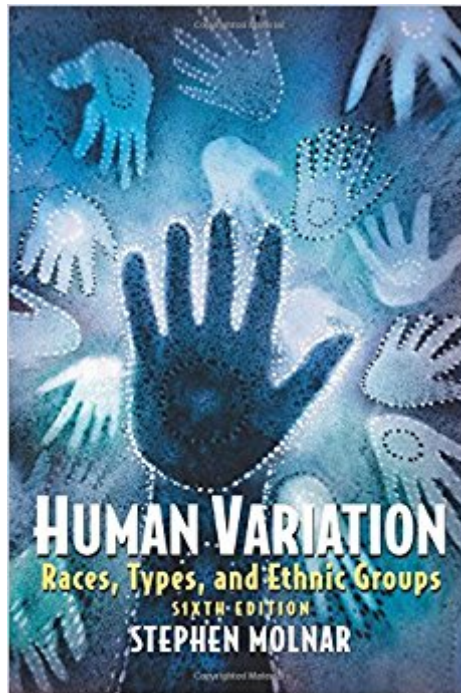




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Human Variation: Races, Types, And Ethnic Groups



Synopsis

Basic text for the sophomore/junior level course in Human Variation or Human Diversity taught anthropology or biology departments. This classic introduction to human variation, has been thoroughly updated to include the issues and controversies facing the contemporary study of diversity.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This volume examines the range of human biological diversity in contemporary populations, and discusses and evaluates past attempts to classify and explain human variation in the light of recent data and theoretical interpretations. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Discarding race as misleading, *Human Variation: Races, Types, and Ethnic Groups* examines the biology of human variation at the population level. It argues that diversity is a reflection of humans' ability to adapt to environments, organize activities, and regulate breeding behavior. This book reviews the history, behavior, and demography of contemporary populations and the distribution of major distinctions of body form, size, and skin color. The book traces the concept of race and analyzes faulty perceptions of human differences and issues of racism on assumed inherited inequality. It incorporates the latest DNA technology into a discussion of genetic markers including their adaptive significance. It also reviews ongoing evolution. The fourth edition of *Human Variation:*

Races, Types, and Ethnic Groups has been revised to include a reorganization of chapters to unite discussions of inherited traits with explanations of their adaptive significance. The book also includes the latest data and a glossary of the latest terminology. A valuable reference book for any reader interested in the biological diversity of the human species. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Great condition

Very interesting

Having survived a quarter-long course in anthropology using this as a textbook, I've acquired a pretty good feel for its strengths and its faults. Let's start with the latter and work toward the former. What will bother most people is the occasionally lacking organization/illustration of the subject matter. While this is fine in a college environment, the layman can easily get lost in its pages. The chapters were probably practical enough from the author's perspective, the bulk going from one "racial" feature to another and exposing the actual evolutionary roots, but I would have liked more theoretical continuity. Also, despite the mass of excellent data, the book lacks a proper genetic analysis of human variation. Research has given us an idea of how far various conventional "groups" are from each other, genetically speaking--sometimes in direct contravention to the expected associations. This sort of analysis is elementary to tracking our remarkable journey into the far reaches of the world, and should not be omitted in a text that considers what happened in the process. As an extension of my first complaint, it's the lack of theoretical perspective which makes "A reader's" review possible. Had the author made the meta-scientific point of race being an irrelevant construct, my fellow reviewer would not have spoken of "...the big *racial* differences in size, speed, leaping ability, and muscularity..." since there are quite valid selective factors behind such variation, independent of any perceived "race." To Molnar's credit, he *does* take a look at stature in its evolutionary context. In any case, one must not turn "a feature present in people seen as belonging to a race" into "a racial feature." Accordingly, Molnar should have noted the inherent logical circularity of racial distinctions: Races are defined by certain features, and those features are racial because they define races. How do they define races? Because races have them. What defines a race? Those features. It is our perceptual emphasis on apparent differences that creates racial categories, and only secondarily do some intrepid pseudo-scientists attempt to provide a more sophisticated academic "justification" of those categories. This book is rife with detailed information

to use against these sorts, but it helps to grasp the bigger picture in advance. Ultimately, Molnar fails to ask a rather philosophical question: What makes a category scientifically real? If you're going to say that races don't really "exist," the standard of existence must be made explicit. The short answer is that things are scientifically real insofar as they fit into science's theoretical machine; in this case, evolutionary theory and its applications. The concept of distinct "races" arose in less enlightened times, and it is thus incommensurable with the language of modern biology. Science has no use for it, since, functionally, there is only the genetic paint of human inheritance spread over a geographical canvas, tinted by natural selection. Internally, there is no way to rigidly divide the resulting image, since one shade blends into another through space and time; externally, the substrate and the tint are often indistinguishable. Does the blending occur in more or less dramatic ways? Certainly. However, as Molnar amply illustrates, there are no simple *primary* colors in human variation (save *Homo sapiens sapiens* itself), and the belief that they do exist overlooks a complex history of inheritance and selection. As a result, attributing features to those "colors" is scientifically sloppy, and socially sloppy as well. "Black" Entertainment Television, "Black" crime, "Black" culture, "Black" poverty, "Black" genetic resistance to disease: Some forget the generality of racial terms, and all hide the functional factors, be they cultural, historical, selective or deeply hereditary. Race is the ultimate red herring, and Molnar should have made that explicit. Intelligent readers will find that his data can speak for itself, or at least it will help the reader recognize that understanding can only be found in that data, which, taken unto itself, contains no meta-categories. All in all, "Human Variation, Races, Types, and Ethnic Groups" is best seen as the educated man's reference book on race, for use in illustrating your own arguments. If you're seeking a guided journey through the subject, look elsewhere.

Everybody is supposed to "celebrate diversity" these days, but in practice that seems to mean stomping on anybody who actually want to do it. Few things are less welcome these days in American academia than a discussion of what we all see as we walk down the street each day: the remarkable biodiversity of the human species. Only a few selectively bred species like dogs exceed humans in variability of size, color, and temperament. This textbook reviews most of the duller, politically less incendiary topics in human biodiversity: e.g., blood types, sickle cell genes for preventing malaria, and high-altitude adjustments. He shies away from the more fun topics like the big racial differences in size, speed, leaping ability, and muscularity, which we all see so vividly illustrated in the Olympics and in American pro sports. (What are all those huge Samoans doing in the NFL if human biodiversity doesn't matter much?) And, to prove that his heart is in the right place

politically, Molnar mails in a pro forma denunciation of Arthur Jensen and the other Bell Curvers. Ho hum. Steve Sailer

Textbook

Molnar's book is a wonderful introduction to human genetics, variation, and racial classification (that is, race is an illusion), just as the title suggests. Parts of the book are highly involved and technical, giving both the amateur and the professional room for learning. The book would be great for undergrads and graduate students.

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