

Top 5 Scientific Racisms

Erik: I'm Erik.

Jim: I'm Jim.

Jo: I'm Jo. And this is speaking of race.

Erik: And what are we doing, Jo?

Jo: OK, so here's the deal. We had a really good question from a listener fairly recently that caused us to think.

Jim: For the first time.

Jo: It's something we rarely do. So let's take advantage of it. OK, so the question was, what are the most egregious uses of science in the name of scientific racism? Each of us kind of had our own ideas about how we might respond to this. So we decided to make a listicle episode. Now, folks, I didn't know what listicle meant until Jim told me that it's a format of journalism in which you have lists of things which we're all familiar with. I just didn't know it was called.

Erik: The baby boomer had to instruct the millennial.

Jo: True.

Jim: This is bad.

Jo: I'm a Gen X slash millennial. I think we should get into some generational warfare. OK, anyway, so that's the idea, right? We're going to talk about our top five, maybe more than five most egregious instances of the use of science to promote scientific racism. And I feel like in some ways it's a good interlude to whatever it is that we're doing right now.

Erik: The problem is that we couldn't come up with a top five so we picked five and then put them in reverse chronological order.

Jo: What's number five?

Jim: Number five on our top five list is Herrnstein and Murray's book, *The Bell Curve* from 1994 (Herrnstein & Murray, 1994).

Jo: Why does it make it onto our list?

Erik: So the *Bell Curve* is a very long book., A true confession, I actually assigned it the first time that I taught my race in science class.

Jo: No. OK, now tell us why you assigned it.

Erik: So it's an influential book that I read when I was in college and then we looked at it again when I was in graduate school in anthropology. And it was really influential because it basically said Asians are the smartest Caucasians are the moderate intelligent people, and African-Americans are the lowest on the intelligence scale. And there's basically nothing that you can do about it.

Erik: There is some overlap on these, the ends of the curves, the bell curves. Hmm. But essentially, the world is stuck in these intelligence orders.

Jim: Wow. That creates a social hierarchy then, as a result of the genetic capacity for intelligence and performance.

Erik: Strongly limits what can be done through things like education or social programs.

Jo: Sure.

Erik: Yeah. So we read it when I was in college as a, Hey, isn't this neat? And in anthropology as, hey, look how powerful genetics is for humans.

Jo: In other words, it was uncritical.

Erik: The height of uncritically. But in my race in science class, we read it to show, hey, this is this is the state of things. And how do you actually combat this? But it's such a long and convoluted book that my students gave up reading it.

Jo: OK, so it was really popular, wasn't it? Like a New York Times bestseller or something? Am I making that up? So yeah, it was wildly popular. It had it dropped in the early mid 1990s. What do you think was the broader social effect of that book?

Jim: The Contract on America.

Erik: The Contract on America. What?

Jo: What do you mean, Jim?

Jim: Newt Gingrich's policies to reestablish white supremacy.

Erik: So after the election of Bill Clinton, Republicans get their act together to take over Congress in 1994 on a thing that Gingrich calls the Contract for America, which basically says we're going to slash social services pretty much across the board. And I think the bell curve is one of the influential books at the same time I don't think it and I think Gingrich reads it but it comes out at the same time and basically says the reason biologically why we shouldn't have so much you know tax money going into things like education and welfare is because essentially people are stuck genetically and there's no real reason to dump money into a problem that can't really be fixed.

Jo: OK. Dare I ask what sorts of evidence Herrnstein and Murray used to support this claim?

Erik: They used a G.

Jo: What?

Erik: You want to talk about that Jim?

Jim: Little g. Not just a G. They used a little g.

Erik: L'il g.

Jo: L'il g. Oh, yeah.

Erik: You remember a L'il g?

Jo: That's from the podcast? Yes. Why don't we remind listeners what that is?

Jim: That's the statistical extract of IQ testing that gives you your supposed general intelligence.

Jo: Mm hmm. Right. That was from our race and intelligence series.

Jim: Yes. And in fact, we talked about Herrnstein and Murray in the third part of our race and IQ series. So if you want to go back and listen to what we had to say about it then (Bindon, Peterson, & Weaver, 2018c).

Erik: And what was their other scientific evidence for that claim? That's right. Crickets. There wasn't any. There wasn't any. But they packed a lot of statistics into that book.

Jo: Yeah. Obviously, I mean, the basic fault was that we know IQ testing doesn't really measure IQ, right? And they totally took it at face value as actually measuring IQ when in fact it was measuring things like social conditions and cultural orientation. OK, and.

