racial intolerance is often predicated on the assumption that racial differences are biological and immutable. The authors challenge those assumptions by arguing that the most important distinctions between people are sociological and are therefore modifiable. Also, historically noteworthy achievements are the result of six sociological success factors (Preparation, Adversity, Innovation, Obstinacy, Serendipity and Notoriety) rather than the innate superiority of one group or another.*

McGettigan, Timothy, and Earl Smith. *A Formula for Eradicating Racism: Debunking White Supremacy*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016.

DOI: 10.1057/9781137599759.0006.

As a species the most extraordinary quality that humans possess is agency. Agency, or free will, can be understood as a form of ingenuity that enables individuals to transcend otherwise deterministic social and environmental constraints (McGettigan, 2011, 2013). Most species are determined by the limitations of their genetics. A creature that happens to be marvelously adapted to a particular aquatic environment runs out of luck when its pond dries up. The same is not true for *Homo sapiens*.

Agency is a special, uniquely human intellectual capability that enables agents to defy the status quo. Because of this agentic intellectual agility humans are not entirely determined by either their biology or their environs. If human aspirations were strictly delimited by biology, then humans would never have walked on the moon (Chaikin, 2009) or, closer to home, Oscar Pistorius (2009), the prosthetically enhanced South African track star, would never have qualified for the Olympics.

As an aside, we acknowledge the horrendous crime (Gottesdiener, 2013) of which Oscar Pistorius has been convicted. Quite apart from Pistorius' criminal misdeeds his feats on the field of athletic competition remain the stuff of legend. When legless humans can literally compete on an equal footing with able-bodied Olympians, then it is evident that biology, in and of itself, does not determine the fate of any particular individual. For people who experience debilitating physical handicaps, such as Oscar Pistorius and, in the realm of science, Stephen Hawking (Ferguson, 2012), human achievement is a combined product of biology and agentic ingenuity.

If humans were truly determined by their biology, then few people would have heard of Oscar Pistorius, or Stephen Hawking, the path-breaking physicist who was silenced decades ago by Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis. However, because both men are agents they have been able to overcome otherwise catastrophic biological limitations and, each in his own field of endeavor, achieve at a higher level than the majority of their able-bodied peers. Franklin Delano Roosevelt provides another example of a physically challenged agent who refused to allow his handicap to limit his political aspirations. Also, Frida Kahlo and Helen Keller had every right to be defined by their severe physiological impairments. However, both women treated their handicaps as motivators to inspire lifelong achievements that put the majority of their able-bodied contemporaries to shame.

Though people have long argued that humans are either a product of nature or nurture (Dowling, 2011), we will argue that the human experience is necessarily a dynamic combination of nature *and* nurture. If anyone is ever going to achieve a sensible resolution to the nature-nurture debate, they will have to acknowledge that each side of the debate describes something essential and non-reducible about high-achieving agents. Unquestionably, humans are biological creatures who are constructed from molecules that obey the laws of physics. However, humans are also much more than that.

Being endowed with advantageous biological characteristics does not guarantee that one will exhibit above-average athletic capabilities. In fact, the reverse can be true. Biologically advantaged people can sometimes exhibit a paucity of athletic skill; greater than average height does not guarantee that one will also be an adept basketball player. Alternately, people with significant physiological disadvantages can sometimes achieve physical and intellectual feats that beggar belief. Again, Pistorius, Hawking, Kahlo, Keller and FDR provide compelling examples.

Biology alone does not determine success or failure for agents. Biology is merely a starting point. It is what agents decide to do with their biological advantages or disadvantages that ultimately distinguish average from extraordinary achievers.

North and South Koreans are probably very similar to one another genetically, yet North Koreans are poor while South Korea has developed a tiger economy that is post-Malthusian, modern and prosperous. The difference, evidently, lies not in the two countries' genes or geography but in the fact that *the same set of social behaviors can support either good or bad institutions.* (Wade, 2014, p. 179, emphasis added)

One could argue that if Napoleon had grown to an average height he might not have cultivated the legendary Napoleon Complex that drove him to build an empire (McLynn, 2002).

## Real genius

For agents, the true measure of excellence is “achievement that intentionally and ingeniously exceeds the records of one’s most accomplished predecessors.” Examples of such accomplishments include, among other things, setting athletic world records, intellectual breakthroughs that generate new scientific truths, and producing revolutionary artistic

masterpieces. The most extraordinary achievers in any field of endeavor are the agents who commit themselves to the mastery of a particular avenue of pursuit—which can include practically any type of activity, including, science, sport, art, politics, technological invention, education, and so on—and, once having equaled the feats of past masters, true geniuses find some way to push the envelope of individual, agentic achievement even further (Merton, 1965).

In contrast with Shenk (2014), we argue that individual agents, not pairs, are the source of real genius. Individuals may derive certain forms of inspiration from working in pairs, but the creative process of redefining reality, or transcending previously established limits of human achievement, is an intimately individual-level intellectual accomplishment (McGettigan, 1999, 2006, 2011, 2013).

Einstein (Isaacson, 2007) is rightfully considered a genius because, upon colliding with the venerable limitations of Newtonian physics, Einstein transcended those time-honored intellectual boundaries by inventing a new physics of relativity. In turn, Bohr, Heisenberg, Feynman, Gell-Mann and others earned their genius badges by transcending the limitations of Einsteinian physics and opening up the wonders of the quantum universe (Kumar, 2009a). The most exceptional agents aren't just smart; they are original thinkers *and doers* who intentionally transcend the established boundaries of human achievement.

Also, the most noteworthy achievers in a particular field of endeavor may not be renowned as “geniuses” per se. Nevertheless, the most successful agents tend to share a similar commitment to transcending previously unassailable thresholds to human achievement, such as running a sub-four minute mile, breaking gender and color barriers in various sports, revealing new scientific truths that inspire paradigm revolutions, climbing previously insurmountable mountains, demanding service at lunch counters even though one has the “wrong” skin color, or being the first member of a politically marginalized minority to ascend to a paramount political office.

## The truth behind the lie

Contrary to the claims of neo-eugenicists—people who assert that humans can be defined and ranked according to various appealing or repugnant biological attributes (Agar, 2005; Kluchin, 2009; Wade,

2014)—we argue that the most significant distinctions among humans are sociological. Inequality is a very real social phenomenon and racial inequality has been employed as a malevolent rationalization to perpetrate many of the worst crimes in history (Kühl, 1994). However, most forms of inequality are products of sociological misperceptions, ignorance and bloody-minded hatred (Hattery and Smith, 2012). A case in point is that most racial distinctions, while widely perceived as being biological in nature, are actually concatenations of ethnic and, thus, sociological differentiation.

To help illustrate the role that agentic innovation plays in cultivating human excellence we will draw upon the example of Serena and Venus Williams, arguably the two most dominating players in the history of women's professional tennis. Like all agentic innovators the Williams sisters *have not* achieved success because of their biological superiority. The Williams sisters have succeeded in dominating women's tennis by pursuing an innovative training regime that has equipped them with a better set of game-day skills than their rivals. Thus, the Williams sisters win because they are more ambitious agents than their opponents (Smith and Hattery, 2013).

## Sociological success factors

Race is only a factor in human achievement insofar as racism creates a pervasive environment of sociological bias for members of privileged vs. despised castes (Hattery, Embrick, and Smith, 2008). For example, being born with richly pigmented skin has never been a key ingredient for success in the world of professional tennis. Quite the reverse. Instead of being determined by skin pigment excellence is primarily a matter of agentic activation—or the extent to which an individual decides to exceed conventional expectations and, thereby, blaze an original path to unprecedented success. Separate from the issue of racism, the amount of success, notoriety and excellence that agents achieve is largely a function of the following six sociological success factors:

- 1 Preparation
- 2 Adversity
- 3 Innovation
- 4 Obstinance
- 5 Serendipity
- 6 Notoriety

## Sociological success factor 1: Preparation

To achieve excellence, agents must cultivate their potential through training. In spite of what neo-eugenicists, such as John Entine (2000) might say, conditioning makes a huge difference when it comes to winning. Those who are better prepared are more likely to achieve much sought-after goals. Whereas Michael Phelps was unbeatable at the 2008 Beijing Olympics (Goldish, 2009), when Phelps trained less intensively for the 2012 London Olympics he was not only beatable, but some of his performances were, by Olympic standards, downright mediocre.

Also, Herrnstein and Murray (1994) argue that the kind of “fast thinking” which is required by IQ tests demonstrates evidence of higher intelligence among whites than blacks. In reality, IQ tests are primarily a measure of acculturation, not intelligence, and genius is more a product of deliberate rather than fast thinking (Gleick, 1992). The most noteworthy geniuses in the history of science (Gribbin, 2002) have demonstrated a marked propensity to cogitate on mind-bending problems for years. Genius is, therefore, not a product of rapid thinking. Just ask any professor who has ever graded last-minute term papers. Genius is a product of slow, meticulous, aesthetically demanding intellectual labor that paves the way to paradigm revolutions.

## Sociological success factor 2: Adversity

Einstein’s famous quote says it all: “Great spirits have always encountered violent opposition from mediocre minds” (Einstein and Calaprice, 2011). As innovative, status-quo challengers, agents often encounter fierce opposition in pursuit of their goals. The relative excellence of an agent’s achievements often stands in stark contrast to the amount of adversity that an agent must overcome to arrive at sought-after outcomes. For example, most historians view Abe Lincoln as an epic overachiever (Goodwin, 2009). The fact that Lincoln needed to struggle mightily for every privilege that he earned, from a dirt-floor cabin to the Oval Office, equipped Lincoln with a greater capacity to fulfill his duties as US President than any other occupant of the office.

By contrast, George W. Bush, a career underachiever, breezed into the Oval office on the strength of advantageous family connections (Weisberg, 2008). The absence of adversity in Bush’s career is a likely explanation for his underwhelming performance as President.

Jackie Robinson's achievements as a Brooklyn Dodger are all the more remarkable given the onerous racism that he confronted throughout his life (Smith, 2014). Every move that Robinson made throughout his historic career took place under the searing scrutiny of racist antipathy. For Robinson to be considered the equal of his white counterparts, he had to achieve at a much higher level as both an athlete and as a citizen. The fact that Robinson consistently outperformed his white peers and did so with uncommon grace is indicative of truly exceptional genetic excellence.

### **Sociological success factor 3: Innovation**

High-achieving agents tend to overcome adversity and paradigm paralysis (McGettigan, 2013) by embracing innovative skill-development techniques. Rather than being a product of race, setting world records or surpassing other achievement thresholds is a product of individual talent combined with dauntless tenacity, aesthetic aspiration, and innovative, performance-enhancing training. Success often requires agents to blaze entirely new trails to much sought-after goals.

In addition, the first person to achieve a significantly sought-after goal usually garners the lion's share of acclaim associated with that accomplishment. While many people recall that Roger Bannister was the first person to run a sub-four minute mile, hardly anyone remembers who ran the second. Bannister's achievement remains memorable in spite of the fact that his racing time has been bested by many faster and arguably superior athletes in the decades since his breakthrough.

Edmund Hillary (Johnston, 2005) has also enjoyed a similarly enduring notoriety, even though one could argue that Hillary's Sherpa guides were the superior mountaineers in his conquest of Mount Everest. This case also highlights the poisonous influence of racial bias: How many Sherpas have ever been knighted for climbing Mount Everest (Silverman, 2013)? The fascination associated with Hillary's conquest of Mt. Everest derives from the fact that he was the first white guy to summit the world's highest peak. The fact that Hillary's usually unnamed Sherpas actually worked harder to conquer Mount Everest is generally deemed unworthy of attention.

Much sought-after "firsts" also gobble up the lion's share of attention outside the realm of athletics. Scientists who claim priority for major

breakthroughs, such as the discovery of DNA, often garner more credit than they deserve for new discoveries. Watson and Crick's uncredited usurpation of Rosalind Franklin's path-breaking insights is one of the more odious examples of intellectual piracy in the history of science (Maddox, 2002; Merton 1957; Watson and Stent, 1980).

#### **Sociological success factor 4: Obstinacy**

The single-minded pursuit of clearly defined aesthetic goals often distinguishes average from legendary achievers. When asked how he managed to achieve so many more breakthroughs than his peers Sir Isaac Newton (Dolnick, 2011, p. 48) attributed his success to an uncommon capacity for perseverance. Apparently, Newton had an exceptional ability to train his mind on a problem and remain focused in spite of searing mental agonies until he cracked the problem. By his own admission, what distinguished Newton from his peers was a higher level of intellectual tenacity. Newton simply worked harder than his peers.

#### **Sociological success factor 5: Serendipity**

Serendipity means that the right talent needs to come along at the right time to achieve the most sought-after goal. Serendipity has been the decisive factor in endless tales of woe and triumph. How many great talents have fallen short of their astronomical potential because of an ill-timed injury, a psychological breakdown, a drug addiction or the loss of a loved one? By the same token how many less-than-stellar talents have, through a fortuitous convergence of circumstances, achieved more than they ever dreamed possible? The 1980 US Olympic Hockey team's miracle on ice provides a shining example.

Entine (2000, 29) argues that Kenyan runners dominate the world of distance running not because of the extreme environmental and sociological conditions under which they train, but because they are biologically superior to their competitors.<sup>1</sup> This is akin to arguing that Silicon Valley is home to an abnormally high concentration of technology companies because the San Francisco Bay Area breeds biologically superior IT geeks.

Why resort to vague, race-baiting biological criteria when serendipitous socio-environmental factors provide a more plausible explanation? It makes far more sense to argue that Silicon Valley cultivates greater-than-average success among IT entrepreneurs because, at present, Silicon



Valley offers a greater abundance of the necessary social resources—such as education, competition, technology, experience, capital, motivation and inspiration—that are critical for breeding success. No doubt, the same is true for Kenyan runners and their training environment.

If, in the years ahead, the Chinese succeed in eclipsing Silicon Valley's IT leadership, will it mean that the Chinese have suddenly developed better IT genes than Silicon Valley geeks? Or, will it mean that the Chinese have formulated a riper social environment for success? We daresay the second alternative is far more plausible than the first.

### **Sociological success factor 6: Notoriety**

History-making achievers tend to be highly motivated agents who also benefit from positive PR. How did the world's greatest athletes make a living before professional athletics became a career choice? Most likely, they were farmers. Celebrity athletes are an invention of the mass media.

Although he is often perceived as a god among men, George Washington was nothing more than a high-achieving agent who distinguished himself at an opportune moment in US history and who has since benefited from almost uniformly positive PR. Had Washington been born at a different time it is doubtful that he would have stood out. Some might object to characterizing George Washington as being no better nor worse than any of his historical counterparts. We would respond by saying that George Washington was one of the principal founders of a radically democratic society. Given that, one would expect Washington to acknowledge that he made his mark on history by fighting for democracy. Nothing should make warriors for democracy prouder than declaring their categorical *equality* with every other human being.

We generally do not apply the term genius to individuals who may be graced with exceptional intellectual talent, but who employ their intellect in socially undesirable pursuits. Examples include Adolf Hitler, Joseph Stalin and Osama bin Laden.

It is a truism that the winners write history. Had Hitler won World War II or had the Soviets won the Cold War subsequent histories would probably have taken a much different view of history's most praiseworthy geniuses. Also, a praiseworthy genius in one culture can be viewed with deep disdain in another: we suspect the Japanese would be far less likely than Americans to characterize Manhattan Project scientists as praiseworthy geniuses.

## Back to nature vs. nurture

In the following chapters we will propose an agentic solution to the nature vs. nurture debate (Ceci and Williams, 1999; Ridley, 2003). We argue that fundamental misperceptions about the concept of race (Graves, 2004; Spelsberg, 2011; Chase 1980) have produced excessive confusion about the fount of human excellence (Gould, 1997). Nature-dominant perspectives have erroneously asserted that achievement varies among human groups largely as a result of race-based genetic distinctions. While nature-dominant advocates have often asserted that various racial groups are endowed with differing biologically determined aptitudes, no one has ever succeeded in doing either of the following things.

- 1 **Specifying coherent racial groups.** Racial demarcations invariably circumscribe groups of people who share more inter-group than within-group commonalities. For example, Wade argues that there are “three major races”:

The three principal races are Africans (those who live south of the Sahara), East Asians (Chinese, Japanese and Koreans) and Caucasians (Europeans and the peoples of the Near East and the Indian subcontinent) (2014, p., 4).

Wade’s racial groups contain so much internal diversity that they hardly make sense: Would Queen Elizabeth believe that she was a member of the same “race” as her Gurkha soldiers? Hardly.

Wade (2014) has run afoul of the very same problem that bedevils everyone else who tries to impose arbitrary racial boundaries on the global complex of ethnic diversity. The members of any particular racial group, no matter how well- or ill-defined, tend to have more biological commonalities with the members of *other* racial groups than they do with their presumptive racial kin (Lewontin, 1973). Racial designations speak volumes about the racist peccadilloes of their creators, and reveal almost nothing about the biology of their members.

- 2 **Identifying an objective ranking system.** Evolution does not judge. People do. Humans like to think that they are better than other life forms, but from an objective biological perspective we aren’t. Evolutionarily speaking, humans are not better than jellyfish, glow worms or tree fungus. We’re just different. There

is more than one way to perpetuate life or DNA on earth. Vive la différence.

The same is true of human sub-groups. People have a passion for making invidious comparisons: pink is better than brown. But that's racism, not science. If pink and brown exist then, so far as nature is concerned, they are equally marvelous.

## Note

- 1 We must also add that, at various points in his discussion, Entine (2000) unabashedly invokes the language of William Sheldon's roundly discredited "constitutional psychology" (Fish, 2011, p. 68); describing Kenyans as ectomorphs. How valid can Entine's argument be if he doesn't even bother to ground his discussion in sound science?.

# 3

## The Farce of Race

**Abstract:** *The authors explain that race prejudices are a product of the same sort of medieval ignorance that gave rise to beliefs in vampires, werewolves and witches. Racism is founded on two false assumptions: that it is possible to clearly determine racial boundaries and qualitatively rank racial groups. Science has demonstrated that evolution is indifferent to such value judgments. Species are either fit or unfit for survival. Judging the relative value of one life form or another is an anti-scientific obsession.*

McGettigan, Timothy, and Earl Smith. *A Formula for Eradicating Racism: Debunking White Supremacy*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016.  
DOI: 10.1057/9781137599759.0007.

As in the tale about the clueless emperor (Andersen, 2015), for centuries people have been duped into believing that humans are all clothed in non-existent racial costumes. Our ignorance has made naked fools of us all.

Before the advent of modern science people were extremely superstitious (Bailey, 2007). For the gullible, witches, warlocks, goblins and ghouls seemed every bit as real as the animals in the forest. In such a superstitious world it was easy to believe that indigenous peoples were as inhuman as bogeymen (Lindemann, 2013). To Europeans in the age of discovery, the denizens of foreign lands were in some ways even more peculiar than the monsters that stalked their nightmares. At least vampires had the good sense and breeding to be members of the nobility. The modern concept of race was born in this cesspool of superstitious ignorance.

Victorian-era Europeans had an unhealthy superiority complex (Noble, et al., 2014, p. 586). Europeans literally believed they were a higher order of being than the uncivilized rabble that their explorers encountered. Civilization was a pejorative. To be civilized implied that one was biologically superior to the uncivilized riffraff whose lives Thomas Hobbes (Hobbes, 1998) famously derided as “solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short.”

Victorian Europeans believed they were a cut above and they translated their revulsion for Others into prejudicial racial classifications (Beasley, 2010). Schemes for denigrating Others on the basis of race usually operate on the following false assumptions:

- 1 Race is a biological certainty.
  - a. Arbitrary racial designations delineated stark biological distinctions between civilized Europeans and uncivilized barbarians.
  - b. Biology is unalterable. Individuals are defined by race from birth until death. Once a barbarian, always a barbarian.
- 2 We are better than Them.
  - a. Defectives must not be permitted to sully the gene pool: either by having too many defective kids or (heaven forbid!) by breeding with their superiors.
  - b. It is humane, or even courageous to cull defective sub-humans from the gene pool.

For superstitious Europeans, racial classifications that denigrated Others made perfect sense. After all, the world was chock full of semi-human

creatures—such as witches, werewolves and vampires—who personified evil and who therefore posed a dire threat to civilized humans (Bailey, 2013). Racial classifications were simply an extension of noxious European superstitions: non-Europeans were semi-human creatures who, though they may not have been vampires per se, nonetheless posed a dire threat to European blood (Kiernan, 2007).

