



# BioPolitical

## News&Views

September 30, 2021

### SPOTLIGHT



#### Techno-fantasies of the rich and famous

Pete Shanks, *Biopolitical Times* | 09.28.2021

Immortality is having a media moment, for various bad reasons. Journalists, their editors, and tech billionaires seem to share an ongoing fascination with living forever.

### ANNOUNCEMENTS



#### Watch on demand: Dismantling Eugenics: Legacies/Reckonings/Futures

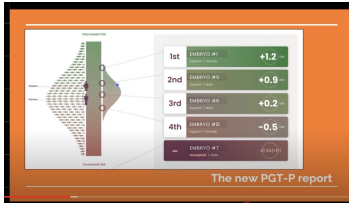
Now online! Videos of dozens of presentations, conversations, and artistic interventions are available from Dismantling Eugenics, a virtual convening aimed at envisioning and working toward an anti-eugenics future. ASL and Spanish translation, along with captions, available for many sessions. [Register for access.](#)



#### DNA Identities: Narrative and Authority in Genetic Ancestry Performance on YouTube

What do genetic ancestry test "reveals" tell us about identity and biological determinism in our post-genomic age? Former CGS staff member Leah Lowthorp, now University of Oregon Assistant Professor of Anthropology and Folklore, presents with discussant Osagie K. Obasogie, UC Berkeley Professor of Law and Bioethics and CGS Senior Fellow. Friday, Oct. 15, noon PT. [Register here.](#)

## COMMENTARY



### The First Polygenic Risk Score Baby

Pete Shanks, *Biopolitical Times* | 09.30.2021

The first child acknowledged to have been selected as an embryo on the basis of its “polygenic risk score” is now 16 months old. Her parents, at least one of whom is a transhumanist, chose from among four IVF embryos scored by Genomic Prediction on their risk of developing heart disease, diabetes, and cancer as an adult.

## CGS IN THE NEWS



### “Gattaca” and the Ethics of Genetic Selection

David K. Johnson, *The Great Courses Daily* | 09.19.2021

How much control should parents have over the genetic make-up of their future children? One worry expressed by CGS’ Marcy Darnovsky is that if the design is too specific, the child’s freedom could be restricted.

## WHAT WE’RE READING

HUMAN GENOME EDITING | POLYGENIC RISK SCORES | ASSISTED REPRODUCTION |  
EUGENICS | GENOMICS | VARIOUS

### HUMAN GENOME EDITING

#### What Does Global Health Justice Look Like With a Seven-Figure Drug?

Kevin Doxzen and Diana M. Bowman, *Slate* | 09.22.2021

Whose role is it to ensure that patients around the world benefit from future genome editing therapies? If left to the market, multi-million dollar price tags will likely exacerbate global health inequities.

#### If I Could Use Gene Therapy to Cure My Manic-Depression, I Don’t Know Whether I Would

Tana Wojczuk, *Slate* | 09.21.2021

Genetic discoveries about depression, schizophrenia and other psychiatric disorders are about to intersect with developments in gene editing. But applications of gene editing must take into account a history of cultural and institutional discrimination against people with mental illnesses, along with a host of moral, philosophical, and personal questions.

#### Temple researchers take another step toward curing HIV

Marie McCullough, *The Philadelphia Inquirer* | 09.17.2021

Temple University’s experimental treatment to cut out dormant HIV hiding in human cells has Food and Drug Administration approval for testing in humans, following experiments in mice and non-human primates. The researchers hope for a functional cure, even if latent virus remains.

### POLYGENIC RISK SCORES

#### Biology meets public policy

Aaron Panofsky, *Science* | 09.24.2021

*The Genetic Lottery* attempts to link genetics to justice. Author Kathryn Paige Harden could have served her purposes better by targeting the rhetoric of neoreactionaries rather than trying

to yoke the left to genetics.

## Picking Embryos With Best Health Odds Sparks New DNA Debate

[Carey Goldberg](#), *Bloomberg* | 09.17.2021

A handful of companies in the U.S. and Europe are offering embryo risk scores for conditions including schizophrenia, breast cancer, and diabetes. Many are calling for an urgent society-wide conversation.

## ASSISTED REPRODUCTION

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### The great sperm heist: ‘They were playing with people’s lives’

[Jenny Kleeman](#), *The Guardian* | 09.25.2021

A donor-conceived 40-year-old uncovered a scandal involving ruthless doctors, stolen sperm, exploited patients, and a community of donor-conceived people in a race against time for truth and justice.