Erik: We just talked about Stephen J. Gould's Measure of Man. It was released in a second edition in 1996, specifically to combat Bell Curve (Gould, 1996).

Jo: All right, so that's number five, what's number four.

Erik: So I got number four.

Jo: OK.

Erik: So this is an out of left field suggestion for this podcast. But there was a time in the 1960s where the hottest topic in anthropology was the study of human aggression. So in 1963 an ethologist named Conrad Lorenz from Austria.

Jo: Whoa, whoa, what's an ethologist?

Erik: I was hoping that you would ask. So Lorenz is a guy who studies animal behavior to figure out stuff about human behavior, but he wasn't a primatologist, he didn't study primates mostly. He studied birds.

Jim: Geese.

Erik: Yeah. Mostly, yeah. Geese that he kept in his house. He lived with geese and other kinds of birds. Yeah. And then he said by observing these birds, we can learn a lot about human behavior. So that's ethology. His 1966 book is called On Aggression (Lorenz, 1966). And basically what Lorenz says is that humans are aggressive. Let's look for the origins of aggression in non human things and he finds instances of aggression in fish and birds primarily and lizards and things like that.

Erik: And then he just interprets that as a hard biological thing that humans share as well and he attracts a whole lot of followers including these two other guys who themselves were not scientists Robert Ardrey and Desmond Morris, both Ardrey and Morris arteries in the United States. Morris was in the UK, both become fabulously well known. Robert Ardrey for his 1966 book called the Territorial Imperative which basically argues humans are aggressive which Karl Lorenz has already said (Ardrey, 1966).

Erik: And one of the things that we just do biologically is we defend territory by force if necessary. And then Desmond Morris writes *The Naked Ape* in 1967 which is why we often call humans naked apes (Morris, 1967). And he goes on to lead the London Zoo and then writes a book in 1969 called *The Human Zoo*. So these three figures together popularized through the late 1960s the idea that humans are innately aggressive, territorial and tribal and that justifies racism because basically what that says is that the reason why humans are racist is biologically programmed.

Jo: Like in-group outgroup stuff.

Erik: Exactly. So they popularize that idea. The reason why it becomes most problematic isn't just that it's so popular. They make TV series about it. There's even honestly there's like a cartoon series that's made and tellingly in 1968 Ashley Montagu who we've talked about on this podcast before saw these three as such a threat that he organized a whole symposium with 14 different biologists and anthropologists simply to try to discredit this aggression stuff because he saw it as this really deeply terribly rooted thing that was going to make racism worse because it made it natural I mean biologically demanded (Montagu, Barnett, & Montagu, 1968).

Erik: So all this is picked up by a guy named Paul Ehrlich and the reason why this matters is because Ehrlich is a proponent of the zero population growth movement, which becomes popularized in a book in 1968 called *The Population Bomb*, which basically means there's too many people on earth, we're running out of resources and we're all going to fight each other and how are we going to fight each other (Ehrlich, 1968)?

Erik: We're going to fight each other along racial territories where we're all going to duke it out because we're all aggressive racist figures forever and ever. There's nothing you can do about it. Amen.

Jo: So were Ardrey, Lorenz, and Morris actually applying this idea to race or did their idea get applied by other people to this? It's sort of like inevitable race.

Erik: Yeah, but sometimes they were pretty naked about the fact that races would just be at each other's throats. And we talked about Darwin in the descent, a man saying that Anglo-Saxons would eventually wipe out all other nonwhite races. That's the way they talked about it too. OK, they did. They were also monogenists. They all agreed that humans evolved from nonhuman ancestors in Africa, but they also essentially thought that once spread out through the earth, these tribes would coalesce along typical racial lines and then would sort of fight it out as the resources were depreciated across the planet.

Erik: I think all this stuff is basically still repeated in evolutionary psychology today.

Jo: Yeah, no question.

Jim: The worst parts of it. Yeah, absolutely.

Jo: OK, so that was number four.

Erik: Number three.

Jo: Number three.

Jim: Number three is for me, I'm going back into my academic genealogy and I'm grabbing an academic uncle of mine named Carlton Stephens Coon. He was the second PhD student trained

by Ernest Albert Hooten at Harvard in the physical anthropology program. Coon received his PhD in 1928 and at that time he was already working in race. His dissertation was a study of the fundamental racial and cultural characteristics of the Berbers of North Africa, as exemplified by the revisions, he assisted in the racist fight against the desegregation of public schools called for by the 1954 Supreme Court decision in *Brown v Board of Education*.