Besides superiority, racism also connotes the idea of immutability, thought once to reside in the blood and now in the genes. Racists are concerned about intermarriage (“the purity of the blood”) lest it erode the basis of their race’s superiority. (Wade, 2014, p.17)

Modern science has eradicated the majority of such preposterous superstitions. Few rational adults still cling to sincere beliefs in goblins, ghouls and vampires. Unfortunately, people have been more reluctant to forgo their racist superstitions. This is in spite of the fact that scientists have resoundingly debunked the notion that race is a real, hierarchical biological phenomenon. Craig Venter, one of the principal scientists credited with mapping the human genome, has stated conclusively, “The concept of race has no genetic or scientific basis” (Krimsky and Sloan, 2011, p. 25).

In addition to Venter’s repudiation of race, the American Anthropological Association has also dismissed race as a destructive myth:

Racial beliefs constitute myths about the diversity in the human species and about the abilities and behavior of people homogenized into “racial” categories. The myths fused behavior and physical features together in the public mind, impeding our comprehension of both biological variations and cultural behavior, implying that both are genetically determined. Racial myths bear no relationship to the reality of human capabilities or behavior. Scientists today find that reliance on such folk beliefs about human differences in research has led to countless errors. (<http://www.aaanet.org/stmts/racepp.htm>)

So, there you have it. As far as responsible scientists are concerned race is naught but a destructive pre-scientific myth. And yet, as emphatic as the scientific repudiation of race has been, people tenaciously cling to irrational race biases. Why?

Although the AAA’s disavowal of race was unequivocal, other scientific organizations have sent mixed messages about the concept of race. For

example, the American Sociological Association concurs with the AAA about the scientific problems associated with race:

Some scholarly and civic leaders have proposed that the government stop collecting data on race altogether. Respected voices from the fields of human molecular biology and physical anthropology (supported by research from the Human Genome Project) assert that the concept of race has no validity in their respective fields. Growing numbers of humanist scholars, social anthropologists, and political commentators have joined the chorus in urging the nation to rid itself of the concept of race. (American Sociological Association, 2003)

But instead of joining colleagues who have abandoned race the ASA advocates the continued use of race. Why? Because, the ASA claims that, regardless of the human costs of preserving the concept, they simply can't get along without it.

When a concept is central to societal organization, examining how, when, and why people in that society use the concept is vital to understanding the organization and consequences of social relationships. (American Sociological Association, 2003)

The ASA would be better served to join the AAA in disavowing the concept of race and replacing it with ethnicity; an eminently sociological concept that does not suffer from the logical and ethical problems that plague the concept of race.

In addition to being confused by mixed messages from social scientists, the public has often been chary of scientific pronouncements that deny the existence of seemingly self-evident facts: people believe that race is real because, day in and day out, they see race in every person they encounter. Africans, Asians, Europeans, Polynesians, Inuits and many other identifiable ethnic groups exhibit biological traits that are discernible to the human eye and, crucially, are biologically heritable. Why would scientists dispute the existence of anything that seems so self-evidently real?

The best way to answer that question is by referring to one of the most famous controversies in the history of science: the trial of Galileo (Mayer, 2012). Galileo is widely revered as one of the greatest scientists in history. However, Galileo's genius almost led to his execution at the hands of the Roman Inquisition. His crime: Galileo expressed support for heliocentrism. In Galileo's day, people believed that the universe revolved around

the earth. Anyone who disputed geocentrism was begging for trouble and Galileo landed in mighty big trouble (Finocchiaro, 2010).

Why did people believe so passionately in geocentrism? Because of the facts that paraded before their very eyes.

People have always been surrounded by evidence that appears to conclusively support geocentrism. For those who stand on its surface the earth seems stationary. Also, every object in the heavens appears to revolve obediently around the earth. The evidence is overwhelming. If the earth stands still while the heavens revolve around it, then the earth must lie at the center of the universe. Right? Geocentrism was perfectly obvious and, yet, it was also dead wrong.

Science has revealed that appearances are often deceiving. That is true for geocentrism and it is also true for race.

## **Race is everywhere and nowhere**

In 1995, one of the authors had an illuminating experience during a vacation in Bali. While out for a walk on Kuta Beach, TM and his wife, SF, sat down at a bar and ordered a couple of Bali Hai beers.<sup>1</sup> Their bartender was a jocular Balinese man who, as a hobby, kept an informal tally of the many countries from whence his customers hailed. Happy to play along, SF and TM volunteered that they were from the US. The bartender chuckled and replied, “No, that’s not what I mean.” Then he pointed at SF and said, “You are from Germany;” and shifting his gaze to TM, he added, “You are from England.”

SF and TM were both taken aback. The bartender had blithely brushed aside their gossamer ethnicities and correctly divined the nationalities of their immigrant ancestors. That was quite a party trick. Either the bartender had made a couple of lucky guesses—which seemed unlikely because he went on to divine the ancestral nationalities of every other customer within earshot—or the bartender was somehow interpreting “racial” information that was graven into his customers’ physiognomies.

The latter thought was troubling. For starters, TM was not enamored of the idea that he sported ethnic regalia that lumped him in with misfits like the British royal family. Of greater concern was the possibility that race might be a more legitimate demographic phenomenon than, at least of late, respectable scientists had been willing to concede.



What people generally perceive as race are patterns of biological traits that occur with varying frequencies in different populations. Let's be clear from the outset, however: self-aggrandizing Europeans are, and always have been, dead wrong. Europeans are not superior to the people that they have bad-mouthed (Huggan and Law, 2009). People in every corner of the globe are members of one remarkably homogeneous species, *Homo sapiens*. No matter where they hail from none of those people are genetically better or worse than any others. If some claim otherwise, then it's because they are ignorant, prejudiced dolts: "...just because they breathe we hate the filthy bums."

Patterns of cosmetic physiological commonalities, such as those detected by SF's and TM's Balinese bartender, are real. As with all evolution-driven genetic diversity *Homo sapiens* developed cosmetic physiological differences—such as, patterned variations in skin pigment, hair texture, ear, eye and nose shape—after modern humans emerged from Africa and spread hither and yon around the planet (Haviland, 2011). Species that become geographically isolated from ancestral populations often evolve into new species, but that process usually takes millions of years and it is predicated upon reproductive isolation (Quammen, 1996). As long as species continue interbreeding they remain united.

There is widespread agreement that anatomically modern *Homo sapiens* emerged in Africa approximately 200,000 years ago. All living humans are descended from and remain anatomically identical to their African forbears (Crow, 2002). For people who have grown used to the warp-speed, digitized fantasy that is the Information Society biological evolution proceeds with almost inconceivable slowness. While biologists measure genetic evolution in multi-million year epochs, cultural evolution transpires at a much brisker pace (McGettigan, 2013). More on that later.

When humans first ventured away from their African homeland farewell meant forever. The people who hunted and gathered from one horizon to the next did not look back. The people they left behind, for the most part, stayed behind. Time passed and the millennia left their mark on humanity. The further people strayed from their African homeland the more they changed—due to both natural and sexual selection (Campbell, 2006). That is why thousands of years after going our separate ways inquiring minds, such as a certain Balinese bartender, can espy the subtle gravings of evolution on their globe-trotting clientèle.

But it takes a practiced eye, or a clever parlor trick, to discern Germanic from Anglo-Saxon spouses. There are several reasons for this. One is that Germans and Brits are blissfully happy to form pair bonds. As humans trot the globe and form pair bonds *Homo sapiens* neutralizes the effects of reproductive isolation that, a few million years hence, might have led to speciation (Lahr, 1996). The biological term for this is reticulation:

Among humans, reticulation occurs when there is interbreeding within the species—mating among individuals from different geographical populations. The result of such genetic mixing of previously isolated groups—due to migrations, invasions and colonization—is that no clear boundaries can be drawn around the variety of humans, no “races” of us. (Sapp, 2012)

As with any species that evolves into geographically based races, there is usually continuity between neighboring races because of the gene exchange between them. *Because there is no clear dividing line, there are no distinct races*—that is the nature of variation within a species. (Wade, 2014, p. 92, emphasis added)

The millennia during which human sub-groups have been geographically isolated has been far too brief and far too disrupted by reticulation for significant genetic distinctions to arise (Lieberman, 2013).

What people generally perceive as race are distinctive patterns of allele frequency. Gregor Mendel was the first to discover that genes can either be dominant or recessive: brown eyes are dominant and blue eyes are recessive (Yannuzzi, 2004). Variable alleles are the reason that humans can all share the same genome and still be individually idiosyncratic. Thanks to sexual reproduction every individual is made up of a unique combination of dominant and recessive alleles.

Unique as we may each be humans also share undeniable similarities with our larger genetic family. In the broadest possible strokes humans are all a bunch of naked apes (Regal, 2004). *Vive la similarité!* Patterns of superficial distinction emerge among sub-groups that interbreed with greater regularity. In the preindustrial era people did not travel much. Intrepid explorers like Marco Polo were very much the exception. After a few thousand years of interbreeding in the same zip code the distinctive allele frequencies that people identify as races cropped up.

Racial categories are contentious for a number of reasons. For millennia, people have used superficial racial distinctions to justify the slaughter of millions (Weitz, 2003). If anyone wonders why scientists are keen to

annihilate the concept of race, that's perhaps the most important reason. Race is not only fraught with ill will, but it also lacks logical coherence.

Most people believe they know precisely where races begin and end; who belongs to a particular racial group and who doesn't. The truth is that, genetically speaking, race is an irretrievably vague concept. Races do not have clear-cut biological boundaries because sub-groups of modern *Homo sapiens* have never been isolated long enough for genetic boundaries to solidify (Cavalli-Sforza, et al., 1994).

The strongest argument against treating the races of men as separate species, in Darwin's view, "is that they graduate into each other, independently in many cases, as far as we can judge, of their having intercrossed." This graduation is so extensive that people trying to enumerate the number of human races were all over the map in their estimates, which ranged from 1 to 63, Darwin noted. (Wade, 2014, p. 23)

The human animal being what it is, neighbors have always been keen to reticulate—whether through marriage or conquest—with their neighbors. The people who live at the outer edges of separate continents tend to look strikingly dissimilar: Nordics look different than sub-Saharan Africans and Inuits look different than indigenous Australians. If, however, we examine all of the people who reside in the regions that fall between Sweden and Swaziland or Beijing and Barcelona, we discover that gene pool reticulation has moderated stark differences into extremely fine shadings of difference from one neighboring group to the next (Cohen, 2011). Because of these vanishing degrees of reticulated distinction debate has raged about precisely how many races actually exist: are Brits and Germans members of different races? What about Greeks and Turks? Serbs and Croats? Some have proposed that there are zero races (Corcos, 1997), while others have contended that the number of races runs to infinity (Firmin, 2000). It is only by imposing arbitrary criteria—take, for example, the Third Reich's difficulties identifying Jews (Browning, 2007) or the US's conundrum of specifying race in a melting pot (Brumfield and Botelho, 2015; Nobles, 2000)—that we can create the illusion of chasmic genetic differences where, in fact, no such chasms exist.

In the preindustrial era, humans in the most distant corners of the globe remained reproductively isolated long enough to evolve cosmetically distinguishing traits: the Irish look different than Fijians. Humans subsequently pulled a feat of evolutionary jiu jitsu by embarking on industrial-scale global journeys. Via modern travel *Homo sapiens* has transformed the globe into a vast genetically reticulated melting pot.

Day by day, humans form new international connections—matrimonial, adoptive, business, casual, and so on—that aggressively counteract the evolutionary effects of reproductive isolation.

Because of this reticulation-driven trend, racial boundaries that were never more than blurry transitional zones have become ever blurrier. Even where racial distinctions appear the most extreme, this is usually in situations where culture amplifies the appearance of ethnocentric disconnect (Kleg, 1993), race has never been anything more than cosmetic variations on a common theme. Race is akin to printing books with different-colored covers. The rainbow colors may be eye-catching, but they are irrelevant to the content. Humans are like good books. It's what's inside that counts.

Some have argued that recent genetic mutations, such as high-altitude adaptations among Tibetans (Stinson, et al., 2012), suggest that racial divides are more cavernous and rapidly evolved than previously imagined. Certainly, high-altitude adaptations among Tibetans speak volumes about the plasticity of the human genome. Like darkened dermal pigment among equatorial peoples and the heat-preserving physiology of the Inuit, special high-altitude adaptations among Tibetans are a product of evolutionary selection pressures. No serious scientist would claim that humans or any other life forms are free from the influences of evolution. What is at issue is whether sub-populations of *Homo sapiens* have developed genetic attributes that render them qualitatively distinct from, and more or less meritorious than their fellow humans.

As generations of Himalayan mountaineers have learned (Neale, 2002), Sherpas and native Tibetans have an enhanced ability to surmount the world's tallest peaks. So, in the realm of high-alpine mountaineering, is it possible to say that Tibetans and Sherpas are superior to non-Tibetan mountaineers? The answer is both yes and no.

Sherpas and Tibetans are better acclimated to high altitude exertions than low-landers. That has enabled some Sherpas and Tibetans to perform mountaineering feats that beggar belief (Tenzing and Tenzing, 2001). Most people would count themselves lucky if they were able surmount Mount Everest even once in a lifetime, but some Sherpas have ascended Everest more than 20 times (Nehring, 2013). Nonetheless, the question of ranking the relative merits of different mountaineers remains highly subjective. If we measure superiority in terms of how quickly or how often mountaineers can summit Mount Everest, then Sherpas and Tibetans are likely to win the prize every time. If, however, we measure

mountaineering accomplishments in terms of the special challenges that one must overcome to summit Everest, then children (Blanc and Romero, 2010), or the elderly (Evans, 2013), or the disabled (AFP, 2013) who conquer Everest might deserve the prize for the greatest mountaineering achievements.

*The truth is that anyone who climbs Mount Everest has achieved something special.* Whom we decide has performed the greatest accomplishment says more about our subjective biases than it does about the mountaineers and the exceptional feats that they have performed.

This brings us back to the discussion of excellence. We believe it is possible to develop valid measures of excellence, but not on the basis of race. Race-based discussions of merit accomplish nothing save to foment racism. We want no part of that. Our definition of excellence is linked to human agency. Agency is a special form of status quo-challenging ingenuity that humans alone possess. In the pursuit of excellence we acknowledge that biology matters. Sherpas and Tibetans have in-bred mountaineering talents that exceed the abilities of most other humans. But not all Sherpas and Tibetans want to be mountaineers. We would hazard that the majority of Tibetans and Sherpas share the same aspirations as the rest of humanity: food, shelter, security, success, and to love and be loved.

In all of those endeavors we believe that biology is a starting point. People who are seven feet tall are, by nature, probably pretty good shot-blockers. But not all seven-footers want to play basketball. Some prefer to write poetry.

Depending on what they are trying to accomplish some people are advantaged by their biology and others are disadvantaged. Someone who is seven feet tall, but whose lifelong dream has been to jockey a horse in the Kentucky Derby might feel biologically cheated. Being born with unhelpful biological attributes is not fair, but life isn't always fair. On the upside, agents aren't wholly determined by their biology. We argue that biology is just a starting point. It's what agents choose to do after they have been dealt their biological cards, whether advantageous or disadvantageous, that is the true measure of human merit.

Excellence is a product of the record-breaking achievements toward which agents aspire. Some have a tougher climb than others, but we argue that *everyone* has the potential to achieve some form of excellence. Precisely what sort of excellence an individual decides to pursue is not determined by race. It is a product of individual initiative. Champions are not born, they are made.

## Agency as the fount of excellence

There is no “race gene” (Garcia, 2007, p. 2) that establishes an unequivocal basis for biological distinction or, much less, that establishes a scientific basis for ranking different groups into hierarchies (Lombardo, 2011). We will draw upon the aforementioned example of the Williams sisters<sup>2</sup> to emphasize the role that agency plays in generating outstanding achievement, while simultaneously debunking race as a scientifically bankrupt concept (Roberts, 2011).

Venus and Serena Williams, the daughters of Richard and Oracene Price Williams, were both born in Lynwood, California, but shortly thereafter they moved to the city of Compton, California. Once there, they learned from their father how to play the game of tennis (SSF 1 – Preparation; Edmondson 2005). Much has been made of the tough living conditions in Compton (SSF 2 – Adversity), the California city made famous by the rap group Niggaz Wit Attitude (NWA), and the tough training regimen that Richard Williams designed to cultivate his daughters’ tennis skills (Potter 1995).

Edmondson (2005) chronicles the fact that Richard would often take Venus and Serena to Compton’s outdoor public tennis courts—which were outfitted with out-of-date steel nets—and let them play amidst the cracks and pops of live gunfire (SSF 2 – Adversity and 3 – Innovation). After practicing amidst live gunfire, the Williams sisters were less likely to be intimidated by the “pressure-cooker atmosphere” of the posh country clubs that often play host to high-profile tennis tournaments.

According to this lore, Richard felt it would be advantageous to Venus and Serena to understand that it was not just a knowledge of tennis that they needed for long-term success. They also needed some school of hard knocks street-smarts. Thus, Richard Williams exposed his daughters to the circumstances that persist in impoverished neighborhoods (i.e. inadequate facilities, gang activity, and the like) in order to teach them that tennis might be a game, but, when played with sufficient intensity, it could also be a golden ticket out of places like Compton (Douglas 2011).

A CNN online profile (2004) of the Williams family details these experiences:

Fairly or unfairly, the sisters’ hometown of Compton, California, located 18 miles south of Los Angeles, is often associated with drugs, gangs and violence—not tennis, widely considered a wealthy, white sport. But it was on

the city's courts that Venus, born in June 1980, and Serena, born 15 months later, got their start.

Richard Williams, who learned tennis largely from reading books and watching videos, began hitting tennis balls to the girls at a court near their house even before they started grammar school. "Those tennis courts were rotten, tore up, no nets, then they did put nets up and they were steel and they'd go boom, and you'd say another gun was shooting . . . it was terrible," Richard Williams remarked. Williams did his best to equip his daughters with the kind of physical and mental toughness (SSF 4 – Obstinacy) that would help them remain strong in the face of racial slurs and cheating, and that would also instill in them the drive to someday rule the tennis world.

"It was almost like, 'Breakfast, lunch and dinner, and we'll be number one and two in the world,'" says Rick Macci, one of the sisters' former coaches. "This was . . . arrogant, cocky, as a matter of fact: This is going to happen, there's no doubt."

Richard Williams' unconventional tennis-training regime soon paid off. By 1990, Venus was the top-ranked, under-twelve female player in southern California. The story of this black, inner-city phenom captivated agents, tennis manufacturers and the media. By year's end, Venus had been depicted on the front page of *The New York Times* and in the pages of *Sports Illustrated*. Richard engineered the hype machine (SSF 6 – Notoriety).

The essence of the above is that the unconventional methods of training, far removed from the privileged environment in which most young players become acquainted with the sport of tennis, have stuck with the Williams sisters and, arguably, augmented their success. Similarly, some of the unique training methods applied by Tiger Woods' father, Earl, have stuck with Tiger Woods throughout his historic career and have become an indelible part of his life story (Woods 1997).

Venus and Serena also trained with professional coaches early in their careers as teenagers in Florida.<sup>3</sup> In their teenage years, the Williams family moved from Compton to West Palm Beach, Florida to seek better tennis-training opportunities for their talented daughters. There the sisters had the opportunity to train with tennis pro Richard Macci (Edmondson 2005, p. 35).

Every era has its heroes and dominant players (SSF 5 – Serendipity) and there is always much debate about who is the best of the best. In that spirit, a strong case can be made to consider the Williams sisters as the two most dominating players in the history of women's professional

tennis. Like the other athletes who have been credited with transforming their sport—such as, Tiger Woods, Martina Navratilova and Babe Ruth—the Williams sisters, and Serena in particular, have accumulated an unsurpassed record of achievement in women's tennis.

Compared to her competitors, Serena's body is different. Not only does she have curves, but like Woods and Navratilova, Serena has introduced a whole new level of power and finesse to the sport of women's tennis (SSF 1 – Preparation, and SSF 3 – Innovation). Serena Williams' first serve is faster than that of most men. Graced with unsurpassed strength and skill, Serena has accumulated a jaw-dropping list of accomplishments:

- ▶ In the span from 1999 to 2015, Serena Williams won 21 Grand Slam women's singles titles, while Venus won seven. No two sisters have ever dominated a major sport as extensively as the Williams sisters.
- ▶ From 1999 to 2012, Venus and Serena teamed up to win 13 Grand Slam doubles titles and three Olympic gold medals for women's doubles tennis.
- ▶ Also, Serena and Venus have met in eight separate Grand Slam tournament finals. Serena won six of those meetings and Venus won two.
- ▶ Serena Williams also won a Gold Medal in women's singles tennis at the 2012 London Olympics.

