

## Who bankrolled the early days of 'race science'? And who backs that movement today?

In 1961, a new journal of ethnology and anthropology appeared on academic bookshelves. Nearly every page betrayed an obsession with racial differences.?

"The few worthwhile contributions cannot justify the publication of the rest of the journal," [wrote](#) the English anthropologist G. Ainsworth Harrison, spotting error after error. "None of the authors rigorously and objectively appraises the limitations of the tests he uses." One article made the bizarre claim that Egypt — a country described as being made up of racial "hybrids" — was more "disease-ridden" as a result. "What is particularly insidious in a supposedly scientific journal is the use of words with overtones of moral judgment," Harrison concluded.

What he didn't know was that this was entirely by design. The journal had been founded by a tight web of far-right thinkers intent on blocking racial integration in the United States, ending immigration from everywhere but Western Europe, and promoting eugenic policies that would encourage only those they believed were the fittest to survive and reproduce. They were relying on the naivete of fellow researchers, using academia as cover so they could present their agenda to politicians and policymakers as supposed scientific fact.

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The Mankind Quarterly, as this journal was known, was a work of political propaganda. Its cover featured a globe divided into three, each with a head sticking out of it. The top two heads were labelled "Homo Caucasicus" and "Homo Mongolicus," and the one at the bottom in black was labelled "Homo Africanus." The editors never pretended they weren't publishing race science.

Harrison's declared hope was that The Mankind Quarterly would be shut down before it did any more damage. Had the scientific process operated perfectly, perhaps it would have been. After all, this is how good science is supposed to work. Researchers read each other's papers to make sure that dodgy theories and biased studies don't slip through. The worst mistakes are meant to be corrected or retracted. Peer review of this kind is the ultimate check and balance. It forms the cornerstone of public trust in science.

What the public is not told is that some mistakes are never corrected. A few are so profound that their effects reverberate through the decades.

The Mankind Quarterly was first published in 1961 to widespread condemnation. Today, more than 60 years later, the journal continues to publish race science under the guise of academic credibility.

In the 1960s, there was still a wide gray area between those on the disreputable fringes and those in the center of academia when it came to race, giving room to those who harbored political biases. A few contributors to *The Mankind Quarterly* were scientists with positions at top universities. Among them was Henry Garrett, the chair of psychology at Columbia University between 1941 and 1955, president of the American Psychological Association — and the one who made the unsubstantiated racist claims about Egypt's diverse population. On the back cover of the October to December 1961 issue of *The Mankind Quarterly* was a full-page request for donations from the University of Edinburgh, with payments to be made directly to the university's administrative office. These stamps of approval from reputable academia would have been enough to mislead some readers.

But most crucially, *The Mankind Quarterly* was funded and distributed independently. Its editors didn't have to care about the judgment of other scholars because they were being bankrolled by a single benefactor from outside the scientific establishment. This philanthropist gave thousands in grants and gifts to Garrett alone, as well as bequeathing him \$50,000 in his will. The influence of his largesse was so profound that today, more than 60 years after the first issue was released to widespread condemnation, *The Mankind Quarterly* is still in publication.

This is a story of how outside political interests have skewed the science of human difference for decades. And the damage continues. Only recently a grant was given by one of these shadowy funds to an American academic whose work was so ethically unsound that this year he was fired by his university.

I first began investigating *The Mankind Quarterly* in 2017 for a book about racism in science. The journal was already notorious. The late psychologist William Tucker described it as being written by racists for racists. This was a publication in which nothing was “too bizarre or repugnant” to get a seal of approval, Tucker [wrote](#) in “The Funding of Scientific Racism,” a book published in 2002.

?The current editor-in-chief, Gerhard Meisenberg — a relatively unknown biologist — did not respond to requests from Undark for comment. But when I interviewed him by email in 2017, Meisenberg wrote that “some of the early editors were nutcases.” He and others considered changing *The Mankind Quarterly*'s title after he took over, he added, “but then didn't do it because perhaps improving an existing shoddy brand is more promising than having something without name recognition at all.”