Jo: He mean he was like pro-segregation.

Jim: Yes, absolutely. Yes. He worked through his cousin, Carlton Putnam, the one time CEO of Delta Airlines. Putnam was very upset with the Supreme Court decision and *Brown v board*, and he spent a lot of time and energy and money arguing against it. And he ended up eventually publishing a booklet in 1961 called *Race and Reason*, which is largely a massive diatribe against Boazian Anthropology and Boazian thought on race. Why? Yeah, because of Footnote 11 in *Brown v Board*.(Putnam, 1961).

Jo: Oh yeah.

Jim: The last item in that key footnote that it's the social science underpinning the decision is and see generally Myrdal an American dilemma and Myrdal took his cue on race from Boaz not from Hooten the lead physical anthropologist in the US at that time (Myrdal, 1944). So Putnam was just infuriated by this he saw these Jewish anthropologists at Columbia you know coming out with this anti-racist standard.

And so he corresponded and coon corresponded back and forth. Coon managed to convince him in the letters you can see Coon managed to convince Putnam to not lean on Madison Grant and Lathrop Stoddard, two very racist eugenicists of the early 20th century in the U.S. and instead to use some obscure authors. And then also Putnam actually got a quote from Coon, but it's a hidden quote because he puts it into this booklet as coming from a distinguished scientist younger than I am a scientist, not a Southerner. Who was a recognized international authority on the subject we are considering.

Jo: And just what did it say?

Jim: He quotes Coon as saying, about 25 years ago, it seemed to be proved beyond a doubt that man is a cultural animal, solely a creature of the environment, and that there is no inheritance of instinct, intelligence or any other capacity. Everything had to be learned. And the man or race that had the best opportunity for learning made the best record.

The tide is turning, heredity is coming back, not primarily through anthropologists, but through zoologists. It is the zoologists, the animal behavior men. Konrad Lorenz, are you listening oh yeah. Who are doing it and the anthropologists are beginning to learn from them. It will take time, but the pendulum will swing. He even affected my education on race when my human variation professor at Berkeley in 1972 Vince Sarich taught me Coon's version of origins. Coon in his 1962 book *The Origin of Races* showed five different regional lines of *Homo erectus* evolving into five races of modern humans (Coon, 1962).

Oh boy. The interesting thing about what Coon does in this is that based on his interpretation of the fossil record, he sees Caucasoids as being the first to evolve into modern humans, and that they did this about 200,000 years before Negroid they were the last to evolve into moderns. He sees that time in grade essentially as being time for improvement.

So he sees that as the ultimate reason why whites are so much more accomplished and civilized and intellectual than blacks are. He did get the time differential almost exactly bass-ackwards in that it's the Africans who evolved first and the Caucasians who came last. He was still defending these ideas when he wrote his self-serving memoir in 1980 (Coon, 1981). He died the year after in 1981.

There are a lot of other things that I could give you to put nails in coons scientific racist coffin but that should be enough to let him stay on the list.

Erik: I mean that's a good reminder that many of these ideas from well recognized scientists are less than 50 years old and still kicking around.

Jo: Yeah, totally. OK, so that was number three.

Erik: Number two.

Jo: Number two. Don't worry folks. I am eventually going to talk. I've got number one and our bonus. But what's number two?

Erik: Well, I can hear a lot of what Jim just shared with Carlton Coon in number two, which is our 19th century figure. It's Ernst Haeckel, a German who also was basically the most important person to translate Darwin from a scientific audience to a popular audience. A historian of science, Bob Richards at the University of Chicago says that more people at the turn of the 20th century learned about evolutionary theory from the writings of Haeckel from any other source, even more than learned actually from Darwin. So one of the most influential scientists of the late 19th and early 20th century and Haeckel wanted to develop his own racial anthropology he was really explicit that he wanted to take ideas that there were these different races that didn't overlap in intelligence as a theme (Levit & Hossfeld, 2019; Marks, 2012).

Jo: Yeah.

Erik: And show how each of these evolved. So among other things, Haeckel was known for drawing these trees, these evolutionary trees, some of which are still in use today in biology classrooms, which just blows my mind. Yeah. And so of course, Haskell does this with humans, too. So he has what he calls his pedigree of the 12 species of man. I mean, they're species. It's different races aren't subspecies like Darwin said, or just gradations, like others have said, they're actually different species. Haeckel loved to draw, and he had his students draw things in order to promote them. He was big into the promotion of scientific ideas. So many of the drawings of these 12 species of humans still float around in racist corners of the internet to be used over and over today.