## **The making of tennis champions**

The Williams sisters were not born tennis champions. The foregoing discussion illustrates that the Williams sisters became champions by incorporating each of the six sociological success factors into a very successful agency-activation regime.

SSF 1 – Preparation – The Williams sisters have introduced a new style and intensity of training in professional tennis. They have trained like a new era of champions and, consequently, they have dominated women's tennis in the new millennium. No matter what sort of physical gifts anyone may be born with, those gifts will lie fallow in the absence of dedicated training. Champions are not born, they are made.

SSF 2 – Adversity – Venus and Serena Williams launched their meteoric tennis careers as outsiders. Not fitting the mold of the stereotypical



country club athlete, Venus and Serena needed to demonstrate that they belonged in the realm of professional tennis every bit as much as their more privileged country club rivals. Since they needed to scrap for every bit of status that they have earned throughout their careers, such struggles have equipped Venus and Serena with a competitive edge that their more pampered opponents lack.

SSF 3 – Innovation – Richard Williams’ decision to toughen his daughters by subjecting them to the rigors of Compton’s ramshackle facilities and life-threatening violence equipped Venus and Serena with an unmatched competitive edge and a reservoir of intestinal fortitude that country club athletes simply cannot match.

SSF 4 – Obstinacy – Training in Compton under exceedingly challenging conditions is not for the faint of heart. Living in Compton is arguably a more grueling ordeal than any two-week tennis tournament at an elite country club could ever be.

SSF 5 – Serendipity – Though Venus and Serena Williams had to struggle long and hard to earn success, had they been born at an earlier stage of US history, a pervasive environment of racist segregation would have blocked all avenues of professional success for the sisters. Venus and Serena owe a significant portion of their success to their good fortune at being born in the 20th, rather than the 19th century.

SSF 6 – Notoriety – At first the Williams Sisters were noteworthy as “phenoms from Compton.” Subsequently, they have accumulated global fame for being the toughest, winningest pair of tennis-playing sisters in history.

In the discussion that follows, we will debunk biological or nature-dominant explanations of human excellence and instead develop an agentic definition of excellence. Our notion of agentic excellence strikes a dynamic compromise between the influences of biology and sociology in the process of cultivating high-achieving agents.

## **Bogus gene-based definitions of excellence**

Are humans’ products of nature or nurture? In other words, are people born with a fixed set of genetic attributes that determine their lot in life, or can people cultivate an indeterminate range of potentialities in response to varying environmental stimuli? Was Michael Jordan *born* the

best basketball player in NBA history, or did he *become* the best player? Or, in a different vein was Albert Einstein *born* a genius, or did he, through dint of will, *become* the most celebrated scientific genius of the 20th century? How one answers the above questions generally depends upon one's fundamental view of human merit:

- 1 Are the most outstanding achievers born or made? Is excellence a product of genetically deterministic nature, or nurture-cultivated agency?
- 2 How much influence can any single human have on the course of history?

In the nature-nurture debate the nature-dominant perspective (Lombardo, 2011) asserts that humans are essentially ambulatory sacks of DNA. People are what they are and do what they do according to the whims of their genes. The nature-dominant perspective asserts that individuals have very little control over how well or poorly they will fare in life. People who are fortunate enough to be born with good genes are, thus, biologically equipped to accomplish great deeds: legendary athletes, masterful artists, brilliant scientists, outstanding leaders, and so on. Conversely, people who are endowed with inferior genes are fated to fare poorly in the struggle for survival (Wade, 2014).

Whether analyzing success or failure the nature-dominant perspective advances an uncharitable view of human nature. Since, from this perspective, psychological intentions have zero influence upon an individual's genetic attributes<sup>4</sup> high-achievers cannot assign credit for their success to personal initiative. Instead, humans are merely conduits for either exemplary or defective gene expression. When genetics are the decisive factor anything high-achievers might think or intend contributes very little to the outcomes of their activities. Nor must low-achievers shoulder blame for their failures. Being hard-wired with an inferior genetic package losers are largely exempt from responsibility for their derelictions (Gabel and Danforth, 2008, p. 427; Harris, 2012).

The nature-dominant perspective also asserts that, just as intentionality is irrelevant in generating genetically engineered success and failure, no amount of sentimentality can alter the outcomes that are determined by genetics. Social programs that are intended to cultivate higher levels of success in biologically inferior individuals are, from the nature-dominant perspective, the metaphorical equivalent of making a silk purse out of a sow's ear (Herrnstein and Murray, 1994).

Achieving excellence is, according to the nature-dominant perspective, purely a function of being born lucky (Kluchin, 2009): genetically gifted athletes, such as Michael Jordan, can outperform lesser-endowed athletes even while investing only a tiny fraction of the effort that their opponents invest. The same also applies to genetically gifted achievers in other endeavors, such as scientific geniuses. For instance, if Einstein was indeed born with a higher concentration of genius genes than his peers then, without even trying, Einstein would be able to intellectually outstrip his lesser-endowed contemporaries.<sup>5</sup> Thus, the nature-dominant perspective asserts that excellence can be understood as “a gene-based capacity to outperform rivals.”

## Notes

- 1 TM recommends both the beer and destination for anyone’s bucket list.
- 2 Where appropriate we will also highlight where each of the six sociological success factors are at work in the Williams sisters agentic achievements.
- 3 Urban legend has it that the Williams sisters never had professional coaches. Not so. See, especially Smith and Hattery (2013), “Venus and Serena Williams: Traversing the Barriers of the Country Club World” in Joel Nathan Rosen and David Ogden (eds.), 2013, *A Locker Room of Her Own: Celebrity, Sexuality, and Female Athletes*. University of Mississippi Press.
- 4 No matter how desperately we might desire longer legs, a bigger brain, a dolphin’s tail, or an angel’s wings, such dreams cannot alter the package of genetic traits with which we are equipped at birth.
- 5 More than one of Albert Einstein’s teachers expressed frustration with Einstein’s slapdash approach to his studies. Einstein’s high school Greek teacher, Joseph Degenhart, has achieved immortality for castigating young Albert with the ironic declaration: “*nothing will ever become of you*” (Fletcher and Hattie, 2011, p. 10; Kaku, 2004). Also, one of Einstein’s professors, Herbert Minkowski, famously described Einstein as a “*lazy dog*” (Cwiklik, 1987, p. 119). Yet, in spite of these insulting observations—or, perhaps, because of them—as a mature scholar, Einstein invested enormous quantities of time and energy into his theoretical contemplations. Without devoting years of intensive mental energy, it is doubtful that Einstein would ever have produced his brain-busting theories of relativity.

# 4

## Scientific Racism

**Abstract:** *Eugenics is a form of racism that masquerades as science. Science has repeatedly demonstrated that the concept of race is a destructive myth. Catastrophically flawed as such a perspective may be, new generations of advocates persist in trying to breathe life into age-old eugenicist superstitions. Legitimate scientific organizations, such as the US Census Bureau and the American Sociological Association, have perpetuated eugenicist irrationality by unscientifically conflating race and ethnicity. Responsible scientists should embrace the American Anthropological Association's more rational treatment of race and take all necessary steps to destroy the myth of race here and now. Full stop.*

McGettigan, Timothy, and Earl Smith. *A Formula for Eradicating Racism: Debunking White Supremacy*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016.  
DOI: 10.1057/9781137599759.0008.

Just as genes determine that butterflies will, of necessity, pursue a different lifestyle than harbor seals, the nature-dominant perspective also asserts that genes endow humans with attributes that dictate their success or failure (Wade, 2014). Herrnstein and Murray (1994) argue that human intelligence, as measured by IQ tests, is a genetically fixed attribute. Thus, Herrnstein and Murray contend that the most exceptional geniuses will be those with the highest IQs. This means, however, that geniuses will not derive their exceptional intellectual talents from hard work and diligent study. Exceptional intellectual talent is purely an outcome of being endowed with a greater-than-average dose of genius genes. In a society wherein merit is increasingly determined by intellectual acuity Herrnstein and Murray fret that diminishing numbers of high-IQ achievers will be saddled with the responsibility of managing the affairs of burgeoning hordes of low-IQ incompetents. Because Herrnstein and Murray believe that intelligence is determined by genetics they insist that social programs, such as Lyndon Johnson's War on Poverty, will never succeed in reducing poverty. Social programs, Herrnstein and Murray contend, are not capable of remedying the biological curse of bad genes.

People who are born with inferior genes—a disproportionate number of whom, Herrnstein and Murray disingenuously lament, are people of color—will remain stuck with their genetic defects in perpetuity. Worse, Herrnstein and Murray argue that, by providing aid and comfort to darkly pigmented incompetents, social programs will exacerbate social problems by enabling genetic dead-enders to propagate large broods of inferior offspring. As a remedy, Herrnstein and Murray advocate curtailing social relief for the dark, ignorant masses and reallocating those resources to lightly pigmented high-IQ achievers. Unlike their inept contemporaries white brainiacs can put social largesse to good use (see especially Chase 1977).

## The color of victory

John Entine (2007) has advanced a similar argument about race-based competencies in the realm of sport (Hughey and Goss, 2015). Entine contends that the politics of race have made it taboo (Entine, 2000) to discuss what he believes is transparently obvious: the dark-skinned are better athletes. In strict accordance with the nature-dominant perspective, Entine argues that varying levels of sporting prowess are purely a

function of race-based genetics. Just as Herrnstein and Murray argue that genius comes more easily to light-skinned intellectuals, Entine argues that athletic prowess is an in-bred characteristic of dark-skinned athletes.<sup>1</sup>

As an aside, we wonder how Entine would explain lily-white anomalies such as the Winter Olympics, the NHL, swimming, rowing, NASCAR, the X Games, golf, equestrian competitions, and so on. We suspect that the athletes in white-dominated sports would take umbrage to the insinuation that their performances are nothing more than embarrassing displays of sporting incompetence. There are without question striking disparities in the ethnic make-ups of the athletes who tend to dominate different sports. However, there are at least as many sports that are dominated by pigment-deficient as pigment-rich athletes. Entine craftily supports his contention that darkly pigmented athletes are superior to lightly pigmented athletes by selectively highlighting supportive evidence, and ignoring contradictory evidence.

The truth is that avenues to participation in sports are more a consequence of social access than ill-defined genetic disparities. In the US, poor kids play basketball because they have more access to hoops than polo horses. By contrast, Kenyan runners are amazing athletes, but until the next ice age sets in they'll be more likely to medal in the Summer than the Winter Olympics. Athletes excel in the sports to which they have access.

Casting aside the countervailing evidence of numerous white-dominated sports, Entine insists that dark skin pigment is the primary determinant of athletic success. For example, Entine discounts the benefits of performance training by claiming that Carl Lewis trained no more than eight hours *per week* in the months preceding the 1988 Seoul Olympics (Entine, 2000, p. 4). For Carl Lewis, being black endowed him, Entine is convinced, with a greater chance of success than any amount of training that his pigment-deficient opponents might have undergone. Darker skin pigment also equipped Lewis with the necessary ability to match Jessie Owens' quadruple gold medal performance in the 1936 Berlin Olympics. Being black, Entine insists, enabled Lewis and Owens to run circles around opponents who were, alas, too pigment-deficient to measure up.

We will soon illustrate that such neo-eugenicist (Murray, 2012; Wade, 2014) perspectives are profoundly misguided. Nonetheless, we are willing to concede that Entine, Herrnstein, Murray, Wade, and other

neo-eugenicists of their ilk are correct about one thing: *intelligence, athletic prowess and other traits are distributed unequally throughout the human population*. Some people exhibit outstanding physical and intellectual talent, while the great majority of humanity regresses<sup>2</sup> closer to the mean. What is less obvious is the degree to which genetics, much less skin pigmentation, unilaterally determines the outcome of human achievement. Even more concerning are Entine's and Herrnstein and Murray's attempts to resuscitate a particularly noxious brand of 19th century pseudoscience (aka, eugenics) as a *fin-de-siècle* scientific breakthrough.

## Eugenics revisited

Entine (2000; 2007), Herrnstein and Murray (1994), and Wade (2014) are not the first to suggest that different racial groups are endowed with varying meritorious genetic qualities. Far from it. The pseudoscience of racial differentiation, which is often referred to as the eugenics movement (Rosen, 2004) was all the rage in the 19th century. In certain unenlightened circles eugenics remained popular well into the 20th century (Gillette, 2007; Lombardo, 2011). Adolph Hitler ultimately became the most infamous advocate of eugenics; rabidly extolling the superiority of Aryans while deploring the inferiority of Jews. It is easy to understand why, subsequent to World War II, the scientific community would have resoundingly rejected eugenics. Rather than good science, Hitler's antics exposed eugenics as nothing more than a gloss for virulent racism.

While neo-eugenicists such as, Entine, Wade, and Herrnstein and Murray, lament the passing of what they characterize as serious scientific considerations of race-based merit, the majority of scientists view the situation differently. Biologists have largely rejected race as a meaningless biological category (Graves, 2004) much less as a legitimate basis upon which to rank, celebrate or deplore differing human groups (Gould, 1996). Due to ethnocentric and racist prejudice many people are falsely convinced that racial categories are more clearly defined than, in reality, they either are or can be (Unander, 2000).

As it is generally understood race is intended to describe identifiable patterns of intraspecies biological variation. Like all sexually reproduced species *Homo sapiens* exhibits a range of physiological variation. However, no matter how we delineate racial groups, their members tend to exhibit more *within*-group than *between*-group variation (Diamond,

1997). Following decades of intensive analysis geneticists have not been able to distinguish anything approaching stark biological boundaries between human sub-groups. If anything, patterns of variation highlight commonalities far more than disparities in *Homo sapiens*' shared genetic heritage.

The genetic variation seen outside Africa is generally a subset of the variation within Africa, a pattern that would be produced if the migrants from Africa were limited in number and carried just part of African genetic variability with them. (Olson, et al., 2005)

Geneticists have never been able to identify even a single “race gene” (Sforza, et al., 1994). The minimal cosmetic variation that humans exhibit is roughly equivalent to the morphological variation that Gregor Mendel (Mawer, 2006) observed among his garden peas: variable expression of a singular allele complex. Like all sexually reproduced life forms humans exhibit a variety of cosmetic differences, but, like peas in a pod, we are all made of essentially the same stuff.

This is worth re-emphasizing because this fact more than any other illustrates that racial categories are more a product of racist wishful thinking than substantive biological distinctions. To reiterate, the people who are lumped into different racial groups generally exhibit more biological commonalities with people in *other* racial groups than they do with the other members of the so-called racial groups into which they have been shoe-horned (Little and Kennedy, 2010, p. 216).

Many Americans are convinced that the black vs. white races are as genetically dissimilar as two groups of humans can possibly be (Jacobs, 2011). However, the distinctions between white and black America represent little more than racist hate-mongering (Thernstrom, 1997). Given the long, albeit controversial, tradition of gene pool reticulation in the American melting pot (Hodes, 1999), if any definitive racial boundaries ever existed in the US, then they have been naught but a product of ethnocentrically distorted imaginations. America may remain a nation divided (Hattery and Smith, 2012), but from the moment of its founding America's gene pool—whether voluntarily or, in too many cases, involuntarily (Smith, 2004)—has been unequivocally united.

The overwhelming anthropological evidence demonstrates that all modern humans trace their heritage to the emergence of anatomically modern *Homo sapiens* in Africa approximately 200,000 years ago (Ash and Robinson, 2010). All modern humans were born in the same African



cradle. Evolutionarily speaking, so little time has elapsed since anatomically modern *Homo sapiens* emerged that there has been no significant subsequent biological evolution in the species. To reiterate, all living humans are biologically identical to the modern humans that emerged in Africa some 200,000 years ago (Willoughby, 2007). Though humans have arguably experienced more change during their brief existence than any other single species on earth, those changes have been due to *revolutionary* advances in culture (McGettigan, 2013) rather than *evolutionary* transformations in the human genome (Pagel, 2012).

The superficial cosmetic differences—such as patterns of skin pigmentation, hair texture, and the shape of eyes, noses, and lips—upon which humans have hung inordinately weighty ethnocentric baggage emerged as varied patterns of allele expression when Africa's naked ape migrated out of Africa (Awise and Ayala, 2010). Cosmetic variations in skin pigmentation emerged largely as a result of localized natural and sexual selection pressures. Because there has been so much confusion and disinformation propagated about this issue it is important to emphasize that, just like Gregor Mendel's peas, minuscule variations in human morphology are a *product of dominant vs. recessive allele expression* rather than fundamental biological disparities, i.e. different genes.

Humans with pigment-deficient allele expression are more likely to survive in regions where there is less danger of overexposure to intense solar radiation and where bodily vitamin D production is at a premium. Depending upon proximity to the equator, widely dispersed human groups developed variations in skin tones (Smith, 2011). The key distinction in this regard is that pigment-deficient humans are endowed with allele combinations that elevate skin pigment only when exposing skin to direct sunshine, whereas pigment-rich humans are endowed with allele combinations that consistently maintain higher levels of dermal pigment (Hall, 2013).

Inconsequential as such distinctions may be, as a result of ignorance and ethnocentrism, humans have amplified the most insignificant variations in allele expression—ear, eye and nose shape, skin tone and hair texture—into overblown sociological pathologies (Adams, 2008). Misunderstood as the biological foundations of race may be the sociological consequences of such malevolent delusions have, in both the past and present, generated tsunamis of catastrophic injury for billions of people (Jones, 2006). And nowhere is the destructive ignorance upon which racial antipathies are perpetuated more prominently displayed, and more counter-productively reinforced, than in the US Census.

## Rationalizing the irrational

One easy way to understand the misapplication of the term, race, is to examine the US decennial Census. Some of the best illustrations of the social construction of race come from analyzing census categories over time. For example, the 1860 census included three racial categories: white, negro and mulatto.

In 1865, immediately following the Civil War, the US performed a special census. In that census, those who identified as negro or mulatto were asked to confirm their racial identity. In part, the purpose of this special census was to advance the American Colonization Society's goal of shipping negroes back to Africa. Never mind the fact that only a small percentage of negroes had ever visited Africa or considered Africa their home. Then as now, the vast majority of African Americans had been born in the US. After the 1865 census, the category of mulatto disappeared in both terminology and sentiment until 2000. In the 2000 census, for the first time since the mid-1800s, individuals could choose to self-identify as belonging to more than one race. To be clear, there is no racial category that is specifically identified as mixed, or multiracial, but in the 2000 census respondents could choose to self-identify as having affiliations to one or more racial groups. As a result, about 13% of the US population now self-identifies as multiracial.

The 2000 census was also important because the Census relocated the designation, Hispanic, from its set of racial categories into a special designation of "ethnicity." By the way, this decision by the Census convincingly illustrates the fact that race is a social construction which is eminently modifiable at the whim of those who are empowered to shape public opinion.

Curiously, Hispanic is the one and only ethnicity that is officially included in the US Census. The reader may well ask: Why? In response, we can only speculate. Since the racial designations that the US Census employs are utterly illogical, it would be wishful thinking to hope that the Census had based its decision to re-designate Hispanics as the US's one and only ethnic group on sound science.

In the realm of sport, players like Sammy Sosa and Albert Pujols would have racially identified as Hispanic in the 1990 census. However, beginning in 2000, the same men would have had to choose a different racial identity: black, white, Asian/Pacific islander, or native American/Alaskan native. According to the US Census, in spite of how Hispanics

may have constructed their own identities, Sosa and Pujols could no longer *racially* identify as Hispanic. Though they were physiologically unchanged from one census to the next and the presumably invariant biological traits that we generally perceive as racial markers—skin tone, hair texture, ear, eye and nose shape—would have remained unchanged, their official racial identity underwent a significant transformation (Hattery and Smith, 2012).

If that is not evidence that racial categories are nothing more than an illogical figment of deluded social imaginations, then we don't know what is (Lopez, 2000). Not surprisingly, in 2000 the majority of Hispanics declined to answer the Census question regarding their racial identity.

Presumably, the purpose of the US Census is to count real demographic phenomena, such as the total number of US citizens, their ages, educational attainment, occupation, and so on. By perennially including race as a demographic characteristic of interest, the Census has conferred undue legitimacy on an otherwise invalid demographic artifact (Rodriguez, 2000). Sadly, the Census is following the American Sociological Association's lead in perpetuating the misuse of a destructive and unscientific concept.