Meisenberg's candid admission nodded at the journal's ignominious history. It originally owed its existence to a wealthy American philanthropist named Wickliffe Draper. Born in 1891, Draper was descended from plantation owners and textile machinery tycoons. The sole heir to his family's fortune after the death of his sister, he invested his inheritance in defending what he saw as one of the most important causes of his time: segregation. In the early 20th century this wasn't a difficult proposition. He had plenty of political support, particularly among leaders in the Southern states.

Draper enjoyed some sympathy in academia, too. Modern science had been macerating for so long in the belief that there really was a biological hierarchy between races that the myth had become embedded in mainstream biology. “Racism,” explains Michael Yudell, a historian and public health ethicist at Arizona State University, was “part and parcel of scientific thought at the time.”

This was a time in which eugenics was popular even among progressives. The [Second International Eugenics Congress](#), held at the American Museum of Natural History in New York in 1921, had as its honorary president the inventor Alexander Graham Bell — famous for patenting the telephone. One of the four sections of the congress was on human racial differences. “Policymakers, eugenicists, and mainstream scientists — some of which were also eugenicists — were in dialogue,” says Yudell. “Even if somebody is not declaring themselves a eugenicist, ideas of eugenics, of racial hierarchy, of some groups being more fit, or in more extreme cases superior to others, you can find it throughout.”

Shy and preferring to operate behind the scenes, according to William Tucker, Wickliffe Draper’s millions would for decades be used to quietly fund individuals and groups who could help make the case that there were such profound psychological and intellectual differences between races that integration was impossible — and that as a result, all efforts toward racial equality were doomed. Directly through grants and cash gifts and indirectly through secondary organizations, money was pumped into academics who shared his political leanings. These funds would eventually extend toward the publication and distribution of *The Mankind Quarterly*.

As Tucker has documented, Draper funded the pamphlets of white supremacist [Earnest Sevier Cox](#), author of the incendiary 1923 book “White America,” which argued that racial mixing would destroy Western civilization and that Black Americans should therefore be forced to leave the United States. He helped promote a 1939 bill by Sen. Theodore Gilmore Bilbo, of Mississippi, aimed at the repatriation of Black Americans. And he donated research funds to [Charles Davenport](#), who founded the Eugenics Record Office at the Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory in New York in 1910 and served as its director until 1934.

But it was after the Second World War, in the era of civil rights and *Brown v. Board of Education*, that Draper’s funding of scientists ramped up. Thousands of dollars were given to Arthur Jensen, an educational psychologist at the University of California, Berkeley who [argued](#) in the *Harvard Educational Review* in 1969 that there might be innate intelligence differences between races, and the Stanford professor William Shockley, who [advocated for](#) eugenic sterilization policies.

Funds would also reach the University of North Carolina anatomy professor Wesley Critz George, who [manipulated science](#) to push against school integration in North Carolina. Another beneficiary of Draper’s money was the psychologist Audrey Shuey at Randolph-Macon Women’s College, author of the 1958 book “The Testing of Negro Intelligence,” which became a much-used resource by those wanting to defend segregation and make the case for natural intellectual disparities between races.

Courtesy University of Kentucky Special Collections

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Images courtesy of the University of Kentucky Special Collections

Draper passed away in 1972. The grants continued.

They would go on to support the work of Jean-Philippe Rushton, a psychologist at the University of Western Ontario who also contributed to *The Mankind Quarterly* and later became central to the small international community of academics seeking to keep scientific racism alive into the 21st century. Rushton would eventually head the Pioneer Fund, an organization incorporated in 1937 to administer Draper's money to researchers. In 2001, the fund had assets totalling more than [\\$3 million](#). But sometime after 2011, according to tax reports, these assets seem to have been almost entirely drained. By 2012, the year that Rushton died, they were down to roughly a million. That same year, large amounts of money had been [divested](#) to an organization calling itself the Charles Darwin Research Institute in Canada — headed

by Rushton himself before his death.

Following Rushton's death, the Charles Darwin Research Institute was taken over by his son, Stephen Rushton, an associate professor at the University of South Florida. Stephen Rushton did not respond to a request for comment about the status of the institute or what has happened to the money invested in it by the Pioneer Fund.