Erik: And I bet you can't guess which race is the most evolved.

Jo: Oh.

Jim: Gee, Erik, he's not a Brit, so it can't be Anglo-Saxon, right?

Jo: Was it the Germans. Was it the Aryan?

Erik: It's kind of a trick question. It's basically Europeans. Oh, and within Europeans, he found four branches Caucasians, Indo-Germanians. So actually the remember the Aryan thesis.

Jo: Oh, how can I forget?

Erik: Big promoter of that hmm. But here's what's interesting about Haeckel, because some people see Haeckel as directly going toward Nazi eugenics and Nazi race policy. However, he puts Semites on the same level as Caucasians in Indo Germania, which is why Haeckel is actually not used by the Nazis because he's not racist enough. Ironically.

Jo: OK, not anti-Semitic enough.

Erik: I guess not anti-Semitic enough. Right. There's one quote that I love about Haeckel that was given by Leo Tolstoy, the famous Russian author. He said, "I believe that Mr. Haeckel is the worst and the most harmful of all that I know what well."

Jo: Tolstoy is on the right side of history.

Erik: So just to sum up, Haeckel tries to take Darwinism and evolutionary theory more generally and make it explicitly about racial competition with whites winning the race. Hmm. Yeah.

Jo: Great. OK, are you ready for number one and number one, remember, not necessarily in order of badness, but in chronological order is Carl Linnaeus. Yeah. And I'm going to tell you why, but if you want to learn more about it, you can refer back to one of our earlier episodes.

Jim: I remember him. He was in *Race and Enlightenment* (Bindon, Peterson, & Weaver, 2018a).

Jo: Part one. That's right. Part one of *Race and Enlightenment*. So Carl is the ostensible father of modern natural history. Interestingly, he didn't actually use the term race for the people groups that he was interested in kind of labeling and talking about but his magnum opus *Systema*, not to worry, was like, you know, as we all know, the first attempt to classify basically all of what he thought as God's creations, animals and plants and fungi and bacteria, he even put minerals in there. And the idea was he wanted to develop a single system that he did develop. It's what we now call binomial nomenclature. Or the Latin sort of like genus and species names that we still use to label species today. Right? Yeah. So within that binomial nomenclature, humans are *Homo sapiens*. They're one species. But in his initial attempt, there is his first edition of this book in 1735, he broke the species down further into four subdivisions, which is noteworthy because that's something he didn't do with any of the other species groups in this giant book (Linnaeus, 1735).

Erik: That's interesting.

Jo: Except for quartz.

Erik: Except for minerals.

Jo: Except for the mineral quartz. OK, and these are, these were the four varieties. So white Europeans, brown or he later referred to them as yellow Asians, red Americans and black Africans. So here he's differentiating the groups by skin color and continental origin. And again, remember, he didn't actually use the term race for these subdivisions. He didn't really talk about their origins per se. So he wasn't saying anything about monogenism versus polygenism. He kind of just left it at that in the first edition of *Systema*, right. Skin color and continent. So in his later 10th edition, which was 1758, the attributes that he assigns to these four subdivisions of humans get more numerous and start to kind of like veer into characteristics that are actually behavioral. Like he says there are innate characteristics of these subspecies. But he's talking about things like temperament, appearance, personality, personal style of dress or tattooing or, you know, bodily adornment.

Erik: You're looking very red today.

Jo: Yeah, even social regulations. And this is important because these terms, the white Europeans, the brown or yellow Asians, right? Americans, black Africans, they implicitly rank the races as more or less superior. And of course, they stereotype groups with things like, you know, black Africans, oil, their skin, things like that. Just these silly things. And the rankings come across as these

permanent essential categories in the sense that he's saying, you know, a European or an African looks like this and acts like this. Of course, who ends up first? Europeans are always first, right? Then Asians, the Native Americans and Africans at the bottom in these attributes which he attaches in the 10th edition to these four groups. He says that Europeans are intellectual and acute and aware. While, on the other end of the spectrum, he says Africans are crafty and lazy and careless. So even though he never actually uses the word race, right, Linnaeus was the first to stereotype and kind of lay out a hierarchy that indicated supposedly innate value of these four human groups based on things that he saw as essential or natural intellectual and behavioral traits that made some superior to others. I mean, like the consequences there, you know, they're pretty far-reaching. For starters, consider that Linnaeus is first two characteristics in the first edition where he only used skin color and continent. Those are still the most common ways that people kind of think about racial difference today. And what's more, those four racial groups were adopted by others persisting even into the U.S. Census until the year 2000 when a fifth group was added Pacific Islanders.