As the leading voice for 13,000 academic and practicing sociologists, the ASA takes the position that calls to end the collection of data using racial categories are ill advised, *although racial categories do not necessarily reflect biological or genetic categories*. The failure to gather data on this socially significant category would preserve the status quo and hamper progress toward understanding and addressing inequalities in primary social institutions. The ASA statement highlights significant research findings on the role and consequences of race relations in social institutions such as schools, labor markets, neighborhoods, and health care scholarship that would not have been possible without data on racial categories. (American Sociological Association, 2003, emphasis added)

The ASA's unwillingness to problematize the concept of race, which the ASA acknowledges is irretrievably flawed, represents but the latest in a long, shameful history of pseudoscientific apologies for the racist status quo. Fortunately, not all scientific organizations are as content to perpetuate racist ignorance as the American Sociological Association. As noted above, the American Anthropological Association has developed the kind of scientifically rational position that will help to ameliorate rather than exacerbate the ill effects of race and racism. We encourage social scientists who value scientific scruples to support a professional

organization, the American Anthropological Association, which does likewise.

Race has always been a socially significant phenomenon: from time immemorial, humans have cast their eyes upon unfamiliar Others and emitted a collective, “Yuck!” The racial categories into which people have been arbitrarily lumped has often meant the difference between privilege and annihilation (Weitz, 2003). One of the most appalling hypocrisies in the history of politics took place when the white patriarchs of US democracy categorized pigment-rich Africans and Native Peoples as sub-humans and non-entities under the aegis of the Three-Fifths Compromise (Hattery and Smith, 2008). Apparently, democracy was for Real Men, not Others. Others, including pigment-rich indigenous peoples, African slaves, Hispanics, Asians and people of mixed race<sup>3</sup> (Zinn, 2003) were subject to indiscriminate and often horrific injustice in the name of democracy.

In a bungling effort to disavow centuries of racist abuse the US Census has attempted to update its mistreatment of race. Yet, with each renewed effort, the Census has only made increasingly extravagant displays of its ignorance (Goodman, et al., 2012). After only a cursory glance at Figure 4.1

6. What is this person’s race? Mark  one or more boxes.

- White
- Black, African Am., or Negro
- American Indian or Alaska Native — *Print name of enrolled or principal tribe.* ✓

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- Asian Indian       Japanese       Native Hawaiian
- Chinese             Korean             Guamanian or Chamorro
- Filipino             Vietnamese       Samoan
- Other Asian — *Print race, for example, Hmong, Laotian, Thai, Pakistani, Cambodian, and so on.* ✓       Other Pacific Islander — *Print race, for example, Fijian, Tongan and so on.* ✓

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- Some other race — *Print race.* ✓

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FIGURE 4.1 2010 US Census “racial” self-identification options (U.S. Census Bureau, 2009)

it is evident that, as recently as 2010, the US Census lacked anything approaching a coherent definition of race.

If race is indeed a biological phenomenon, then the Census has an obligation to separate its measures of race from questions concerning ethnic identity, which is a composite of socio-cultural factors. However, as Question 6 illustrates, the Census does not even make a token effort to distinguish between race and ethnicity. Instead the Census treats race and ethnicity as if they were interchangeable concepts, which represents a grievous error in demographic judgment. Doing so also perpetuates the destructive myth that race is a more substantive demographic phenomenon than it truly is.

Conflating race and ethnicity is a problem because, as discussed earlier, perceptions and ideation have zero impact on biology. Biological facts presumably operate independently of an individual's hopes, dreams, aspirations and any other form of self-perception. In other words, what people think has no impact on the structure of their DNA. Ethnicity, on the other hand, is eminently modifiable: people can change their name, citizenship, clothing, technology, food preferences, religion and spoken language. For example, during World War II, Werner Von Braun was a model Nazi rocket scientist, but, after World War II, under the aegis of Operation Paperclip (Jacobsen, 2014), Von Braun became a model *American* rocket scientist. People can modify their ethnicity, but they can't change their DNA.

No doubt Oscar Pistorius dreamed more than once of having fully formed legs. However, no matter how many prayers he may have uttered to the heavens, Pistorius' wishes could not alter the biological reality of his physical disability. Thus, if the Census is going to measure race, then it should do so by identifying biological rather than social or ethnic bases upon which to distinguish one race from another *because race and ethnicity are two different things*. In the absence of such biologically specific measures the Census should stop pretending that it can measure a biological phenomenon, race, with social variables.

Persistently conflating race with ethnicity is bad science. It's like searching for the Loch Ness Monster in your neighbor's fish tank. Ill-conceived fishing expeditions of this sort tend to obstruct rather than advance science.

As Figure 4.1 illustrates, by embracing the concept of multiracial identity in 2010, the Census attempted to move beyond artificially and insultingly restrictive racial categorizations.<sup>4</sup> However, in doing so, the

2010 Census further transformed its measure of race into a disorganized, illogical hodge-podge. Question 6 uncritically presents respondents with the opportunity to select black or white as distinct racial categories when they are nothing of the sort. If the Census can definitively distinguish between white and black Americans, then it should share its racial divining rod with geneticists who have been singularly unsuccessful in doing so (Zachos and Habel, 2011, p. 103–104). Presumably, the Census assumes that because the black-white racial divide is so deeply ingrained in the American psyche it just “makes sense” to include both categories without definition, explanation or qualification. Apart from catering to irrational race bias the Census’ unilateral distinction between black and white makes no demographic sense whatsoever.

Ever since Europeans began forcibly shipping Africans to the Americas, whites and blacks have engaged in procreation (Lemire, 2002). The ease with which white and black Americans have reticulated has exacerbated ethnic tensions throughout US history. While white male sexual aggression has largely been ignored (Gaspar and Hine, 1996, p. 158), the mere rumor of indiscretion on the part of black males has often inflamed the worst excesses of vigilante injustice (Berg, 2011).

There is no doubt that richly and lightly pigmented people have been sexually co-mingling since their arrival in the New World (Pascoe, 2009). As such, whatever modest genetic distinctions may once have existed have since been reticulatively blurred. From the genetic perspective there is no such thing as white and black America. Genetically speaking, America is a melting pot that is devoid of stark biological distinctions.

Still, the social reality in the US is such that the children of lightly and darkly pigmented parents tend to be viewed, on the basis of *social convention*, as entirely falling into the racial category of their richly pigmented parent. When it comes to racist ignorance there are no half-measures. The children of ethnically diverse parents may be blessed with a genetic heritage that effortlessly crosses pigment lines, but those children will nonetheless be perceived as flunking out of the white racial category. The US’s white supremacist mindset dictates that the privilege of membership in the white racial category implies that not a single drop of non-white blood (Malcomson, 2000) may pollute one’s genetic profile. That said, Question 6 of the 2010 Census does permit respondents to select multiple categories of racial identification, however, the Census continues to reify age-old non sequiturs concerning the biological foundations of “definitive” pigment-based racial categories.

Another factor complicating America's bizarrely inconsistent pigment-bias is, "Who qualifies as black?" (Brumfield and Botelho, 2015). There are many Native Americans, Asian Indians, North Africans, Arabs and Pacific islanders who have darker dermal pigment than many "black" Americans, but who are not considered black—at least not in the US (Wu, 2010, p. 586).

The logical problems with Question 6 don't stop there. In some cases, Question 6 correlates race with skin pigmentation, but in other cases, the Census asks respondents to identify their race in terms of anachronistic racial epithets, e.g. negro. Why not honky, gringo or cracker as sub-categories for white? In still other cases, the Census correlates racial identifiers with geography and/or nationality.

The latter choice is particularly perplexing. In the US, if someone were to respond "American" when asked to identify their race, we would assume that the respondent had gone daft. The same is true in China. Although the US Census may be content to lump all people of Chinese ancestry into a single monolithic racial category—which, by the way, is equivalent to ignorantly proclaiming that "all Chinese look the same"—the Chinese government officially recognizes no less than fifty-six distinct ethnic categories in mainland China (Kwan and Sodowsky, 1997).

Try as it might to develop a more sophisticated treatment of race the US Census has done little more than perpetuate uniquely American ignorance (Lehman, 2009). If there is a lesson to be learned it is that race is an irretrievably irrational demographic concept. In spite of any poor advice that it might be receiving from the American Sociological Association, the US Census should discontinue all future use of the term. Responsible social scientists should embrace the American Anthropological Association's more rational treatment of race and take all necessary steps to destroy the myth of race here and now. Full stop.

Ethnicity, on the other hand, is real. Ethnicity is comprised of discrete, measurable, empirical social phenomena—many of which the Census already integrates into its bastardized measures of race. In sum, the Census should terminate all future use of the concept, race, for two reasons:

- 1 Intellectual dishonesty
  - a. In Question 6, the Census claims that it is going to collect information about race and then proceeds to collect information about ethnicity.
    - i. This is a problem because scientists who care about the truth should not say one thing and then do another.

- 2 The Census's conflation of ethnicity and race perpetuates the misperception that race is a real and measurable demographic phenomenon.
  - a. Ethnicity is a sociological fact (e.g., language, customs, food, clothing, tools, etc.)
    - i. Race is a destructive biological fiction (Dawkins, 2004, p. 399).

In the next chapter we will explain, with the help of important sociological theories, why misperceptions of race have repeatedly inspired atrocities over largely imagined differences.

## Notes

- 1 Though, superficially, Entine's argument might seem complimentary of richly pigmented athletes, in fact, Entine is simply perpetuating the longstanding racist tradition of characterizing richly pigmented people as being possessed of more "low brow," bestial and animalistic qualities than their more cerebral, pigment-deficient counterparts (Largent, 2008; Viklund, 2009). A similar bifurcation operates in Herrnstein and Murray's scheme: IQ tests "prove" that lightly pigmented people are more egg-headed than their ignorant, dark-skinned brethren.
- 2 In the statistical rather than biological sense.
- 3 Women occupied a separate and special, but certainly not privileged, category of disenfranchised inferiors.
- 4 Apparently, in an attempt to relegate the bad old days of "White, Black, and Other" to the dustbin of demographic history.



# 5

## Species vs. Race

**Abstract:** *When it comes to biology, all humans are created equal. Not identical, but equal. We are all one species with one shared genome. Beginning with Galton (1909), eugenicists have made the erroneous argument that human races can be understood as human speciation in progress. Two sociological theorists, Emile Durkheim and W. I. Thomas, provide particularly valuable insights into the sociological processes that transform minimal biological diversity into profound social inequities. The authors argue that it is possible to eradicate racism by using a reverse dominance hierarchy ritual similar to the !Kung's. Americans create racism by ritually "othering" enemies. Examples include dehumanizing people of color in the Three-Fifths Compromise and othering wartime enemies. Americans can eradicate racism by formally ceasing hostilities against enemy-Others—which would involve expunging the Three-Fifths Compromise from the US Constitution.*

McGettigan, Timothy, and Earl Smith. *A Formula for Eradicating Racism: Debunking White Supremacy*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016.  
DOI: 10.1057/9781137599759.0009.

When it comes to biology, all humans are created equal. Not identical, but equal (Chiras, 2005, p. 464). We are all one species with one shared genome. A species can be defined as a group of organisms that are biologically similar enough to successfully interbreed. In turn, speciation occurs when a species sub-divides—quite often, this is caused by lengthy geographical isolation—into biologically differentiated groups that can no longer interbreed (Nosil, 2012).

Beginning with Galton (1909), eugenicists have argued that human races can be understood as human speciation in progress. Not only do eugenicists claim that races are based on indisputable biological distinctions (Wade, 2014), but eugenicists also argue that races are qualitatively hierarchical. Again, consider Hitler's celebration of Aryans and extermination of Jews. Eugenicists are wrong on both counts for the following reasons:

- 1 Humans of every race, nationality, ethnicity, religion, skin pigmentation, hair style, dietary preference, and so on, interbreed and generate viable progeny.
  - a. The barriers that distinguish human groups may be socially significant, but they are biologically insignificant (Dawkins, 2004).
  - b. Reticulation continuously recombines the gene pool of even the most geographically isolated groups of *Homo sapiens* into a single, homogeneous species.
- 2 Erroneous ranking – Genetic variation cannot be judged in terms of good vs. bad, or better vs. worse (Darwin, 1859).
  - a. In scientific terms, genetic traits are either adaptive or non-adaptive.
  - b. Any additional value judgments concerning the relative desirability of genetic traits, such as skin pigment, are entirely a product of unscientific prejudice (McWhorter, 2009).

In his seminal work, Charles Darwin (1859) did not ascribe value judgments to the evolutionary process. From Darwin's perspective, life forms either evolved random genetic solutions to environmental challenges or they did not. Those that survived were not better than those that went extinct, only different.

When it comes to human diversity eugenicists' strenuously disagree (Kühl, 1994). From the eugenicist perspective, markers of racial distinction evince either fundamental virtues or irredeemable vices (Carlson,

2001; Entine, 2000, 2007; Herrnstein and Murray, 1994; Stoskopf, 2002; Wade, 2014). Again, from this perspective, excellence is defined in terms of racist peccadilloes: Aryans are “the bomb” (Weikart, 2004).

Eugenicists are so passionately persuaded by their own illogic that they have repeatedly advocated horrific social policies—including Hitler’s Final Solution, involuntary sterilization in the 20th century US and Europe, and Herrnstein and Murray’s “budget cuts for dummies”—that have been explicitly designed to cull genetically undesirable humans from the gene pool (Bashford and Levine, 2010). For eugenicists, such policies make perfect sense because eugenicists believe that cleansing the gene pool of undesirables enhances opportunities for the genetically preferred to thrive (Mann, 2005).

## The virtues of variety

The crucial flaw in eugenicist logic is that it is biologically absurd. The genetic differences upon which advocates of ethnic cleansing have chillingly rationalized the slaughter of millions (Lieberman, 2006) are biologically disadvantageous only in the twisted minds of racist xenophobes. Darwin (1859) recognized that genetic variation is present in all sexually reproducing species. No two broods of chickens, fields of wildflowers, or pods of peas are identical. Sexual reproduction enhances survival by *increasing* advantageous genetic diversity (Sadava, 2013). Species that are genetically uniform are more likely to be plagued by parasites that need evolve only a single strategy to capitalize on their host’s homogeneous vulnerabilities (Sherratt and Wilkinson, 2009, p. 42). Species with wider variation in their gene pools present multiple challenges to undesirable invaders, such as bacteria and viruses. In fact, it is likely that diversity in the human gene pool may have been the crucial factor that preserved *Homo sapiens* from extinction at the hands of the bubonic plague, or other “bottleneck” near-extinction crises (Santos, 2012, p. 80). In any case where survival is the key criterion increased genetic variation is unquestionably a good thing.

In the struggle for survival ethnic cleansing does not create superhumans (Levy, 2013). It achieves the reverse. By genocidally destroying diversity ethnic cleansing impoverishes the gene pool and, thereby, amplifies the threat of extinction. In more than one sense racist ignorance poses a grave threat to the welfare of humanity.

That said, as sexually reproducing species go, genetic variation among humans is almost non-existent. When eugenicists look at people they often see nothing but genetically repugnant differences (Ball, 2011). As we will soon discuss this is because eugenicists have arbitrarily tuned their “deviance radars” to a setting that is too fine-grained and too ethnically biased. However, for a globally dispersed species, *Homo sapiens* exhibits an exceptionally narrow range of genetic variation.

## One big global family

Geographic dispersion is often a driving factor in the speciation process. Yet, for humans who have succeeded in becoming more widely dispersed than any other single terrestrial species there is an abnormal preponderance of uniformity, rather than diversity in the gene pool. There are multiple reasons for this. One has to do with a bottleneck, or near-extinction event that occurred approximately 70,000 years ago (McGuire, 2014, p. 69). Barely a blink in the *longue durée* of evolutionary history. Anthropologists estimate that a super-volcanic eruption which took place at the present-day site of Lake Toba, Indonesia may have reduced the total global population of *Homo sapiens* to as few as 2,000–10,000 adults (Finlayson, 2009, p. 104–105). In the relatively brief span since that bottleneck there has been too little time for significant biological differentiation to accumulate among humans.

As is also evident from *Homo sapiens*’ global dispersion, humans are avid travelers (Diamond, 1997). As humans have perpetually trotted the globe (Mancall, 2006) they have routinely mixed and mingled genetically (Grearson and Smith, 2001). Consequently, humans have neutralized the speciation process via their propensity to maintain a thriving genetic melting pot (Cole and Morgan, 2010).

## The social construction of revolting diversity

Given humanity’s tendency to continuously stir the genetic stew from whence we derive any significant differences between human groups are going to be more sociological than biological in nature. Two sociological theorists, Emile Durkheim and W. I. Thomas, provide particularly valuable insights into the sociological processes that transform minimal biological diversity into profound social inequities.

In addition to being credited as the founder of modern sociology Emile Durkheim remains one of the most influential social theorists in the world. Durkheim's conceptual treatment of deviance (1938, 1951) is of particular relevance to the present discussion. Deviance refers to behavior that is at variance with or that deviates from whatever the majority population perceives as normal. For example, ancient Romans considered it normal to attend lethal gladiatorial exhibitions (Dunkle, 2008). In the contemporary US we frown upon lethal spectator sports, although we avidly consume virtual violence that is every bit as gruesome as gladiatorial combat (Nagle, 2009).

Durkheim argued that every society relies upon the concept of deviance as a form of social glue (Franzese, 2009, p. 35). Via the concept of deviance humans routinely establish prejudicial boundaries that delineate in-groups from out-groups (Stark and Bainbridge, 1996). The majority population singles out deviants by reference to socially significant evaluation criteria, such as: criminal transgressions, abnormal attire, language, religious rituals, sexuality, hair style, bodily ornamentation, food consumption and so on. In addition, the majority population tends to make value judgments that create unpleasant consequences for those it labels as deviants. Take, for example, convicted criminals who may have paid their debt to society, but who retain the sticky label of deviant criminality (Becker, 1971).

While deviance is often associated with criminality, the concept also has much wider applicability. North America's pigment-deficient majority has constructed potent in- and out-group deviance stigmas based on skin pigmentation (Hattery and Smith, 2012). Since pigment-deprived Americans have traditionally viewed darker dermal pigmentation as a particularly noxious brand of deviance, the majority population has constructed profoundly white supremacist prejudices that have, over the centuries, become deeply ingrained in American society.

Throughout US history richly pigmented people, and males in particular, have been perceived as criminally deviant for no greater offense than "being black in public" (Hattery and Smith, 2012; Yancy and Jones, 2012). Even today, white supremacists take umbrage at richly pigmented peoples for committing the unpardonable sin of drawing breath.

We are the Ku Klux Klan. We hate niggers, we hate Jews, we hate faggots, and we hate spics. We don't have to have reason to hate them, *just because they breathe* we hate the filthy bums. (Brummel, 1998, emphasis added)

America's obsession with white supremacy also explains the grossly disproportionate rates of incarceration for African Americans (Hattery

and Smith, 2010) and unprovoked shootings by police officers (Hintzen and Rahier, 2014). People of color are often treated like dangerous deviants simply for being who they are. Indeed, a Florida police department recently drew criticism for using mug shots of black men as targets on its firing range (Alter, 2015). The implication is obvious: men with brown faces are perceived as dangerous deviants who deserve to be shot on sight. In a culture that is predicated on such poisonously unfair pigment biases it requires almost super-human effort for people of color to avoid unjust incarceration (Smith and Hattery, 2010a) or being murdered outright for the capital crime of being richly pigmented in a white supremacist society.

Nor, as is becoming abundantly clear, is it necessary for the criteria that distinguish out-group deviants from in-group normals to be of towering significance. In ascetic communities, members sometimes define deviance as experiencing “impure thoughts,” such as profanely enjoying sacramental spirits. To outsiders such forms of deviance are laughable. However, among the devout members of ascetic communities profane self-indulgence can represent the epitome of moral depravity (Stark and Bainbridge, 1996).

The more similar that members of a community happen to be, the more fine-grained their operative definitions of deviance tend to become. This is counterintuitive. One might expect that as members of a social group become more physically and behaviorally uniform their obsession with deviance would attenuate. What basis is there to fret about deviance if everyone looks, sounds and acts the same?

Because, Durkheim argues, perceptions of deviance are so essential for social cohesion, in even the most uniform groups people will obsess about deviance. Indeed, as noted above, the more similar that people are the more preoccupied they will become with even the most trivial differences. Take, for example, when servicemen line up for military inspections; the slightest imperfections in dress and comportment can have serious consequences. This also explains why, even though biologists have concluded that race is illusory, people remain convinced that racial differences are both real and important.