It has been said, to quote the physicist Max Planck, that science advances one funeral at a time. But money doesn't die the way people do. Perhaps if everyone who wrote for *The Mankind Quarterly* or received grants from Wickliffe Draper's Pioneer Fund was no longer around, the scientific community might be able to tell itself that rigorous, reliable science won out in the end against the forces of politically motivated race science bankrolled by the wealthy.

But some of these researchers are still alive. And more are taking their place.

One of the largest single beneficiaries of Wickliffe Draper's generosity in the 20th century was the psychologist Thomas Bouchard, currently the director of the Minnesota Center for Twin and Adoption Research at the University of Minnesota, whose twin studies remain influential in intelligence research circles. Most recently, Bouchard's work was cited in a 2022 paper in the *Nature* journal *npj Science of Learning* looking at genetic effects on cognitive performance as people learn over time.

In her 2012 book *"Born Together-Reared Apart: The Landmark Minnesota Twin Study,"* the evolutionary psychologist Nancy Segal claims that Bouchard had never heard of the Pioneer Fund until its staff contacted him in 1980 or 1981. Despite concerns among his colleagues about accepting money from what was known to be a disreputable source, according to Segal, Bouchard admitted in 2009 that, "If not for Pioneer we would have folded long ago."

Another psychologist, Linda Gottfredson at the University of Delaware, was given a research grant of \$174,000 by Draper's Pioneer Fund in 1989. The *Washington Post* [reported](#) at the time that taking this money was considered controversial by her university, but she went ahead and accepted it nonetheless. Gottfredson told Undark by email that the grants she received from the Pioneer Fund ultimately totaled "perhaps several hundred thousand dollars" and that she remains "grateful for its support." She added that the fund's president at the time "developed a talent for recognizing world-class scientists committed to answering critical questions that others feared asking," and "supported them when other organizations would not."

Those critical questions, for Gottfredson at least, have focused on racial group differences in intelligence and her belief that they have some natural underpinnings. Unsurprisingly, given the lack of genetic evidence for group differences in cognitive ability, her work has attracted suspicion. In one [paper](#) she shared with Undark, she condemned her critics for attempting to stifle her academic freedom, using the opportunity to defend fellow researchers Arthur Jensen and Thomas Bouchard. In another [paper](#), titled "Resolute Ignorance on Race and Rushton," she wrote that Jean-Philippe Rushton was a "scholar and a gentleman," and that in her view, it is plausible to assume that IQ differences between Black and White

Americans could be largely attributed to genetics.

## **20th Century Race Science: the Early Years**

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But Gottfredson is perhaps most well-known for her [public statement](#) in The Wall Street Journal in 1994 defending widely-refuted claims about race and intelligence made in “The Bell Curve,” a book published that year by political scientist Charles Murray and the late psychologist Richard Herrnstein. Gottfredson argued that while the statistical bell curve for intelligence among Whites centered at an IQ of around 100, “for American Blacks” it was “roughly around 85,” and that there was no persuasive evidence that these curves were converging. The statement was signed by 52 others, many of whom were also linked to Wickliffe Draper and his funds, including Bouchard, Jensen, and Rushton.

Another signatory was a less well-known figure: Richard Haier, a psychologist and now emeritus professor at the University of California, Irvine. Haier is the editor of *Intelligence*, a journal belonging to the major international scientific publishing group Elsevier, which also publishes the highly prestigious journals *Cell* and *The Lancet*. Unlike *The Mankind Quarterly*, *Intelligence* is considered a reputable mainstream publication, with bona fide academics on its editorial board. Yet many Pioneer Fund grantees — Gottfredson, Bouchard, and Rushton among them — have had dozens of papers published in the journal. After Rushton died in 2012, the journal printed a gushing [obituary](#) comparing him to the 18th-century English social economist Thomas Malthus, whose memorial in Bath praised him for his “spotless integrity.”

It is with people like Haier at the respectable end of academia that this story reaches out of the fringes of science and into its core.

The web woven by Wickliffe Draper in the 20th century, when he could count on august leaders of scientific institutions to support his segregationist and eugenicist causes, is far less distinguished today. But it hasn’t been wiped out completely. Stealthy back-scratching continues among *The Mankind*

Quarterly contributors with scant academic credentials and those in mainstream academia and publishing.