### ‘A Queer Tax.’ New Lawsuit Alleges Aetna Discriminates Against LGBTQ People Seeking Fertility Treatment

[Madeleine Carlisle](#), *TIME* | 09.14.2021

Aetna’s policy defines infertility as not becoming pregnant after 12 months of regular, unprotected heterosexual sex, or 12 months of therapeutic donor insemination. A class action lawsuit alleges that this violates the Affordable Care Act, and human rights laws of New York State and New York City, which prohibit discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity.

## EUGENICS

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### A cautionary history of eugenics

[Adam Rutherford](#), *Science* | 09.24.2021

As science makes advances in reproductive biology, it is incumbent upon scientists and society to firmly grasp the cautionary history of eugenics. Modern genetic techniques provide unprecedented possibilities for control of human biology, and society should proceed with a clear understanding not just of the limitations of this science, but of its grim history.

### Woman with Down syndrome loses UK abortion law challenge

[Sylvia Hui](#), *Associated Press* | 09.23.2021

Heidi Crowter and two others argued that part of the UK Abortion Act is discriminatory because it allows an abortion past the 24-week limit if the fetus is diagnosed with a physical or mental disability. Crowter has said that she found the legislation “offensive” and wanted to change the law to challenge people’s perception of Down syndrome.

### Jeopardy!, Eugenics and Me

[Cynthia Greenlee](#), *Harper’s Bazaar* | 09.17.2021

After Cynthia Greenlee got a chance to compete on *Jeopardy!* and won a round, a news show used her face to illustrate a story speculating that the eventual winner did so well because of the size of his head. She hadn’t expected “to confront racial poppycock when I went on a modern game show.”

## GENOMICS

### High-profile autism genetics project paused amid backlash

[Katharine Sanderson](#), *Nature* | 09.27.2021

A large, UK-based study of genetics and autism spectrum disorder has been suspended, following criticism that it failed to properly consult the autism community about the goals of the research. Concerns about the study included misuse of data by researchers seeking to ‘cure’ or eradicate autism.

### Regulating forensic genetic genealogy

[Natalie Ram](#), [Erin E. Murphy](#), and [Sonia M. Suter](#), *Science* | 09.24.2021

Maryland’s 2021 law comprehensively regulates law enforcement’s use of consumer genetic data to investigate crimes. It was adopted with bipartisan support following a transparent process that engaged a broad array of stakeholders, providing a roadmap for future efforts to regulate genetic genealogy.

## What Is 23andMe Doing With Your DNA?

[Kara Swisher](#), *The New York Times* | 09.20.2021

An interview with CEO Anne Wojcicki covering 23andMe's vast trove of genetic information and their plans to commercialize it through drug development. What are the ethical, privacy, and security questions that come with building a business off the back of customers' genetic data?

## Scientists should counter the myth of biological race

[Marcia L. O'Connell](#), [Zachariah I. Grochau-Wright](#), and [Christopher T. Fisher](#), *The Philadelphia Inquirer* | 09.20.2021

It is critical for those in the medical and scientific professions to acknowledge their role in perpetuating the lie that "races" represent biologically distinct groups. Science educators, in particular, must speak out with one voice in declaring that there is no biological basis for race.

## An anti-racist action plan for studying the human genome

[Eric D. Green](#), *The Hill* | 09.16.2021

The National Human Genome Research Institute is part of an expansive effort at the National Institutes of Health to end structural racism in biomedical research. In December, NHGRI will host a virtual symposium that brings together scholars and researchers to consider the history of eugenics and scientific racism and their complex legacies in the modern health sciences.

## VARIOUS

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## U.N. official calls for moratorium on artificial intelligence tools that breach human rights

[Sammy Westfall](#), *The Washington Post* | 09.15.2021

"Action is needed now to put human rights guardrails on the use of AI, for the good of all of us," said Michelle Bachelet, the United Nations Commissioner for Human Rights. Bachelet warned that the rapid evolution of artificial-intelligence-based technologies and their widespread adoption have outpaced efforts to hold them to human rights standards.

## Theranos and COVID-19 Testing Are Mirror-Image Cautionary Tales

[Benjamin Mazer](#), *The Atlantic* | 09.15.2021

How do we balance the risks of disruptive innovation with the mortal costs of administrative inertia? Theranos and COVID-19 testing are both cautionary tales of failed medical oversight, but the morals flip from one case to the other.

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