Right. So it's pretty, in my opinion, hard to estimate the importance of what Linnaeus did here, not to mention the fact that he was a highly respected scientist who was making, sort of like situating, these four human subgroups in a very sciencey publication alongside Cortes and everything else, and maybe giving some of the heaviest like early scientific weight to this idea of separate races.

Jo: So that's why I think he's number one. What do you guys think?

Jim: He also was a very important person, just ask him.

Jo: Right.

Jim: Linnaeus himself would say God creates and I classify.

Jo: That's right.

Jim: He is God's right hand man basically on the planet at that time.

Erik: Wow. Wow.

Jo: Yeah. OK, are you ready for one more guys.

Erik: And one more.

Jo: Honorable mention I think should go to recreational genomics companies like 23andMe. What do you think does that sound reasonable.

Jim: I'm on for it.

Erik: Why?

Jo: OK, why? Because I think they are one of the most presently visible forces right now in society that make ancestry and thus race seem purely genetic and readable through science. They're really prominent. They're really popular everybody knows about them. And I know that when all three of us have taught about race and science, one of the questions we have gotten in the past is if race isn't biological then how can 23andMe know that I'm half Asian, right?

Erik: Yeah, totally.

Jo: We did a whole episode, which is one of my favorite episodes actually ever about ancestry companies. So go check it out if you haven't yet (Bindon, Peterson, & Weaver, 2018b). And we talk in that episode about how commercials for 23andMe show people discovering new aspects of their ancestry and sort of like changing the way they think about their own identity. And even the way that they present themselves sort of through the wonders of genomic science.

Jo: They don't talk about race. So we're kind of like Linnaeus, right? They're not using that word. They only call it Ancestry. But you could argue that because of what I just said about Linnaeus, we know that Continental ancestry translates to most people as information about one's racial makeup, right? So if you found out that you had some percentage of Asian ancestry, for instance, you might start looking for Asian features in your face maybe. I don't know. Or like the guy in the commercial, if you find out you've got Scottish ancestry, you might start wearing a kilt or whatever, right?

Erik: Instead of lederhosen.

Jo: Right. The problem is that the techniques that companies like 23 and me use to determine ancestry are proprietary and the results they produce differ depending on the analysis method used and on the sample that they're comparing your genetic information to. Some companies even admit this in their own disclaimers. Just for perspective, they use 2/100 of 1% of your DNA for these analyzes to look for ancestry informative markers. So I mean, we're talking about a minuscule amount of your total genome and each company picks and chooses different parts of the genome to look at. So if you happen to be someone who has ancestry that's not very well represented in the sample, they're comparing you to, or if they happen to just skip over the portion of your genome that flags a particular part of your ancestry, it just won't show up in your results.

I don't know about you guys, but I have had my ancestry tested by two separate companies with pretty different results. And even though I did this like six plus years ago, I still get updated ancestry estimates all the time. Right.

Erik: So different ones.

Jo: Different. Yeah. Sometimes I've got a little bit of, you know, Middle Eastern ancestry that pops up and other times it completely disappears and I'm entirely French or whatever. And again, the reason I think these guys deserve honorable mention is because they're socially really popular and really prominent. And I think their mere existence and sort of sciencey marketing really goes a long way toward reinforcing general populations perceptions that ancestry and therefore race are encoded in our genes.

Jim: I don't think there's anything else in modern culture that reifies biology as race as much as these guys do.

Jo: Absolutely.

Jo: Yeah. I'm Jo, the cultural anthropologist.

Erik: I'm Erik the historian. Science.

Jim: I'm Jim uh, the, uh.

Erik: Do you still want to claim biological anthropology after Carleton Coon?

Jim: My, my, my academic uncle? Sure. Yeah. The physical anthropologist and you've been listening to Speaking of Race.

Jo: Find us on Facebook at SORpodcast on Twitter and Instagram at @SpeakingofRace and wherever you get your podcasts.

Erik: Thanks for listening.

Erik: His [Linnaeus'] use of colors makes me think of Lucky Charms sorry.

Jo: Yes. Thank you for that. I don't know why, because lucky charms are like pink and blue.

Erik: Delicious.

Jo: They are. Did you know there was a period in high school where I ate Lucky Charms three meals a day?

Erik: That is absolutely the outro.

Jo: Yep.

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