In early 2018, I [reported](#) for The Guardian newspaper in the U.K. that there were at least two individuals sitting on the editorial board of the Elsevier journal *Intelligence* who failed to meet the publisher's own professional benchmarks. One of them was editor for The Mankind Quarterly, Gerhard Meisenberg. The other was Richard Lynn, then assistant editor of The Mankind Quarterly, and the president of Draper's Pioneer Fund. Lynn was an emeritus professor of psychology at Ulster University in Northern Ireland, but a few months into 2018 that title would be [withdrawn](#), following a motion by its student union that his views were "racist and sexist in nature." (Since 2015, The Mankind Quarterly has been [published](#) by the Ulster Institute for Social Research, a think tank headed by Lynn.)

At the time, Haier, the editor of *Intelligence*, defended Lynn and Meisenberg. "I have read some quotes, indirect quotes, that disturb me," he told me, "but throwing people off an editorial board for expressing an opinion really kind of puts us in a dicey area." Yet, by the end of 2018 — after the piece in The Guardian was published — the journal's editorial board went through a dramatic reshuffle and Lynn and Meisenberg were both gone.

A spokesperson for Elsevier told Undark that it is policy "to rotate Editorial Board members from time to time" and that "Elsevier's journals operate under the guidance of an Editor-in-Chief and an Editorial Board. Editors-in-Chief are established researchers with a broad interest in their field and are well connected and respected in their subject community."

In 2021, after losing all respectable academic affiliations, Lynn went on to co-author a [paper](#) in another Elsevier journal, *Personality and Individual Differences*, comparing the processing speeds of people in the United States and Taiwan. He made the unverified claim that part of any gap could be attributed to genetic differences between population groups. Lynn sat on the editorial advisory board of *Personality and Individual Differences* as recently as 2018. The journal's editor published a [review](#) of his memoirs in 2021.

## A tangled web

Wickliffe Draper's early investments in race science have spawned a vast and still thriving network of people and publications devoted to race essentialism. Click unexpanded boxes to learn more about the personalities involved, the funds that support them, and the many avenues they have used — and continue to use — to spread their ideas.

"Peer review should weed out papers like that that are being submitted today," says Yudell of Arizona State University. "But certainly, there are journals that are out there that have missed the boat and publish stuff that is promoting racism explicitly." Both Elsevier journals, *Intelligence* and *Personality and Individual Differences*, have become clearing houses for those closely connected to The Mankind Quarterly and the Pioneer Fund, routinely publishing articles about psychological and behavioral differences between races.

"The hard truth that some people don't like to admit is that you can get anything you want published in something that looks like a respectable, prestigious journal," says the science journalist and editor Ivan



Oransky, who co-founded Retraction Watch, a website that logs papers that have been retracted from academic journals and reports on cases of scholarly misconduct, including plagiarism and harassment.

“There’s this imprimatur of peer review that happens, and I would argue in many cases, a false imprimatur of quality or legitimacy or even being correct,” Oransky explains. “Then it’s in the literature, and once it’s in the literature, inertia is an incredibly difficult force to reckon with. And so, it becomes even harder to remove something from literature or retract it.”

When these avenues fail, some simply set up online journals of their own. “Anybody could put a journal up on the internet right now and call it ‘the journal of whatever’ and create a peer review system with their own set of lackeys and publish and promote nonsense,” says Yudell.

The line between serious, rigorous scientific publications and shoddy ones, or “junk journals” as Oransky refers to them, has become further blurred in recent years with the dramatic rise in online academic publishing.

“This stuff keeps coming up,” says Oransky. It can be difficult for those on the outside to distinguish reliable content from the unreliable. Fringe race researchers looking for credibility have employed the effective strategy of publishing in both junk journals and — if they’re able to — in more respectable ones that are willing to give them room, such as *Intelligence* or *Personality and Individual Differences*. As their publications and citations mount up, they appear to meet the metrics for academic success.

Publishing is one side of the research coin. The other is funding. And following a temporary hiatus, Wickliffe Draper’s Pioneer Fund is still in business. In 2013, following the death of its president Jean-Philippe Rushton, only a small fraction of the fund’s assets remained. By 2020, though, they had risen again to almost \$300,000 — suggesting that money was coming in from somewhere.