Wade (2014) rejects the scientific contention that race is not a biologically real phenomenon. He insists that scientists must be wrong because his common sense insists that race is real.

From biologists’ obfuscations on the subject of race, sociologists have incorrectly inferred that there is no biological basis for race, confirming their preference for regarding race as just a social construct. *How did the academic world*

*contrive to reach a position on race so far removed from reality and commonsense observation?* (Wade, 2014, p. 68, emphasis added)

Of course, Wade is committing the very same error as those who insist that the earth is flat (Garwood, 2008), or the universe is geocentric (Sungenis and Bennett, 2007) or that God does not play dice with quantum particles (Stone, 2013). Upsetting as it may be, science has revealed time and again that the universe often operates in ways that defy common sense expectations. That is true with quantum particles (Kumar, 2009b) and it is also true with race. In spite of what Wade may think he sees, exhaustive scientific research on the human genome has determined that race is as mythical as unicorns. Fortunately for Wade, he is at liberty to express devotion to any crackpot beliefs that he wishes. However, Wade and other devotees of common sense-based myths will, like the members of the Flat Earth Society, only look more foolish the longer they cling to antiquated misperceptions.

Wade is convinced that race exists not because science has established an unequivocal biological foundation for race, but because his “deviance radar” tells him that race exists.

This gives a three-way split in the human population that corresponds robustly to the three racial groups *that everyone can identify at a glance*, those of Africans, East Asians, and Caucasians. (Wade, 2014, p. 93, emphasis added)

Deviance radar can be understood as the highly attuned sensibility that humans develop for the purposes of discerning vanishingly fine-grained evidence of “distinguishable deviance” among their fellow humans. As discussed above, as globally dispersed species go humans are incredibly uniform. When confronted with striking physiological uniformity, rather than disregarding nominal differences, humans tend to set their deviance radars to an even finer degree of scrutiny.

The problem with this process is that, as uniformity increases, human deviance radars assign progressively higher degrees of importance to less and less significant markers of distinction. That may be well and good for ascetic communities and military parades, but it quickly becomes problematic when societies begin sanctioning their members for contemplating impure thoughts (Greenwald, 2014; Orwell, 2003). The problem with deviance radar systems is that their settings are often more fine-grained and biased by racist prejudice than they should be. Sometimes deviance radars warn us that people are “dangerously different” when they really aren’t.

Traditionally, people have programmed their deviance radars to screen for race in the commonsensical fashion that Wade advocates. Wade argues that anyone with a pair of eyes can easily discern the racial distinctions between three (or five?) human races: Africans, East Asians and Caucasians.

Such an arrangement, of portioning human variation into five continental races, is to some extent arbitrary. But it makes practical sense. *The three major races are easy to recognize.* (Wade, 2014, p. 94, emphasis added)

However, scientists have concluded that traditional perceptions of race-based deviance are deeply flawed. Before the advent of modern genetics deviance radars assured their operators that Others were not only revoltingly different, but they were also inferior.

The central premise of racism...is the notion of an ordered hierarchy of races... Since quality is seen as biologically inherent, the racist's higher status can never be challenged, and inferior races can never redeem themselves. The notion of inherent superiority...is held to justify unlimited abuse of races held to be inferior, from social discrimination to annihilation. (Wade, 2014, p. 17)

Thanks to modern science we now know that Real Men are not as different from Others as racist deviance radars have indicated. Just as science has helped humanity see beyond the naïve misperceptions of geocentrism, the Flat Earth Society, and Newtonian physics, white supremacists are in desperate need of help from scientists to recalibrate their pigment-intolerant deviance radars: Pink is not better than brown. Nor is Wade correct in asserting that categorical racial distinctions are equally obvious to all observers.

To the uninitiated racist tensions between Turks and Armenians, Serbs and Croats, and Hutus and Tutsies are mystifying. To the untutored eye, the groups on each side of such "racial" divides appear physiologically identical in all important respects (Dutton, 2007). However, for those who are sufficiently acculturated to the appropriate *social* cues, the slightest deviations from dominant ethnic norms can literally mean the difference between unqualified acceptance and genocidal extermination (Toal and Dahlman, 2011). While this emphasizes the trivialities that can often motivate atrocious racist hostilities, in the next section we will illustrate that even imagined differences can sometimes trigger appalling exhibitions of racism.



## The power of suggestion

To understand how people amplify biologically insignificant phenomena into criteria that can destroy lives it is helpful to consider the Thomas Theorem (1928): “If men define situations as real, they are real in their consequences.” This means that, purely through the power of suggestion, people often transform insignificant physiological differences into monumental social pathologies.

People are extraordinarily susceptible to suggestion. When it comes from an authoritative source the mere suggestion that right-minded citizens should perceive Others as despicable sub-humans can often put entire nations under the thrall of a misanthropic trance.

Otherring enemies during wartime is a very common practice. Doing so creates a semi-hypnotic environment in which slaughtering enemy-Others carries no moral penalties. Quite the reverse. During wartime, murdering Others is usually considered cause for celebration. Bizarrely, those who refuse to murder enemy-Others during wartime are often treated like criminals (Brock, 2006). When wars end and political leaders officially rescind wartime hostilities right-minded citizens obediently—and with remarkably little cognitive dissonance—resume a frame of mind in which they perceive wartime enemy-Others as Real Men. After D-Day heroes murdered Germans. After VE Day only murderers murdered Germans.

Thus, if we insist that “skin pigment *matters*,” then in spite of its utter insignificance as a physiological trait, we can construct treacherously unfair social inequalities purely on the basis of suggestion (Griffin, 1961). Jane Elliott’s blue eye–brown eye schoolroom exercise (Peters, 1987) offers an illuminating example of the Thomas Theorem in action.

In 1968, Jane Elliott asked her third grade students to accept, on her word alone, that eye pigment was a valid basis upon which to assess human merit. Since all of her third-graders were white kids from the American heartland Elliott could not create a palpable environment of racism among her students on the basis of skin pigment. Instead, purely via the power of suggestion, Elliott created an environment of eye pigment racism in her classroom. She did so for the following reasons:

- 1 One can’t fully understand racism unless one has personally felt its sting.
- 2 Elliott’s eye pigment exercise demonstrated that the American obsession with dermal pigment is irrational.

- a. It makes as much sense to discriminate on the basis of eye pigment as it does to discriminate on the basis of skin pigment.
- 3 Elliot demonstrated that eye pigment racism is *remediable*.
  - a. Once they had experienced racist scorn Elliott's students were only too happy to destroy the eye pigment racism that they and their teacher had constructed.
- 4 If eye pigment racism is remediable, then so is skin pigment racism.

On day one of her 1968 exercise, Elliott created a suggestion-induced environment of eye pigment racism by declaring that her brown-eyed students were inferior to blue-eyed kids. On day two Elliot reversed the eye pigment racism in her classroom by negatively stigmatizing blue-eyed kids. Note that, as with every other form of racism, the eye pigment racism that Elliott constructed in her classroom was predicated on two mutually interdependent misapprehensions: that individuals were (1) biologically distinguishable and (2) deemed either superior or inferior with respect to a socially significant, but biologically *insignificant* physiological trait. In this case, eye pigment.

No sooner had Elliott instituted an imaginary environment of eye pigment inequality in her classroom than she began to witness alarming forms of racial intolerance erupt among her students. Purely in response to Elliott's invented eye pigment hierarchy, a formerly homogeneous group of kids became acrimoniously polarized. By the way, this is a further illustration of the minutia that can instigate Durkheimian deviance-driven prejudice. Insignificant as eye color may have been prior to the exercise, the moment that Elliott planted the seed of eye pigment prejudice in her students' minds, Elliott's students became passionate eye-pigment racists. Kids with the inferior eye color du jour weren't only singled out for being different, their more privileged peers treated kids with inferior eye color as reprehensible degenerates. Thus, Elliott's exercise provides an important confirmation of the argument that pigment-based racism—including both eye and skin pigment—is largely a product of suggestion.

Introducing even a modicum of suggestion-induced inequality, admittedly at the behest of a classroom's paramount authority figure, can transform previously sweet little kids into monsters. The students upon whom Elliott conferred a new form of eye pigment superiority seemed to relish the opportunity to sadistically malign their formerly co-equal classmates.

Philip Zimbardo (2007) experienced a similar turn of events in his infamous prison experiment. Zimbardo set up a simulated prison environment in the basement of Stanford's psychology building in order to achieve the following:

We wanted to see what the psychological effects were of becoming a prisoner or prison guard. To do this, we decided to set up a simulated prison and then carefully note the effects of this institution on the behavior of all those within its walls. (Zimbardo, 1999)

Even though Zimbardo and his participants were fully aware that they were taking part in an experimental simulation, as soon as the experiment got underway, all of the participants (including Zimbardo!) began to treat the simulation and the invented dominance hierarchies therein—superior guards and inferior prisoners—as if they were real. Of particular interest for this discussion was the fact that even in Zimbardo's simulated environment, socially constructed inequalities inspired those in power to sadistically abuse the powerless.

Though randomly selected for their roles in the simulation, the prison guards in Zimbardo's experiment behaved like sadistic overlords. The guards treated their fellow Stanford students as if they were contemptible miscreants. For their part, the prisoners behaved like the members of a socially despised underclass—in much the same way as the kids who were arbitrarily designated as having the inferior eye color in Elliot's classroom exercise. Interestingly, Albert Einstein also noted a curious willingness on the part of the oppressed to be complicit in their own oppression:

It seems to be a universal fact that minorities, especially when their Individuals are recognizable because of physical differences, are treated by majorities among whom they live as an inferior class. The tragic part of such a fate, however, lies not only in the automatically realized disadvantage suffered by these minorities in economic and social relations, but also in the fact that those who meet such treatment themselves for the most part acquiesce in the prejudiced estimate because of the suggestive influence of the majority, and come to regard people like themselves as inferior. (Albert Einstein as quoted by Jerome and Taylor, 2005, p. 137)

The purpose of this digression is to illustrate how susceptible people are to suggestion, and how easy it is, as Milgram (2004) also discovered in his Obedience experiments, for mild-mannered gentlefolk to become heartless sadists. Even though Elliot's and Zimbardo's students knew perfectly well that they were taking part in simulations, their attitudes

and behaviors changed dramatically—and not for the better—in response to the artificial inequalities that their teachers invented.

Not only does each study offer a textbook example of the Thomas Theorem at work, but Elliot's and Zimbardo's simulations also emphasize the poisonously corrupting influences of socially constructed dominance hierarchies. The only differences between the privileged and oppressed participants in Elliot's and Zimbardo's studies were those that each teacher invented. Yet, the privileged participants in each study, under the tutelage and authority of their teachers, wielded those imagined differences like lethal weapons. Each respective dominance hierarchy not only conferred an overblown sense of superiority on privileged research subjects, but it also motivated privileged subjects to torment inferior Others.

The fact that the powerful have a propensity to sadistically denigrate the powerless helps explain why there are often such intense hostilities between competing ethnic groups. Viewing Others as qualitatively inferior has inspired genocide more than once. As pointed out earlier, this is true even in situations where the perceptible differences between competing ethnic groups are vanishingly inconsequential (Toal and Dahlman, 2011). As illustrated by Elliot's and Zimbardo's studies, even simulated dominance hierarchies can serve as a pretext to profoundly malign and oppress Others.

Given how horrific and ubiquitous ethnic discord can be, people have often concluded that racism is incurable. However, it is significant that at the conclusion of their respective studies both Elliot and Zimbardo destroyed the sadism-inducing dominance hierarchies that they and their students had constructed. When Elliott told her students that they should no longer discriminate on the basis of eye pigment, Elliott's students instantly jettisoned the eye-pigment racism that they had colluded in creating. Zimbardo achieved a similar result at the conclusion of his prison simulation. When he terminated the study, Zimbardo also dissolved the sadistic dominance hierarchy that had erupted between privileged guards and inferior prisoners.

## Note

- 1 The vast majority of eugenicists are not professional biologists. As such, eugenicists lack the scientific chops to understand, much less credibly dispute, the findings of professional geneticists.

# 6

## A Remedy for Racism

*Abstract: No other species has ever introduced as much innovation into the earth's biosphere as Homo sapiens. What makes humans unique is a special combination of biological and intellectual gifts that have made humans the most potent agents of change on planet earth. Agency is a uniquely human form of creative non-conformity. Until 1964 virulent racial prejudice determined the life chances of various racial groups in the US. Though he encountered an unremitting headwind of racist hostility, Martin Luther King Jr. demonstrated the transformative power of human agency by dedicating himself to ending racial inequality. In so doing, he changed the course of US history.*

McGettigan, Timothy, and Earl Smith. *A Formula for Eradicating Racism: Debunking White Supremacy*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016.  
DOI: 10.1057/9781137599759.0010.

Richard Lee (1984) is an anthropologist who studied the !Kung of the Kalahari Desert, a remarkably egalitarian people who are indigenous to southern Africa. Lee discovered that the !Kung maintained their unusually egalitarian social relationships by building a “reverse dominance hierarchy ritual” (Boehm et al., 1993) into their daily lives. Lee referred to this equality-enhancing ritual as an exercise in “insulting the meat” (1984, p. 50).

To survive in the desert, the !Kung needed to devote a large portion of each day to gathering life-sustaining plants, fruits, nuts and vegetables. Animal life is sparse in the Kalahari, so meat tends to be a limited and highly valued item in the !Kung diet. The !Kung so eagerly prized the meat that hunters provided that successful hunters posed a serious threat to the !Kung’s egalitarian social structure. In other words, hunters could use the meat that they supplied as a source of leverage to elevate their social status above non-hunters. Consequently, for the !Kung to maintain an egalitarian society they needed to intentionally deflate the egos of successful hunters.

When !Kung hunters returned to camp after making a successful kill, instead of being greeted by adoring admirers the hunter’s friends and family began hurling invectives at their returning heroes. The better and more copious the kill the more the !Kung would insult and degrade the hunter. One of Richard Lee’s informants, a man named Gaudo, described a typical meat insulting ritual in the following terms:

Say there is a !Kung who has been hunting. He must not come home and announce like a braggart, “I have killed a big one in the bush!” He must first sit down in silence until I or someone else comes up to his fire and asks, “What did you see today?” He replies quietly, “Ah, I’m no good for hunting. I saw nothing at all [pause] just a little tiny one.” “Then I smile to myself,” Gaudo continued, “because I know he has killed something big.” In the morning we make up a party of four or five people to cut up and carry the meat back to camp. When we arrive at the kill we examine it and cry out, “You mean to say you have dragged us all the way out here in order to make us cart home your pile of bones? Oh, if I had known it was this thin I wouldn’t have come.” Another one pipes up, “People, to think I gave up a nice day in the shade for this. At home we may be hungry, but at least we have cool water to drink.” If the horns are big, someone says, “Did you think that somehow you were going to boil down the horns for soup?” (Lee 1984, pp. 155–156)

Of course, the !Kung were exultant any time that their hunters returned with kills. Even though they might have been outwardly unpleasant to successful hunters inwardly the !Kung were jubilant.

Why would the !Kung engage in such a strange insulting the meat charade? In fact, insulting the meat played a vital role in perpetuating !Kung society. To survive in the desert, the !Kung relied on vital contributions from each and every member of their small bands. Sick or weak band members placed a heavy strain on the larger group. Therefore, the best way to preserve the health and welfare of the entire group was to ensure that all members had equal access to much-needed nourishment.

Insulting the meat helped to maintain egalitarian social relationships among the !Kung by, first of all, reducing rather than inflating the social status of successful hunters. Insulting the meat enabled those who were dependent on the hunters to obtain valuable meat protein without plummeting in status relative to those hunters.

Second, insulting the meat is an exercise in “reverse dominance hierarchy” (Boehm, et al., 1993). This means that, far from experiencing an inflated ego, hunters remain the objects of scorn until they have redistributed portions of their kill to each and every member of their meat-starved band. Once unburdened of his kill, a successful hunter’s status can resume a state of equivalency with that of the other members of his band. Via insulting the meat, the !Kung can remain an egalitarian society that is focused on enhancing the well-being of all.

What do reverse dominance hierarchy rituals, such as insulting the meat, have to do with the larger issue of developing remedies for racism?

Jane Elliott’s and Philip Zimbardo’s classic studies illustrate that it takes naught but a few words from authority figures to transform a tranquil social environment into a seething cauldron of sadistic inequality. Conversely, the !Kung meat insulting ritual demonstrates that, just as people can construct social inequalities, they can also counteract social inequalities.

Likewise, Jane Elliott’s blue eye–brown eye classroom exercise also highlights the fact that, just as Elliott could infect the minds of her students with eye-pigment racism, she could also cure her students of that dreadful social malignancy. If we break down Elliott’s classroom exercise into discrete stages, we can identify the key junctures at which Elliott uses her authority to construct, reconstruct and, finally, eradicate eye-pigment racism:

Time 1: Elliott’s class perceives itself as an undifferentiated group of Midwestern white kids.

Status of eye pigment racism: Elliott’s students evince no discernible signs of racism or inequality.

Time 2: Elliott modifies her students' perceptions of themselves by arbitrarily asserting that blue-eyed kids are superior to brown-eyed kids.

Status of eye pigment racism:

- ▶ Blue-eyed kids evince hostile, pigment-biased thinking by racially denigrating brown-eyed kids.
- ▶ Brown-eyed kids evince signs of suggestion-induced racial inferiority.

Time 3: Elliott socially *reconstructs* eye pigment racism in her classroom by asserting that her students should henceforth perceive brown-eyed kids as being socially superior to blue-eyed kids.

Status of eye pigment racism:

- ▶ Brown-eyed kids turn the tables and racially denigrate blue-eyed kids.
- ▶ Blue-eyed kids suffer from suggestion-induced racial inferiority.

Time 4: Elliott eradicates the racism in her classroom by terminating the eye pigment exercise and informing her students that they are all racially equal.

Status of eye pigment racism:

- ▶ Elliott and her students cease all eye pigment related hostilities.
- ▶ Elliott's students resume a state of egalitarian normalcy.

We feel that this time sequence clarifies the manner in which Elliott constructs and destroys racism purely via the power of suggestion. The most extraordinary moment in Elliott's exercise occurs when she obliterates the eye pigment racial divide among her students. In so doing, Elliott demonstrates that at least one form of racism is eradicable. If, as we have argued throughout this discussion, all forms of racism are suggestion-induced social constructions, then the authors are convinced that it should also be possible to eradicate every other form of racism as well (Peters, 1987).

The !Kung's meat insulting ritual demonstrates that it is not possible to eliminate social inequality with apathy. If, day in and day out, the !Kung had not aggressively counteracted meat hunter privilege, then egomaniacal hunters would surely have undermined the !Kung's egalitarian social relationships. This illustrates the fact that if people are not actively involved in the process of neutralizing social inequality, then they are very likely in the process of creating social inequality. The price of democracy is eternal vigilance.



In the world outside Jane Elliott's classroom, suggestion-induced social dominance hierarchies have more than once incited horrifying forms of racial prejudice, such as Nazi Germany's extermination of Jews. What remains to be seen is the degree to which the power of suggestion, or appropriately designed reverse dominance hierarchy rituals can eliminate long-held racist prejudices among members of the general public.

It is significant that, at some point during Time 2 and Time 3 of Elliott's in-class exercise, Elliot subjected all of her students to the sting of racial abuse. Similar to the sting of any other immunization, exposing her students to "a dose" of racism may have been painful, but Elliot's immunizing treatment might well have made her students more receptive to the idea of eradicating eye pigment racism as soon as the opportunity arose. Once again, Elliot's students eagerly complied when she told them to terminate the eye-pigment racism in their classroom.

People who have been victimized by racism are arguably better equipped to empathize with others who have been similarly victimized (Griffin, 1961). Conversely, those who have never experienced racist malice might be less inclined to empathize with those who have. This outcome corresponds with one of the key findings from Stanley Milgram's Obedience experiments: Milgram (2004) found that sadism decreased as proximity to victims increased. The more we empathize with Others, the less likely we are to terrorize them.

To be clear, we are not recommending that all Americans should undergo a "blue-eye/brown-eye" racial-immunization exercise. Any such initiative would be ethically abhorrent and logistically impossible. What we are saying is that when people who are unfamiliar with discrimination suddenly feel the poisonous stab of racism (Griffin, 1961) they tend to develop an enhanced capacity to empathize with the racially despised. If Hitler had been a Jew, even for only a day—at Auschwitz!—he just might have rethought his Final Solution.