The Pioneer Fund’s U.S. [tax records](#) show that its most recent grant was given in 2019, totalling \$15,000 to support an organization known as the Human Phenome Diversity Foundation, based in Ohio. This foundation’s president was listed as Bryan Pesta, then a tenured business professor at Cleveland State University in Ohio. In 2016, Pesta published a [paper](#) in which he predicted that as the IQ level required to do a job increases, “the percent of White and Asian workers will increase, while the percent of Black workers will decrease.” This was published in *Open Differential Psychology*, an open-access online journal edited by a right-wing blogger with no known reputable academic affiliations, who is — like Pesta — a contributor to *The Mankind Quarterly*.

In 2020, Pesta also published [research](#) in *Intelligence* on racial and ethnic group differences in the heritability of intelligence. Roughly a year later, the University of Virginia psychologists Evan Giangrande and Eric Turkheimer [responded](#), stating that the work of Pesta and his colleagues in this paper served “as an example of how racially motivated and poorly executed work can find its way into a mainstream scientific journal, underscoring the importance of robust peer review and rigorous editorial judgment.”

In 2021, Pesta worked on another paper, this time trying to look for correlations between race and behavioral traits using data from the Adolescent Brain Cognitive Development database, a long-term

study of brain development in American children supported by the National Institutes of Health. The paper analyzed the DNA of almost 10,000 of the children in the study to calculate the percentage of five broad population groups each one might statistically belong to, in a similar way to modern-day genetic ancestry tests. Children were labelled as 10 percent or less African, for example, or 90 percent or less European. The goal was to see if differences in rates of depression, educational attainment, and other factors could be linked proportionately to a child's race.

In September, Cleveland State University told Undark that Pesta was dismissed from his job in March, following an internal investigation. This was not because of his associations with The Mankind Quarterly, nor because he had accepted money from the Pioneer Fund. It was because the university had been informed by the National Institutes of Health that Pesta had been misusing their data, "resulting in multiple violations of the Data Use Certification agreement he signed to gain access to the information." A spokesperson for Cleveland State University added that the National Institutes of Health had banned Pesta from using its data for three years, describing this as "the most serious and longest such ban" in its history.

?In its statement to Undark, Cleveland State University defended the right of researchers to follow whatever line of investigation they chose without interference. "We strongly believe our faculty are entitled to full freedom in their research, but they must adhere to the highest standards of honesty, integrity, and professional ethics." Ultimately, then, Pesta's failure was not seen to be his chosen field of research — race. It was his breach of data protocols.

?In an email message to Undark, Pesta admitted to receiving money from the Pioneer Fund, but described the investigation against him as a "kangaroo court."

? "I absolutely did not misuse NIH data," Pesta said, noting that the most recent payment from the fund came to him after he had been fired, amounting to \$20,000. "As per my agreement with them, I am using the money to fund a series of papers that further explore strong links between race, IQ, and human well-being."

On May 14, a supermarket in Buffalo, New York, became the scene of an American mass shooting. Ten people were killed — all of them Black — and three others were injured. Like the Christchurch killer three years earlier, who shot 51 worshippers in a mosque in New Zealand, the murderer in this case wrote an exhaustive [racist manifesto](#) seeking to justify his actions. But in the pages of this document were also citation after citation of scientific journal papers.

In the aftermath, scientists were quick to [introspect](#), wondering how published research could have been distorted to serve such horrific ends and asking how they might communicate better to make sure good scientific work wasn't misinterpreted. For many, the manifesto represented nothing more than the misguided appropriation of honest scientific research by a rambling conspiracy theorist who had failed to understand it. What fewer were willing to confront was that among the academics cited were those who had knowingly accepted funds from supporters of white supremacy like Wickliffe Draper or had chosen to contribute to overtly racist publications such as The Mankind Quarterly for years.

The manifesto cited a 2004 [paper](#) by the twin researcher Thomas Bouchard, and a 2002 [paper](#) by Richard Lynn, president of Draper's Pioneer Fund, titled "Racial and ethnic differences in psychopathic personality." It cited two [papers](#) by Rushton, including one that was [retracted](#) in 2021. According to the retraction note, Rushton's work was not only offensive, but it also failed to "provide a fair representation of the literature of that time which was available" to the authors, and then failed to "draw valid inferences from it." All appeared in journals owned by academic publishing giants such as Elsevier, SAGE, and Wiley.

Two other papers mentioned in the manifesto, making the case for links between genetics and intelligence differences, were co-authored in [2011](#) and [2015](#) by the Scottish psychiatrist Ian Deary, who retired from the University of Edinburgh in 2021 and has frequently contributed to the Elsevier journals Intelligence and Personality and Individual Differences. Deary wrote for The Mankind Quarterly in 1991, although as he told Undark by email, that paper was a "pointed critique of a paper in that journal that was purporting to provide evidence for a biological basis for claimed race differences in intelligence test scores." Deary has co-authored at least [two papers](#) with Linda Gottfredson, the Pioneer Fund grantee and author of the Wall Street Journal Letter. He did not respond to a request for comment regarding his work with Gottfredson.

Another researcher credited in the shooter's manifesto was Michael Woodley, a British academic who often [collaborates](#) with other Mankind Quarterly [contributors](#), and has been [promoted](#) on far-right media channels. The New York Times [reported](#) in June 2022 that Woodley claimed "there has been an IQ decline in France linked to large-scale migration from North Africa" and that "humans can be divided into subspecies." Yet, as easy as it is to find Woodley's extremist writings online, at the time the manifesto was published he was affiliated with one of Belgium's most highly-regarded universities, Vrije Universiteit Brussels.

When there were protests after the Buffalo massacre, the university suspended its links with Woodley, declaring itself in a statement to be "[shocked](#)" by what had happened.

How is it possible for institutions to be shocked at having racists on their staff or for journals to plead innocence when racists write for them when these individuals make no effort to hide their views? "Ideology plays a role in all science," says historian Mark Borrello at the University of Minnesota. He dismisses as naïve the defense of academics and institutions that claim to be politically neutral, or oblivious to the real world when it comes to race and racism.

??The story of Wickliffe Draper and his millions makes this clear. It could be argued that science bared its

political cracks in 1961 when The Mankind Quarterly should have been closed down at the urging of serious researchers. It revealed its ideological failures again with Jean-Philippe Rushton, whose papers are only now being flagged or retracted, years after his death. More recently, concerned academics made clear that Woodley's and Bryan Pesta's research could not be trusted, yet their universities allowed them to continue in their posts and keep publishing race research until external events forced their hands.

?The question this raises is where the boundaries of acceptable research lie in a system compromised by outside political interests for more than a century. One of the factors keeping fringe racist theories in academia alive well past their sell-by dates is the perennial defense of academic freedom. This principle holds that nothing, no matter how uncomfortable it may make people, is beyond scientific inquiry — and it is so deeply embedded in how scientists think and how institutions operate, it can leave a low bar for what is morally or socially acceptable. In some cases, it also leaves a low bar for what is factually or scientifically accurate.

?Can academic freedom be treated as absolute if organizations like Draper's Pioneer Fund and publications like The Mankind Quarterly are able to circumvent the processes designed to maintain academic rigor? Not according to Ivan Oransky at Retraction Watch. "If you're going to talk about academic freedom above all else then you have to take responsibility and acknowledge when there is wrong information, wrong claims, dangerous information, harmful claims and take responsibility for that," he warns. "I don't see that happening."

?This isn't to say that there haven't been challenges to the individuals and organizations funded over the last century by Wickliffe Draper. There have been, and many times over. Countless articles and books have been written exposing the dangerous, pseudoscientific networks that Draper and his staff cultivated through the 20th century, and have helped keep alive into the 21st. What is less clear is why this kind of firefighting is still needed if science is so good at correcting itself. "Where's the academic vetting? Where's the academic responsibility toward facts and the truth?" asks Oransky.

?In the meantime, politically motivated work continues to be published by journal groups that are supposed to maintain the highest ethical standards for the sake of public trust in science. "It would take a century's worth of work to go back and look at all the terrible research that was done to promote racism," says Yudell. At the moment, progress is happening painfully slowly — one retraction, one ethical breach, one massacre at a time.

**Angela Saini is a science journalist and author of four books. This article extends from research she first carried out for her 2019 book, "Superior: The Return of Race Science," which was shortlisted for the LA Times book prize.**

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