To put it mildly, the US is not yet as colorblind as one would expect the "world's greatest democracy" to be. Insulting the meat may preserve the egalitarian social structure of small gatherer-hunter tribes in the Kalahari Desert. However, terminating racism in a democracy with over 320 million citizens will require a reverse dominance hierarchy ritual of an entirely different magnitude. What sort of ritual, one may well wonder, would be sufficient to galvanize a nation of 320 million Americans around the cause of eradicating the scourge of racism once and for all?

If the United States is ever going to make a sincere effort to eradicate racism, it will be necessary to kill that vile weed at its root. So, where, one may ask, does the deepest taproot of American racism lie? Racism certainly existed in the western hemisphere before the founding of the US. We can thank Christopher Columbus for importing a particularly noxious brand of European-style racism to the New World. Thanks for nothing, Chris! Columbus was not a hero (Zinn, 2003).

If, however, we are searching for the foundations of uniquely US-style racism, then we will have to search for underlying racial biases in the political structures upon which the US was founded: the US Constitution. What does the Constitution have to say about racism? Once again, the text of Article 1, Section 2, Clause 3 of the United States Constitution is revealing:

Representatives and direct Taxes shall be apportioned among the several States which may be included within this Union, according to their respective Numbers, which shall be determined by adding to the whole Number of free Persons, including those bound to Service for a Term of Years, and excluding Indians not taxed, three fifths of all other Persons. (Constitution of the United States)

The United States is a democracy that was born in hypocrisy. How can a nation that calls itself a democracy treat the vast majority of its residents as either non-entities or sub-humans?

Democracy + 3/5 Compromise = Hypocrisy

For people of color, the US Constitution does not make good on the promise of democracy. Instead, for people of color, the US Constitution amounts to a declaration of war. Given that the white supremacist dogma which defines US-style racism is still inscribed in the text of the US Constitution, if the US is ever going to cease hostilities against people of color, then Americans will have to eliminate the passages in the US Constitution that vilify people of color and simultaneously institutionalize white supremacy.

As we have already seen, authorities who insinuate that Real Men are better than Others can trigger appalling demonstrations of racism. So long as Americans preserve language in their most sacred of documents—the US Constitution, no less!—that advocates skin pigment racism, the US will remain a bastion of white supremacy that inflicts grievous injury upon people of color each and every day. Therefore, we

call for the immediate and total erasure of the Three-Fifths Compromise from the US Constitution.

Hypocrisy – 3/5 Compromise = Democracy

In calling for the erasure of the Three-Fifths Compromise, we are not proposing another constitutional amendment, such as the Equal Rights Amendment. No, we are proposing something altogether unprecedented—at least at the federal level.<sup>1</sup> For the good of democracy, we are calling for the complete erasure of reprehensibly racist language that should never have been incorporated into a purportedly democratic constitution in the first place. Since adopting the US Constitution in 1789, Americans have amended the Constitution many times, but Americans have never erased any portion of the original document. The time has arrived for Americans to do precisely that.

It is no wonder that racism has been rampant in the US ever since its founding. It is not possible to build a real democracy out of a document that advocates white supremacy. So long as the Three-Fifths Compromise remains woven into the US Constitution, the US will remain committed to racist injustice in both word and deed.

No doubt proposing that Americans should strike the Three-Fifths Compromise from the US Constitution will ruffle some feathers. How dare we suggest that portions of the US's most sacred document amount to a declaration of war against America's richly pigmented citizens? In response, we would ask, "Precisely which democracy-loving constituencies would defend the genocide-inspiring language of the Three-Fifths Compromise?" Come out, come out wherever you are.

We submit that, if anyone had ever bothered to ask people of color if they supported including language in the US Constitution that explicitly dehumanized people of color, people of color would have emphatically rejected such an obscene proposal. It is difficult to imagine anyone who is daily besieged by America's shit-storm of micro and macro racist aggression defending the Other-hating sentiments that are expressed in the Three-Fifths Compromise. The only people who are likely to defend the anti-democratic language of the Three-Fifths Compromise are the white supremacists who care more about maintaining America's perverted system of racist privilege than creating a nation that truly embodies the US's democratic ideals.

As a thought exercise, it might be worthwhile to consider replacing the Three-Fifths Compromise with a universal declaration of human

equality.<sup>2</sup> That is, one would expect a democracy to encourage every human being to treat every other human being like human beings. A universal declaration of human equality would certainly make much more sense in a democratic constitution than the Three-Fifths Compromise. A universal declaration of human equality would also change the US government's role from chief instigator of racist hostilities to (as it should be) chief protector of human rights. Of course, incorporating a universal declaration of human equality in the US Constitution would make it more difficult for authorities to conveniently reclassify immigrants, people of color and wartime enemy-Others as sub-humans, but perhaps that's a good thing.

Some people are likely to be so deeply wedded to racist misanthropy that their irrational convictions will remain immune to any amount of rational discourse.

We don't have to have reason to hate them, *just because they breathe* we hate the filthy bums. (Brummel, 1998, emphasis added)

Nevertheless, there is also evidence that both individuals and entire societies can change. In 2002, Oregonians successfully voted to expunge the racist ban on people of color from their state Constitution. Also, until recently, it would have been unthinkable for a richly pigmented man to be elected President of the United States. If miracles on that scale can occur, then there is every reason to hope that Americans may one day purge the US Constitution of white supremacy. If Oregonians can remove racist language from their state Constitution, then there is every reason to believe that Americans can expunge the Three-Fifths Compromise from the US Constitution. On that happy day, the US will finally take its first serious step toward creating a real democracy in both word and deed.

## **The future is what we make it**

Jane Elliott's work offers a tantalizing glimpse into the role that suggestion plays in socially constructing racism. Elliott illustrates that it can be as simple to infect the human mind with racist irrationality as it is to eradicate such malignant delusions.

At the very least, scientists owe it to the world to tell the truth. The core truth at the heart of this discussion is that race is one of the most

destructive lies that humanity has ever concocted. Enlightened thinking has succeeded in eliminating numerous other age-old scourges. So, there is reason to believe that, if we put our rational minds to work, racism may one day be as curable as any other medieval malady.

As we have learned from modern medicine the key to curing any disease is to isolate the cause and then concoct an effective antidote. Toward that end, we can say that racism is a social-psychological disorder that thrives in any environment where the voice of authority asserts that Real Men are better than Others. If we are going to destroy racism, then we must debunk the fallacies that support the ravings of racist authorities—regardless of whether such gibberish emanates from the mouths of KKK leaders, or clutters the pages of (anti)democratic political constitutions.

Any scourge as old and tenacious as racism cannot be cured overnight. Nevertheless, the following is a list of three steps that, starting now, scientists and the general public can and should employ to make immediate progress against the scourge of racism.

- 1 *Quit Shilly-Shallying*: Beginning now, responsible people should follow the American Anthropological Association's example and repudiate the concept of race.
- 2 Replace race with ethnicity.
  - a. Too many people use the terms, race and ethnicity, interchangeably. They are not interchangeable concepts.
    - i. Ethnicity is a sound, measurable empirical phenomenon.
    - ii. Race is a destructive myth.
- 3 The US must delete the Three-Fifths Compromise from its Constitution and officially terminate all remaining white supremacist hostilities against people of color.

Does curing the blight of racism sound impossible or Pollyannaish? Actually, it should be as easy for Americans to eradicate the scourge of skin pigment racism as it was for Jane Elliott to banish eye pigment racism from the minds of her third graders. As enlightened citizens of the 21st century, we—and scientists more than anyone—must come to grips with the fact that race is just as illusory as archaic beliefs in witches, warlocks and vampires. We can render such medieval superstitions harmless so long as we banish them to the realm of childish fantasy. It is only when people start believing that fairy tales are real that Dark Age fantasies can wreak havoc in the real world. Take, for example, the Salem

witch trials or Hitler's crackpot delusions about Jews. It wasn't until the Germans emerged from their Nazi-induced trance that they grasped the true horror of their and Hitler's atrocities.

Just as the Salem witch-hunters, World War II-era Germans, and the rapscallions in Jane Elliott's classroom were cured of their hate-filled delusions, the same is possible for every other racist. Once again, curing racism involves debunking the suggestion-induced delusion that humanity can be divided and ranked by race. Any rational person is capable of debunking race in precisely the same way that they debunk erroneous beliefs in hobgoblins, ghouls and zombies.

Racism is an awful, but curable social-psychological disorder. Scientists who pretend that they can be neutral about racism—such as those who support the American Sociological Association's misguided endorsement of the racist status quo—actively cultivate a social environment in which age-old racist superstitions can thrive and, in so doing, they aid and abet every hate crime that racists commit.

## Notes

- 1 Recall that in 2002, Oregonians voted to expunge racist language from their state Constitution that had banned people of color from residing in Oregon.
- 2 Those interested in what such a declaration might say may refer to Appendix 3 for the complete text of the United Nation's Universal Declaration of Human Rights, <http://www.un.org/en/documents/udhr/>.

# 7

## Planet of the Super-Adaptable Apes

*Abstract: Humans have a capacity for agency. This means that, unlike other life forms, humans are not determined by the limitations of their environments or biology. For humans, biology is a starting point. Many people, such as Martin Luther King Jr., born into environments that are permeated by severe inequalities have refused to be defined by those onerous social constraints. It may not be a simple thing to accomplish, but motivated agents, such as MLK Jr., have demonstrated that even in the US people can fight and destroy undemocratic dominance hierarchies. Too many minds have been warped by the pathological delusion that race is real and, therefore, their destructive racist peccadilloes are justified. Still, in its endeavor to bring truth to light, science has regularly provoked hitherto unimaginable social change. If agents have proved anything, it is that, humans can change themselves and their world for the better.*

McGettigan, Timothy, and Earl Smith. *A Formula for Eradicating Racism: Debunking White Supremacy*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016.  
DOI: 10.1057/9781137599759.0011.

Jane Elliott's blue eye–brown eye exercise illustrates that humanity's most significant differences are those that humans invent (Dain, 2002). Because humans are agents reality is largely what we make it (Berger and Luckmann, 1966). As illustrated above, this is true in a negative sense. In other words, because we insist that imaginary racial divides are real racism continues to destroy lives in every corner of the globe (Berg and Wendt, 2011). Fortunately, agency is not only a force for destruction. When agents decide to build rather than destroy, they can often achieve the impossible (McGettigan, 2011).

Although the past 200,000 years have been genetically static for *Homo sapiens*, it has been an era of unprecedented socio-cultural change (Fuller, 2011). No other single species has ever introduced as much innovation into the earth's biosphere as *Homo sapiens* (Pagel, 2012). While all species are unique, because humans are endowed with a capacity for agency, it is not an exaggeration to say that, among all of earth's inhabitants, humans are the most extraordinary (McGettigan, 2013). What makes humans unique is a special combination of biological and intellectual talents—nature *and* nurture—that have synergized to make humans the most potent agents of change ever to evolve on planet earth.

Karl Popper (1999) argues that most animals solve problems with their biology. Thus, ancient fishes underwent remarkable genetic adaptations that enabled their distant descendants to live on dry land (Morgan, 2009). Throughout the evolution of life on earth, species after species has undergone long, complex processes of evolutionary change as a means of solving new environmental problems (Darwin, 1859; Gould, 2002). As their grip slipped on global dominance at the K-T Boundary many dinosaurs went extinct. Yet some clung to life by evolving into birds (Paul, 2002).

Without question, humans are products of our biology (Grine, et al., 2009). Humans have only managed to evolve from pre-human scavengers into a globally dominant species with the help of crucial biological adaptations, such as an opposable thumb, upright posture and expansion of the braincase. That said, Popper (1999) argues that, in addition to solving problems with our biology, humans are endowed with a unique capacity to solve problems cognitively. When humans need to solve a problem, such as searching for food in a submarine environment, rather than undergoing an eons-long random biological evolutionary process—such as seals, otters and whales have separately undergone—humans simply invent cognitive solutions, such as boats, submarines and scuba gear.



There are multiple advantages of deploying cognitive solutions to environmental problems (McGettigan, 2011). First, cognitive solutions enable humans to deploy solutions far faster than they can genetically adapt. It requires much less time to fashion a spear than it does to evolve saber teeth. In the struggle for survival a speedy solution can often mean the difference between survival and extinction. Developing solutions at the speed of thought has enabled humans to transform the ongoing quest for survival into an increasingly rapid-fire intellectual exercise.

In addition to speed, cognitive solutions also offer the advantage of specificity. Whereas biological adaptation is random (Darwin, 1859)—species either develop advantageous genetic mutations, or they go extinct—cognitive problem-solving is very specific. Biological evolution is not a conscious process (Dawkins, 1989). Woolly mammoths did not make a conscious decision to wear their hair longer during the ice age. Instead, as the earth's climate cooled, longer-haired mammoths enjoyed a slim advantage over shorter-haired mammoths (Agenbroad and Nelson, 2002). During periods of sustained global cooling, shorter-haired mammoths simply ran out of luck.

When humans have been faced with similar problems, *Homo sapiens* has not stood idly by and waited for evolution to determine its fate (Stringer and Andrews, 2005). Instead, humans have activated their capacity to super-adapt (McGettigan, 2011, 2013). Super-adaptability means that humans can deploy nearly instantaneous survival solutions by transforming evolutionary challenges into Lamarckian cognitive exercises. As such, humans have reaped enormous benefits from rapidly implementing non-random solutions to specific survival problems. For example, in response to the challenge of surviving in cooler climates, super-adaptable apes have deployed highly effective synthetic heat production solutions, such as building fires and insulated dwellings and wearing comfortable protective clothing (Wrangham, 2009).

For humans, the struggle to survive is qualitatively different than it is for other creatures. What makes humans different—and uniquely advantaged—is a capacity for intellectually creative action (McGettigan, 2011, 2013; Popper, 1999). Another name for that capacity is agency. An agent is an entity who not only engages in fast, specific, intellectual problem-solving, but an agent who also possesses an ability to conceive utterly original ideas.

Innovative thinking is distinguishable from conventional thinking in two important respects: First, innovative ideas are demonstrably new. Prior to 1903, humans had only managed to dream of flying. The Wright Brothers, however, deployed an entirely new intellectual solution to heavier-than-air flight (Dixon-Engle and Jackson, 2007). As of December 17, 1903, the Wright Brothers conferred the gift of flight on humanity and the world has never been the same since. Second, innovative ideas are often logically contradictory to, or incommensurate with (Kuhn, 1970) pre-existing ideas. Charles Darwin's (1859) evolutionary theory was so new and contradictory to creationist thinking that, more than 150 years after its original publication, evolution remains highly controversial (National Academy of Sciences, 2008).

It is essential to define agency as a form of “oppositional innovation” in order to identify agency in real empirical contexts. Defining agency as “oppositonality” is important for several additional reasons:

- 1 Oppositionality represents the antithesis of conformity (Ogbu, 2008). Agents are non-conformists who are capable of generating innovation even in the face of withering antagonism.
  - a. “Great spirits often encounter violent opposition from mediocre minds” (Einstein and Calaprice, 2011).
- 2 Oppositionality renders agency empirically observable.
  - a. Those who strive to achieve desired goals in spite of opposition—such as, the colonial revolutionaries who thumbed their noses at King George III—tend to stand out in identifiable ways from crowded fields of conformists.
- 3 Agency is a form of transformative opposition.
  - a. Agents introduce change into otherwise innovation-inhibiting, or deterministic environments (McGettigan, 1999, 2011, 2013; Ogbu 2008).

## **Eliminating the scourge of race from science and society**

Many people believe that humans are agents, but they have not explained how to see agency at work in real social contexts (Ritzer, 2000; Tsekeris and Lydaki, 2011). Without criteria to identify agency, it is impossible to

distinguish agents from non-agents. With that in mind, we will define agents as people who are capable of:

- (1) Consciously contemplating problems.
- (2) Developing original intellectual solutions to those problems, and . . .
- (3) *Implementing* solutions—often in the face of withering opposition (McGettigan, 2011, 2013).

To fully activate their agency, agents must do more than idly contemplate problems; agents must use their capacity for intellectual innovation to dream up and implement novel solutions to real world problems (McGettigan, 1999, 2006, 2008).

We cannot overstate the importance of follow-through in the makeup of an agent. Just because humans have a capacity for agency does not mean that they will exercise that capacity. It is often easier to go with the flow than swim against the tide. Merely dreaming of a better world, no matter how tantalizing that dream may be, does not get the job done. The difference between agents and dreamers is that agents effect real change in the real world. For example, for centuries people dreamed of creating a more democratic America, but it was not until Martin Luther King, Jr. brought sufficient pressure to bear that the long dreamed of Civil Rights Act became a reality.<sup>1</sup>

Effecting real world change is the key element of agentic behavior. By its very nature, agency must be understood as thoughts, words and deeds that intentionally violate established conventions. In other words, agency only exists when an agent intentionally challenges, transcends and redefines the deterministic inertia that tends to reproduce conformity with the status quo. Non-agents—such as clams, sunflowers, lemurs, and so on—thrive when their environment remains relatively static, whereas agents thrive on re-synthesizing their environs.

Agency becomes explicitly identifiable when agents actively oppose the environmental influences that tend to determine the established course of events. Returning to the example above, until 1964 virulent racial prejudice officially determined the life chances of different racial groups in the US, conferring big advantages on white supremacists and onerous disadvantages on ethnic minorities. Though it cost him his life to do so, Martin Luther King, Jr. decided to fight a ferocious headwind of vitriolic racism, and in so doing activated his agency in both word and deed. King was convinced that direct and dedicated opposition to racism was the only means of ending racial inequality in the United States.<sup>2</sup>

## Notes

- 1 The Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Pub.L. 88-352, 78 Stat. 241, enacted July 2, 1964).
- 2 See, especially, “Letter from a Birmingham Jail” (1963). [http://www.africa.upenn.edu/Articles\\_Gen/Letter\\_Birmingham.html](http://www.africa.upenn.edu/Articles_Gen/Letter_Birmingham.html).

# 8

## Segregated Buses and Redefined Realities

*Abstract: As we have argued throughout this discussion, excellence is a category of exceptional achievement that humans pursue via our capacity for agency. All humans have a capacity for agency, but we don't all choose to activate our agency to the same extent. Some people are relentlessly high achievers, while others prefer to kill time playing video games. We measure excellence by the degree to which motivated agents succeed in transcending longstanding barriers to achievement, such as surmounting Mount Everest, running a sub-four minute mile, achieving heavier-than-air aviation, or making boot prints on the moon. The characters that history remembers most fondly are generally highly motivated agents who have also benefited from the six sociological success factors that we elaborated upon earlier: Preparation, Adversity, Innovation, Obstinacy, Serendipity, Notoriety.*

McGettigan, Timothy, and Earl Smith. *A Formula for Eradicating Racism: Debunking White Supremacy*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016.

DOI: 10.1057/9781137599759.0012.

Martin Luther King Jr. grew up in a profoundly segregated America (Smith and Hattery, 2010). In a deterministic universe, it would have made sense for King to hang his head and comply with the gross inequities that his society had foisted upon him. Yet, rather than being determined by his nation's deeply entrenched racism, King struck out in a new direction. With some help from his friends, MLK Jr. revolutionized reality by repudiating American racism and opening the door to an entirely new brand of democracy in America (Branch, 1988).

Redefining reality is a process through which agents challenge deficient intellectual paradigms through a combination of astute observation and an ingenious capacity for cognitive innovation. The notion of redefinable reality posits, in agreement with Popper's (1983) realist philosophy, that there is a universe "out there." As such, we argue that universal Truth does exist, but such Truth is not contained within extant scientific paradigms. The Truth, such as it is, extends infinitely into the unlocked mysteries of the expanding universe. In other words, reality is what it is: a quark is a quark, and so on. Truth is an intrinsic, inseparable feature of phenomena as they exist independently of human perception. Lies and distortions come into existence via humanity's vast capacity for ignorance. Humans view the illimitable universe through awed and flawed psyches. Although admirable in many ways, the human grasp of infinite mysteries remains woefully incomplete. Nevertheless, the process of redefining reality permits limited human psyches to transcend the limitations of inadequate paradigms in pursuit of a grander vision of Truth.

The process of redefining reality begins when agents make unanticipated observations, such as:

"Hey! Why does a so-called democracy allow white racists to practice overt racial segregation?"

Individuals may follow up such observations by formulating a challenge to established paradigms:

"Racial segregation is evidence that America's democratic principles are in conflict with its *undemocratic* practices."

In the process of making sense of such anomalies individuals tend to dismantle the conceptual frameworks that limit their ability to comprehend mysteries:

"If the US is supposed to be a democracy, then I don't believe that I should tolerate racial segregation."

As individuals re-evaluate their beliefs with respect to their inability to comprehend anomalies the features of their paradigms that do not hold up under scrutiny come under substantial erosive pressure. If individuals are persistent enough, they may reach a point at which the critical mass of their contemplations overloads the shackles of their former beliefs and, thus, they may experience a moment of truth:

“Aha! If America is ever going to live up to its democratic principles, then I will have to fight its *undemocratic* practices.”

Moments of truth are similar to eureka experiences in that, having dismantled the distorting influences of inadequate paradigms, individuals invent a more anomaly-clarifying definition of reality. These experiences generate more truthful insights because agents produce them by intentionally negating deterministic social controls over outdated definitions of reality. This is not to say that redefined paradigms constitute the final, ultimate Truth. Far from that, we maintain that all human-made belief systems are fraught with errors, delusions and limitations.

Science may never arrive at the final, ultimate Truth; however, eliciting newer, better truths in a stepwise process will always remain science’s chief occupation. Thus, to experience a moment of truth does not transport one to an ideal realm wherein Truth reigns unchallenged. Martin Luther King Jr. introduced an enormous amount of much-needed social change, but he did not make it “to the top of the mountain.”<sup>1</sup> Instead, we merely suggest that the process of redefining reality helps equip agents with the intellectual tools that they need to create newer, better (but never perfect) definitions of reality, such as transforming an environment of overt racial segregation into a society that operates more in keeping with its democratic principles. Therefore, humans have all of the necessary cognitive abilities to creatively transform the deterministic barriers that seal the fate of non-agents.

## Racism in the 21st century America

Like goblins, ghouls and zombies, race is an archaic myth from a bygone era. Europeans were the popularizers of the modern notion of race and they invented the concept in order to denigrate Others. To salve their guilty consciences, Europeans convinced themselves that they were genetically superior to the inferiors that they tormented, murdered and

enslaved (Diamond, 1997; Gould, 1996). Rudyard Kipling summed up these self-serving prejudices in his obnoxious poem, “The White Man’s Burden” (Kipling and Wise, 1899).

Take up the White Man’s burden—  
Send forth the best ye breed—  
Go bind your sons to exile  
To serve your captives’ need;  
To wait in heavy harness,  
On fluttered folk and wild—  
Your new-caught, sullen peoples,  
Half-devil and half-child . . .

Kipling’s odious poem asserted that the diverse peoples of the world were self-evidently inferior to Europeans and the weighty task of ensuring the welfare of “Half-devils” fell to their European masters. Europeans assuaged their guilty consciences by assuring themselves that, rather than wantonly destroying the lives of countless fellow humans, colonizers were on a mission of Christian charity. Kipling’s onerously encumbered White Man assumed the righteous responsibility of taming and transforming rude savages into noble, civilized creatures—even if that meant tormenting those noble savages to death.

Nineteenth century pseudo-scientists did their part by concocting proof that European racism was eminently justifiable (Gould, 1996). Eugenicists gleefully cooked their data to confirm even the most preposterously self-serving prejudices (Graves, 2001).

## The ugly truth

As the modern fields of biology and genetics emerged scientists revealed astounding new truths about the human animal. Perhaps the most extraordinary new truth was that, rather than being genetically differentiated into two or more distinguishable sub-groups, the human race was either composed of an infinite number of micro-races (i.e. every person being sufficiently distinct to warrant their own unique racial classification), or humans were all part of one big race—or more accurately, one large, and curiously homogeneous species (Tattersall and DeSalle, 2011).

Not surprisingly, neo-eugenicists have not been willing to forego their beloved racial prejudices without a fight (Entine, 2000, 2007; Murray,



2012; Wade, 2014). The more that scientists have learned about the human genome, the more eagerly racists have searched for their Holy Grail: the race gene. Intensive as that misguided search has been it has been fruitless. This might be a blow to racists, but it should come as welcome news to anyone who is a true friend of humanity. We now live in a world where science can demonstrate that the most important distinctions between people are sociological rather than biological. We certainly don't wish to minimize the significance of those sociological differences. Up till now, every complex society that humans have ever constructed has been monstrously unfair. Civilization has conferred stratospheric wealth on a privileged few and ruinous poverty on far, *far* too many Others (Shachar, 2009).

## **Curtailing the abuses of pseudo-science**

Recognizing that the most meaningful differences between people are sociological does not mean that social inequities are insignificant or will be easily remedied. Throughout history, the vast majority of atrocities that humans have inflicted upon each other have been driven by sociological misperceptions. When misapplied, sociology kills (Wermuth, 2003). For scientists, and everyone else for that matter, the top priority should be to ensure that we no longer abuse science to justify racism and genocide. Europeans do not need to save noble savages from themselves.

That said, we must acknowledge that science is not a magic wand. Even though science has revealed the truth that race is not a biologically meaningful phenomenon, irresponsible people, many of whom are scientists, continue to treat race as if it were real. Worse, people all over the world continue to harbor racist prejudices that are based upon malicious, pseudo-scientific nonsense (Lauren, 1988).

While it is true that science cannot wipe away the blight of pre-Enlightenment ignorance all in one stroke, nevertheless, science has demonstrated that when it is applied to its best purpose—to seek newer, better truths (McGettigan, 2011)—science can change the world for the better. No human activity has ever transformed the world more extensively and beneficially than science. The scientific age has been an era of heretofore unprecedented change (Kurzweil, 2012). Some have suggested that more social change takes place in a single post-industrial year than in an entire pre-industrial century. Given that, we believe it will be possible

for science to debunk and eradicate racism within the foreseeable future. If science has demonstrated anything, it is that scientists often do their best work when they dedicate themselves to achieving the impossible (McGettigan, 2011). Therefore, if we have a mind to do so, science can eradicate the scourge of racism as effectively as science eradicated polio. We have all the necessary tools, we need only put them to work.

## One step at a time

Perhaps the first place to begin debunking irrational racist preconceptions is in the US Census. If for no other reason than the sake of scientific integrity, the US Census should immediately cease using the demographic concept of race. Science has succeeded in debunking other forms of pre-scientific nonsense, such as alchemy, astrology and sorcery, so there is reason to hope that science will also eradicate the irrational fictions that perpetuate the myth of race. Whether the Census staff realizes it or not, their misuse of race perpetuates scientifically groundless and socially destructive myths (Prewitt, 2013).

The concept of race is based on the anti-scientific assumption that race is a real biological phenomenon (Miles, 1989). As discussed throughout this book, modern biology has thoroughly debunked such unenlightened nonsense:

- 1 There is no biological basis for race.
  - a. No matter where one draws racial boundaries, there is invariably more biological diversity within than between racial groups.
- 2 There is no biological basis to conclude that one group of people is better or worse than any other.

It would be naïve to hope that science will be able to eradicate the global pandemic of racism overnight. Too many minds have been warped by the pathological delusion that race is real and, therefore, their revolting racist peccadilloes are justified. Still, in its endeavor to bring truth to light, science has regularly provoked hitherto unimaginable social change. If agents have proved anything, it is that, with the help of science, humans can change themselves and their world for the better.

In concrete terms, what sort of improvements to the human condition can we expect science to produce? Though scientists often disdain

any form of political activism, we believe that scientists have an ethical obligation to debunk the sadistic lies that perpetuate racism and white supremacy. There is no scientific basis for the claim that Real Men are better than Others. Science can hardly sustain its sacrosanct commitment to truth-seeking if it abjures its responsibility to aggressively debunk destructive lies.

Scientists have two choices. They can live in a bubble and pretend that their objectivity keeps them disconnected from the malice that Real Men inflict on Others, or they can fight for the kind of scientific truths that will uplift humanity. When we say that science can uplift humanity, we do not mean that science can or should transform humans into superheroes or angels. That would be preposterous. However, we are convinced that science is eminently capable of creating a world where every human being treats every other human being like a human being. We believe that's a truth worth fighting for.

White supremacists may object to this modest, but all-important reappraisal of human merit. However, we suspect that the billions of people who have been maliciously Othered by self-aggrandizing Real Men eagerly await the day that science quits lying down for lies and begins standing up for truth.

## Note

- 1 James Earl Ray Assassinated Dr. Martin Luther King on April 4, 1968 in Memphis, Tennessee.

# 9

## What Is Excellence?

**Abstract:** *Having debunked the racist argument that humans can be divided and ranked into biologically distinguishable groups, we are now in a position to return to Prof. Smith's original question, "What is excellence?" Throughout this discussion, we have repeatedly demonstrated that humans are all equal. Not identical, but equal. Because all humans are biologically equal it would be nonsensical to argue that human excellence is a biologically-determined phenomenon. Instead, we have demonstrated that, for humans, biology is merely a starting point. It is the extraordinary achievements that humans strive to accomplish after their biological cards have been dealt, whether favorable or unfavorable, that offers the truest measure of excellence.*

McGettigan, Timothy, and Earl Smith. *A Formula for Eradicating Racism: Debunking White Supremacy*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016.  
DOI: 10.1057/9781137599759.0013.

It seems only appropriate to close this discussion by returning to the question that began it: What is excellence?

In answer to this very intriguing question, we can safely conclude that excellence is not a biologically determined trait. Eugenacists may persist in their quest to discover a race gene, but for the more rationally minded, science has demonstrated that humans are all biologically equal. Though it is literally like comparing apples and oranges, it is possible to compare biological aptitudes between species. For example, when it comes to tree climbing it is valid to state that cats are more accomplished tree climbers than dogs. We can also safely contend that whales are better swimmers than giraffes. In each case, evolution has equipped the organisms in question with a different set of genetic attributes to better facilitate their survival. The fact that some species are qualitatively better at accomplishing certain tasks than others—bald eagles are better aerial hunters than are grizzly bears—has equipped each of those species with an enhanced capacity to survive in the ecological niche that they occupy.

In a similar vein, it makes a certain amount of sense to make comparisons between humans and other species: humans are better at building spaceships than are dung beetles. However, it makes no sense whatsoever to argue that the members of one arbitrarily delineated human sub-group is *genetically* superior to another. That's like saying the coffee on the left side of a mug is superior to the coffee on the right. We may fanatically cling to the belief that left-side coffee is superior, but our belief is irrational. Left-side coffee freely reticulates with right-side coffee. Therefore, all of the coffee in the mug is equivalent. The same is true for humans.

If some people exhibit excellence in sport, science and art and others don't, we can't attribute the differences in their aptitudes to superior vs. inferior biology. There is no such thing—certainly not among humans. We live in a time when legless athletes can compete at the Olympic-level with runners who are graced with fully formed legs. Biology is merely a starting point. Those who feel slighted by their biology can draw inspiration from their perceived disadvantages in much the same way as other biologically disadvantaged achievers like Stephen Hawking, Oscar Pistorius, Frida Kahlo, Helen Keller, FDR and Napoleon Bonaparte. With sufficient motivation there is nothing to stop biologically disadvantaged agents from exceeding the exploits of their seemingly advantaged peers. This final point conveniently reveals the answer to Prof. Smith's original question: What is excellence?

As we have argued throughout this discussion, excellence is a category of exceptional achievement that humans pursue via our capacity for agency. All humans have a capacity for agency, but we don't all choose to activate our agency to the same extent. Some people are relentlessly high achievers, while others prefer to kill time playing video games. We measure excellence by the degree to which motivated agents succeed in transcending longstanding barriers to achievement, such as surmounting Mount Everest, running a sub-four minute mile, achieving heavier-than-air aviation, or making boot prints on the moon. The characters who history remembers most fondly are generally highly motivated agents who have also benefited from the six sociological success factors that we elaborated upon earlier: Preparation, Adversity, Innovation, Obstinacy, Serendipity and Notoriety.

Humans are at our best when we solve problems, and at our worst when we create them. Up till now, humans have created far more problems than we have solved by asking, "Who's better than who?" Thanks to Prof. Smith's astute question, we now have the tools to solve many of the problems that racist ignorance has inflicted upon humanity. The next question that we must ask is this: Now that we have identified a formula to eradicate racism, "White Supremacy – Racist Malevolence = Democracy," do we have the fortitude to annihilate the medieval superstitions that Real Men use to terrorize Others?

We certainly hope so and, for our part, we intend to do everything in our power to do so.

## Appendix 1—The Origins of Excellence Email Exchange

In case readers might be interested, we have included a sequence of email messages that provide background information about the origins of Prof. Smith’s “very intriguing question.”

The Authors

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From: ES  
Date: Tue, May 29, 2012 at 1:18 PM  
Subject: what is the explanation for athlete EXCELLENCE?  
To: AH, RR, TM

Is there a way to EXPLAIN what separates out the PHENOM from those who are good, the best?

ES

Is there anyone who can (or has) explained the athlete phenom?

The best of the best. Outliers;

Can do on the playing field what no one else can do? Over, and over and over again.

(Not a one time wonder)

(e.g., Ali, Bird, Jordan, Wilt, Tiger, Payton, Fisher, Johnson, Montana, Ruth, Brown, Thorpe, BO, Martina, Rudolph, Babe, Joyner, Johnson, Flo-Jo)

“The champion athlete does not simply do more of the same drills and sets as other swimmers; he or she also does things better. That’s what counts.”

—Chambliss, D.F. 1989. “The mundanity of excellence: An ethnographic report on stratification and Olympic swimmers.” *Sociological Theory* 7: 70–86.

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From: TM

Date: Tue, May 29, 2012 at 4:07 PM

Subject: Re: what is the explanation for athlete EXCELLENCE?

To: ES

Cc: AH, RR

ES:

This is a fascinating topic. I just finished a book about Richard Feynman, titled *Genius* (Gleick, 1993), which examines the subject of exceptional talent among scientists. Just as certain legendary athletes stand out from crowds of superbly gifted peers, the same is true for scientists. What makes some geniuses (Newton, Einstein, etc.) more exceptional or noteworthy than other geniuses?

Great stuff.

TM

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From: ES

Date: Wed, May 30, 2012 at 7:23 AM

Subject: Re: what is the explanation for athlete EXCELLENCE?

To: TM

Cc: AH

Hi TM:

I am going to concentrate on this topic for a while this summer.

Will also read the book on Feynman, someone who I am familiar with for sure. I read some time back his 1974 commencement address (when JT and I were looking at Nobel winners).

“Cargo Cult Science: The 1974 Cal Tech Commencement Address.”

Engineering and Science

<http://calteches.library.caltech.edu/51/2/CargoCult.pdf>



Interesting, he grew up in Far Rockaway, Long Island, a few towns over from where I grew up.

M. Gladwell's "10,000 Hour" piece (a chapter in the book *Outliers*) gets a lot of play in terms of all types of geniuses who distance themselves from all others.

Best,  
ES

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From: TM

Date: Wed, May 30, 2012 at 8:24 AM

Subject: Re: what is the explanation for athlete EXCELLENCE?

To: ES

ES:

Thanks for the link to Feynman's graduation address (I had not realized that he was one of your Long Island neighbors). I will be able to make good use of it. Feynman provides some of the best illustrations of post-positivist scientific philosophy, i.e. "reality" is not what it appears to be and naive empiricism cannot reveal fundamental truths. For scientists, understanding reality often requires extraordinary leaps of imagination. It's a mind-bending insight, but one that has been confirmed over and over again—most obviously in physics, but in many other fields as well.

Again, your project that focuses on super-athletes who stand out from the crowd sounds fascinating, and I am convinced that there is an essential linkage between stand-out athletes, and stand-out scientific geniuses. I believe that luck, tenacity, serendipity, and favorable PR all have something to do with distinguishing historically exceptional individuals in every arena (sport, science, politics, art, etc.), however, stand-outs are also graced with seemingly superhuman talent: Michelangelo's art endures because, in many ways, it is stunningly superior to the work of his peers. The same was true of Michael Jordan's exhibitions against even his most formidable opponents on the basketball court. He literally soared above the competition.

"Talent" is a mysterious, and elusive quality of the human make-up, but no one can deny that it exists. Precisely how to define it—and how to

explain its uneven distribution among humans—is a profoundly worthy endeavor.

TM

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From: ES

Date: Wed, May 30, 2012 at 9:55 AM

Subject: Re: what is the explanation for athlete EXCELLENCE?

To: TM

Hi TM:

I will not bother you again today but wanted to say I have made notes of our back and forth conversation on this topic and MAYBE there is a theoretical essay here on Excellence in Science & Athletics.

ES

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From: TM

Date: Wed, May 30, 2012 at 10:16 AM

Subject: Re: what is the explanation for athlete EXCELLENCE?

To: ES

ES:

I agree that the ideas that we have been kicking around for the past couple of days are quite provocative. You have given me a great deal to think about, and I agree that our exchange could certainly serve as the foundation for an intriguing theoretical article along the lines that you have described. By the way, throughout our exchange I have also been reminded of the difficulties that Marvin Minsky (of Artificial Intelligence fame—and, more specifically, in his book, the *Society of Mind*\*) has articulated concerning the notion of “genius.” In brief, Minsky and other AI researchers have never even been able to develop a satisfactory definition of intelligence. “Genius” escapes them entirely—although Minsky writes the whole issue off by stating that genius isn’t really any different than intelligence.

I disagree.

Anyway, as you can see, your fascinating idea has given me a great deal to think about, and I would be happy to pursue this discussion (in connection with the special case of athleticism) in the days/months ahead.

It is always a pleasure to bounce ideas back and forth with you.

TM

\*I must admit, I was chagrined by the fact that Minsky did not cite even one sociologist in this influential book. For heaven's sake, who would be better informed about issues pertaining to the "society of mind" than sociologists?

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From: RR

Date: Wed, May 30, 2012 at 11:07 AM

Subject: Re: what is the explanation for athlete EXCELLENCE?

To: TM

Cc: ES, AH

Hi ES,

It seems to me that the common denominator is total devotion to the particular discipline. At one level, this seems self-evident; but what I'm suggesting is that people are so committed that most of their time is spent either actively engaged or applying vast amounts of mental and intellectual energy to the subject at hand. This goes back a ways, but I remember reading some comments from a wide receiver teammate of Sonny Jurgenson, who said Sonny would ask his receivers if they preferred to catch the ball with the nose up or down, and with the laces up or down. That's some over-the-top Jedi/Zen master stuff if I've ever heard any, but he didn't get that kind of skill by magic, or divine intervention.

I suppose that there will always be the nature vs. nurture debate. There are plenty of people who fantasize that there are some "naturally gifted" people to whom excellence comes easy, but it seems to me that the "gift" is to understand what it takes to excel, and being willing to do it. It is said of Coltrane that even at the height of his powers, when the people in his band were drinking or schmoozing between sets, Coltrane was practicing. Likewise, the Michael Jordan who came into the NBA with great leaping ability and a good mid-range jump shot became the Michael Jordan who was a 6-time champion, master of every phase of the game, including Defensive Player of the Year multiple times.

There's a huge list of such people in all walks of life. I don't mean to suggest that there's no such thing as exceptional talent or innate ability, but the only athlete I've ever heard of who was said to have everything come easy to them was John McEnroe\*, and I'm not convinced that he didn't work hard. Maybe—maybe—he didn't work as hard as he could have, but that's a different matter entirely.

I remember about 15 years ago hearing the country/bluegrass musician Jerry Douglas for the first time on an NPR story. NOBODY should be able to do what this guy can do—it's impossible, except it isn't, because he can do it. After the initial shock from what I was hearing, I said to N, "I know exactly how this guy spent his adolescence!"

Best,  
RR

\*I'm of course leaving aside the ubiquitous clichés about AfAm athletes being “naturally” talented, or AfAm musicians having “natural rhythm,” or Asians being “naturally” talented at science and/or math.

From: TM

Date: Wed, May 30, 2012 at 8:52 PM

Subject: Re: what is the explanation for athlete EXCELLENCE?

To: RR

Cc: ES, AH

RR:

I think you have hit upon an important point. Full-grown, healthy humans are all composed of essentially the same stuff: height, weight, muscle mass, brain size, etc., vary within an extremely narrow range of diversity. I often point out to my students that, if there was as much diversity in the human species as there is in *Canis familiaris* (dogs), some people would be 2–3 pounds (Chihuahuas), while others would range up to 100X larger (200+ pound great danes, such as Giant George). By comparison, humans exhibit near impossible uniformity for any species that is spread so far across the planet. As such, I agree wholeheartedly with your point that differences in achievement are much more a product of commitment and conditioning than (largely) non-existent physiological differences between various human groups.

Still, stand-outs among us exist—and (as you pointed out about Jerry Douglas) the truly exceptional stand-outs seem to be graced with inhuman capabilities. Every time that I ponder Michelangelo’s accomplishments I am forced to wonder if the guy was truly made of the same stuff as the rest of us. Or, again in the case of Richard Feynman, he was surrounded throughout his career by towering geniuses who almost universally agreed that Feynman left them all in the shade.

I discussed this idea over dinner this evening with my wife—and I was pleased by how enthusiastic she was—and we agreed that “exceptionally outstanding talent” is partly a product of individual capabilities, while it is also influenced by the rarity, and noteworthiness of the achievements. For example, we all know Edmund Hillary’s name, but is that because he was the “most extraordinary mountaineer of the 20th century” (I daresay Hillary’s little known sherpa guides—“pack mules” who lugged Hillary’s essential gear up the mountain almost always without the aid of oxygen—were more than Hillary’s equal as mountaineers) or because he was the first European to achieve a globally noteworthy feat.

Being the first to achieve a rare, much sought-after feat often elevates the degree to which we perceive run-of-the-mill high-achievers from “legendary athletes, geniuses, artists, etc.” Thus, effort and achievement is essential, but so is the noteworthiness of the feats that one pursues—as well as the friendly PR that one can garner.

All of the above is true, and yet, I am convinced that there is an added quality of “graceful agency” that helps the most talented among us to distinguish themselves. In important ways, Feynman was indeed a cut above the competition.

TM

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From: TM

Date: Sun, Jun 3, 2012 at 7:41 PM

Subject: Re: what is the explanation for athlete EXCELLENCE?

To: ES

ES:

I just wanted to let you know that I am continuing to give thought to this fascinating topic. At one point, you mentioned the idea of

developing a theoretical perspective that might capture the phenomena of sporting, or (as the discussion evolved) human “excellence.” I would be very interested in developing such a perspective, and, if you remain interested, I would be very happy to work on such a project collaboratively with you.

I will have time to begin roughing out an outline one week from now (tomorrow begins the final week of the summer courses that I am teaching).

To give you a general idea about the direction that my thoughts have been moving viz the topic of human excellence: for starters, I view the phenomenon of “excellence” as an especially noteworthy expression of the type of “agency” that I described in *Good Science*.

Anyway, I have so much to say on this topic, I can’t possibly fit it into an email. Suffice it to say that—again, for starters—I think that we could whip together a very intriguing paper between now and the fall. Easily. In addition to publishing the paper, I hope that you will consider submitting the project to a conference, such as the ASA—or a more appealing or appropriate conference of your choosing.

Beyond the paper, I think this discussion could easily develop into a book-length manuscript. As I said, I believe that I have a lot to say on this topic. That said, if you are not interested, please don’t permit my overzealousness to be an encumbrance. If you want to keep the project and collaboration limited to a paper, no problem.

Another point: it could be that you may have little interest in the theoretical perspective that is swimming around in my head. If so, I will understand completely. As things stand, it would be generous to claim that my theoretical ideas lie on the margins of sociology. Don’t get me wrong, I think my ideas and projects are eminently sociological, it’s just that they are so far outside the established conventions of mainstream sociology that if sociologists do take any notice, they certainly don’t take my ideas seriously. Please understand, this is not a lament: I Love the work that I do, and I certainly view it as being worthwhile—indeed, I consider the fact that sociologists don’t like my ideas as a strength rather than a liability. However, if my ideas ever achieve any influence among mainstream sociology-types, I have no doubt that it will be posthumous.

By now, I suppose you have guessed that I have been cooking up a fairly radical, innovative take on the subject of human excellence. Indeed,

I have. As I mentioned, I will try to flesh out the ideas a bit more fully and clearly in the near future and then float them your way.

Let me know if you would like to proceed in a different direction.

Best,  
Tim

---

From: ES

Date: Mon, Jun 4, 2012 at 3:14 AM

Subject: Re: what is the explanation for athlete EXCELLENCE?

To: TM

Dear TM:

Good morning.

I am in!

I deliberately sent you the e-mail knowing that we had similar concerns on this topic.

I have been toying with the idea for a LONG time now in various explicit and implicit ways.

Some of the stuff in my sports book on “race” looks at this issue. As you are well aware the question of Black v. White in athletic competition is still a hot topic even if PC has trumped full investigation.

The book you reviewed for R&L is now fully edited, added new more sexy chapter title and it is headed back to them today.

The paper I am working on for the Ireland conference addressing the unintended race (and gender) consequences of conference realignment is done. I am now pulling together the PREZI, adding illustrations and beefing up the theoretical discussion of race.

The 2nd installment of my EXONERATION research is coming (I just hired a student to build the new database) as I continue to show how for a crime that is not committed (African American men raping White women) then how do we explain that 88% of the men who have been exonerated are (a) African American and (b) for the crimes of sexual assault/rape mainly of White women?

It can't be explained by the simple fact that over 50% of all imprisoned types (Holding pens, jails, federal, state prisons, private prisons etc.) are African American men.

Hence, when I sent you the e-mail I had looked at my work schedule, the projects mentioned above and was well aware that time to move in another direction was now.

Let's talk after you are done with summer school and recuperated.

I am in. I have a folder with some stuff already and when you're ready let's map out a nice paper and continue to talk about a book.

Have a good day.

Best,  
ES

From: TM

Date: Mon, Jun 4, 2012 at 10:16 AM

Subject: Re: what is the explanation for athlete EXCELLENCE?

To: ES

ES:

You have a lot of irons in the fire. Impressive. By the way, I agree with you. It is much more satisfying to produce worthwhile projects with available time as opposed to squandering it on nonsense: soaps, reality TV, etc.

If at any point you would like to involve AH (you and she are quite a dynamic team) in the "excellence" project, by all means feel welcome to do so.

Another angle on the topic of excellence comes from the work of Stephen Jay Gould (Full House: The Spread of Excellence from Plato to Darwin). At one time or another, Gould developed an argument about the decline of the .400 hitter in baseball. If I remember correctly, Gould made the point that, instead of this being due to a decline in batters' capabilities, sub-400 batting was due to an increased concentration (and cultivation) of gene-pool excellence in the world of sport. Gould's work will, perhaps, be useful as a bridge between various excellence arenas that we might explore.

The appeal of superhuman excellence has animated human affairs for a long time: what are the Greek gods, but idealized and super-powered versions of ourselves? More recently, our admiration for superhuman



excellence has manifested in wildly popular superhero movies. Though people often denigrate “hero worship” (whether those heroes happen to be athletes, gods, comic book characters, scientists, etc.), I believe we can make the argument that such veneration actually has a tangible impact on the invention, pursuit and achievement of “problematics” (again, this comes from Good Science).


I have been toying with this notion ever since I wrote the concluding chapter of Good Science last year: gods are “immortal”; humans fear death and as a result generate mythologies/fantasies that represent solutions to the seemingly intractable problem of death. Once we invent the fantasy, it then becomes possible to work toward practical solutions to the problem at issue. In this case, “transhumanism”: Aubrey de Grey (Chief Scientist for the SENS Foundation) has asserted that humans will develop a cure for mortality within the foreseeable future. Check out the following link for my brief outline of this argument: [http://www.sociology.org/lead/holy-megabucks-batman-astounding-popularity-superhero-films?wpmp\\_switcher=mobile](http://www.sociology.org/lead/holy-megabucks-batman-astounding-popularity-superhero-films?wpmp_switcher=mobile)

I apologize if I am not being terribly clear. I am looking forward to developing this discussion with greater length and clarity in the days ahead. At this point, I only wished to convey the point that I can foresee a myriad of connections between the excellence discussion and your work in the areas of race and sport.

Also, as you have pointed out many times, there is nothing trivial about the time and energy that people devote to sport. Worshiping sport stars is very similar to the way that the ancients (and many contemporary mythology-lovers: Rick Riordan and the Percy Jackson phenomena) worshiped Greek demi-gods.

Best,  
TM

## Appendix 2—The Complete Text of the American Anthropological Association’s Statement on “Race” (May 17, 1998)



The following statement was adopted by the Executive Board of the American Anthropological Association, acting on a draft prepared by a committee of representative American anthropologists. It does not reflect a consensus of all members of the AAA, as individuals vary in their approaches to the study of “race.” We believe that it represents generally the contemporary thinking and scholarly positions of a majority of anthropologists.

In the United States both scholars and the general public have been conditioned to viewing human races as natural and separate divisions within the human species based on visible physical differences. With the vast expansion of scientific knowledge in this century, however, it has become clear that human populations are not unambiguous, clearly demarcated, biologically distinct groups. Evidence from the analysis of genetics (e.g., DNA) indicates that most physical variation, about 94%, lies *within* so-called racial groups. Conventional geographic “racial” groupings differ from one another only in about 6% of their genes. This means that there is greater variation within “racial” groups than between them. In neighboring populations there is much overlapping of genes and their phenotypic

(physical) expressions. Throughout history whenever different groups have come into contact, they have interbred. The continued sharing of genetic materials has maintained all of humankind as a single species.

Physical variations in any given trait tend to occur gradually rather than abruptly over geographic areas. And because physical traits are inherited independently of one another, knowing the range of one trait does not predict the presence of others. For example, skin color varies largely from light in the temperate areas in the north to dark in the tropical areas in the south; its intensity is not related to nose shape or hair texture. Dark skin may be associated with frizzy or kinky hair or curly or wavy or straight hair, all of which are found among different indigenous peoples in tropical regions. These facts render any attempt to establish lines of division among biological populations both arbitrary and subjective.

Historical research has shown that the idea of “race” has always carried more meanings than mere physical differences; indeed, physical variations in the human species have no meaning except the social ones that humans put on them. Today scholars in many fields argue that “race” as it is understood in the United States of America was a social mechanism invented during the 18th century to refer to those populations brought together in colonial America: the English and other European settlers, the conquered Indian peoples, and those peoples of Africa brought in to provide slave labor.

From its inception, this modern concept of “race” was modeled after an ancient theorem of the Great Chain of Being, which posited natural categories on a hierarchy established by God or nature. Thus “race” was a mode of classification linked specifically to peoples in the colonial situation. It subsumed a growing ideology of inequality devised to rationalize European attitudes and treatment of the conquered and enslaved peoples. Proponents of slavery in particular during the 19th century used “race” to justify the retention of slavery. The ideology magnified the differences among Europeans, Africans, and Indians, established a rigid hierarchy of socially exclusive categories underscored and bolstered unequal rank and status differences, and provided the rationalization that the inequality was natural or God-given. The different physical traits of African-Americans and Indians became markers or symbols of their status differences.

As they were constructing US society, leaders among European-Americans fabricated the cultural/behavioral characteristics associated

with each “race,” linking superior traits with Europeans and negative and inferior ones to blacks and Indians. Numerous arbitrary and fictitious beliefs about the different peoples were institutionalized and deeply embedded in American thought.

Early in the 19th century the growing fields of science began to reflect the public consciousness about human differences. Differences among the “racial” categories were projected to their greatest extreme when the argument was posed that Africans, Indians, and Europeans were separate species, with Africans the least human and closer taxonomically to apes.

Ultimately “race” as an ideology about human differences was subsequently spread to other areas of the world. It became a strategy for dividing, ranking, and controlling colonized people used by colonial powers everywhere. But it was not limited to the colonial situation. In the latter part of the 19th century it was employed by Europeans to rank one another and to justify social, economic, and political inequalities among their peoples. During World War II, the Nazis under Adolf Hitler enjoined the expanded ideology of “race” and “racial” differences and took them to a logical end: the extermination of 11 million people of “inferior races” (e.g., Jews, Gypsies, Africans, homosexuals, and so forth) and other unspeakable brutalities of the Holocaust.

“Race” thus evolved as a worldview, a body of prejudgments that distorts our ideas about human differences and group behavior. Racial beliefs constitute myths about the diversity in the human species and about the abilities and behavior of people homogenized into “racial” categories. The myths fused behavior and physical features together in the public mind, impeding our comprehension of both biological variations and cultural behavior, implying that both are genetically determined. Racial myths bear no relationship to the reality of human capabilities or behavior. Scientists today find that reliance on such folk beliefs about human differences in research has led to countless errors.

At the end of the 20th century, we now understand that human cultural behavior is learned, conditioned into infants beginning at birth, and always subject to modification. No human is born with a built-in culture or language. Our temperaments, dispositions, and personalities, regardless of genetic propensities, are developed within sets of meanings and values that we call “culture.” Studies of infant and early childhood learning and behavior attest to the reality of our cultures in forming who we are.

It is a basic tenet of anthropological knowledge that all normal human beings have the capacity to learn any cultural behavior. The American experience with immigrants from hundreds of different language and cultural backgrounds who have acquired some version of American culture traits and behavior is the clearest evidence of this fact. Moreover, people of all physical variations have learned different cultural behaviors and continue to do so as modern transportation moves millions of immigrants around the world.

How people have been accepted and treated within the context of a given society or culture has a direct impact on how they perform in that society. The “racial” worldview was invented to assign some groups to perpetual low status, while others were permitted access to privilege, power, and wealth. The tragedy in the United States has been that the policies and practices stemming from this worldview succeeded all too well in constructing unequal populations among Europeans, Native Americans, and peoples of African descent. Given what we know about the capacity of normal humans to achieve and function within any culture, we conclude that present-day inequalities between so-called “racial” groups are not consequences of their biological inheritance but products of historical and contemporary social, economic, educational, and political circumstances.

[*Note: For further information on human biological variations, see the statement prepared and issued by the American Association of Physical Anthropologists, 1996 (AJPA 101: 569–570).*]

<http://www.aaanet.org/stmts/racepp.htm>

# Appendix 3—The United Nation’s Universal Declaration of Human Rights\*

## Preamble

Whereas recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world,

Whereas disregard and contempt for human rights have resulted in barbarous acts which have outraged the conscience of mankind, and the advent of a world in which human beings shall enjoy freedom of speech and belief and freedom from fear and want has been proclaimed as the highest aspiration of the common people,

Whereas it is essential, if man is not to be compelled to have recourse, as a last resort, to rebellion against tyranny and oppression, that human rights should be protected by the rule of law,

Whereas it is essential to promote the development of friendly relations between nations,

Whereas the peoples of the United Nations have in the Charter reaffirmed their faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person and in the equal rights of men and women and have determined to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom,

Whereas Member States have pledged themselves to achieve, in co-operation with the United Nations, the

promotion of universal respect for and observance of human rights and fundamental freedoms,

Whereas a common understanding of these rights and freedoms is of the greatest importance for the full realization of this pledge,

Now, Therefore THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY proclaims THIS UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS as a common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations, to the end that every individual and every organ of society, keeping this Declaration constantly in mind, shall strive by teaching and education to promote respect for these rights and freedoms and by progressive measures, national and international, to secure their universal and effective recognition and observance, both among the peoples of Member States themselves and among the peoples of territories under their jurisdiction.

#### **Article 1.**

- ▶ All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.

#### **Article 2.**

- ▶ Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status. Furthermore, no distinction shall be made on the basis of the political, jurisdictional or international status of the country or territory to which a person belongs, whether it be independent, trust, non-self-governing or under any other limitation of sovereignty.

#### **Article 3.**

- ▶ Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person.

#### **Article 4.**

- ▶ No one shall be held in slavery or servitude; slavery and the slave trade shall be prohibited in all their forms.

### **Article 5.**

- ▶ No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

### **Article 6.**

- ▶ Everyone has the right to recognition everywhere as a person before the law.

### **Article 7.**

- ▶ All are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to equal protection of the law. All are entitled to equal protection against any discrimination in violation of this Declaration and against any incitement to such discrimination.

### **Article 8.**

- ▶ Everyone has the right to an effective remedy by the competent national tribunals for acts violating the fundamental rights granted him by the constitution or by law.

### **Article 9.**

- ▶ No one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest, detention or exile.

### **Article 10.**

- ▶ Everyone is entitled in full equality to a fair and public hearing by an independent and impartial tribunal, in the determination of his rights and obligations and of any criminal charge against him.

### **Article 11.**

- ▶ (1) Everyone charged with a penal offence has the right to be presumed innocent until proved guilty according to law in a public trial at which he has had all the guarantees necessary for his defence.
- ▶ (2) No one shall be held guilty of any penal offence on account of any act or omission which did not constitute a penal offence, under national or international law, at the time when it was committed.



Nor shall a heavier penalty be imposed than the one that was applicable at the time the penal offence was committed.

#### **Article 12.**

- ▶ No one shall be subjected to arbitrary interference with his privacy, family, home or correspondence, nor to attacks upon his honour and reputation. Everyone has the right to the protection of the law against such interference or attacks.

#### **Article 13.**

- ▶ (1) Everyone has the right to freedom of movement and residence within the borders of each state.
- ▶ (2) Everyone has the right to leave any country, including his own, and to return to his country.

#### **Article 14.**

- ▶ (1) Everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution.
- ▶ (2) This right may not be invoked in the case of prosecutions genuinely arising from non-political crimes or from acts contrary to the purposes and principles of the United Nations.

#### **Article 15.**

- ▶ (1) Everyone has the right to a nationality.
- ▶ (2) No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his nationality nor denied the right to change his nationality.

#### **Article 16.**

- ▶ (1) Men and women of full age, without any limitation due to race, nationality or religion, have the right to marry and to found a family. They are entitled to equal rights as to marriage, during marriage and at its dissolution.
- ▶ (2) Marriage shall be entered into only with the free and full consent of the intending spouses.
- ▶ (3) The family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society and is entitled to protection by society and the State.

### **Article 17.**

- ▶ (1) Everyone has the right to own property alone as well as in association with others.
- ▶ (2) No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his property.

### **Article 18.**

- ▶ Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.

### **Article 19.**

- ▶ Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.

### **Article 20.**

- ▶ (1) Everyone has the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association.
- ▶ (2) No one may be compelled to belong to an association.

### **Article 21.**

- ▶ (1) Everyone has the right to take part in the government of his country, directly or through freely chosen representatives.
- ▶ (2) Everyone has the right of equal access to public service in his country.
- ▶ (3) The will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government; this will shall be expressed in periodic and genuine elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret vote or by equivalent free voting procedures.

### **Article 22.**

- ▶ Everyone, as a member of society, has the right to social security and is entitled to realization, through national effort and

international co-operation and in accordance with the organization and resources of each State, of the economic, social and cultural rights indispensable for his dignity and the free development of his personality.

### **Article 23.**

- ▶ (1) Everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favourable conditions of work and to protection against unemployment.
- ▶ (2) Everyone, without any discrimination, has the right to equal pay for equal work.
- ▶ (3) Everyone who works has the right to just and favourable remuneration ensuring for himself and his family an existence worthy of human dignity, and supplemented, if necessary, by other means of social protection.
- ▶ (4) Everyone has the right to form and to join trade unions for the protection of his interests.

### **Article 24.**

- ▶ Everyone has the right to rest and leisure, including reasonable limitation of working hours and periodic holidays with pay.

### **Article 25.**

- ▶ (1) Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control.
- ▶ (2) Motherhood and childhood are entitled to special care and assistance. All children, whether born in or out of wedlock, shall enjoy the same social protection.

### **Article 26.**

- ▶ (1) Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Technical and professional

education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit.

- ▶ (2) Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace.
- ▶ (3) Parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children.

### **Article 27.**

- ▶ (1) Everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits.
- ▶ (2) Everyone has the right to the protection of the moral and material interests resulting from any scientific, literary or artistic production of which he is the author.

### **Article 28.**

- ▶ Everyone is entitled to a social and international order in which the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration can be fully realized.

### **Article 29.**

- ▶ (1) Everyone has duties to the community in which alone the free and full development of his personality is possible.
- ▶ (2) In the exercise of his rights and freedoms, everyone shall be subject only to such limitations as are determined by law solely for the purpose of securing due recognition and respect for the rights and freedoms of others and of meeting the just requirements of morality, public order and the general welfare in a democratic society.
- ▶ (3) These rights and freedoms may in no case be exercised contrary to the purposes and principles of the United Nations.

### **Article 30.**

- ▶ Nothing in this Declaration may be interpreted as implying for any State, group or person any right to engage in any activity or to perform any act aimed at the destruction of any of the rights and freedoms set forth herein.

\*The UN's Universal Declaration of Human Rights is a public domain document that the authors reprinted from the United Nations website: <http://www.un.org/en/documents/udhr/>

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