There are few religions or cultures as nebulous as Judaism. No offspring of one Christian and one non-religious parent ever says, "I'm half-Christian." Yet, it is not uncommon to hear half-Jews say so. Nor do people who follow a completely different religion ever say that they have "Christian heritage." Some argue that Judaism is entirely based on faith and values, and has nothing to do with blood lineage, while others claim they are "Jewish" due to their heritage, even though they ascribe to other beliefs. Still others assert their "Jewishness" despite a lack of religious or parental ties, in decisions based solely on genetics tracing back thousands of years. So, truly, who are the Jews? Are they a race? Even if they consider themselves, and are considered by others, to be a race, does genetics agree?

In his recent book, *Abraham's Children: Race, Identity, and the DNA of the Chosen People*, Jon Entine tackles these questions and more, though few are answered. Few can be answered, as they are all linked and dependent upon one another. He delves even further into the issues of Jewish race and identity, deepening his exploration to ask controversial questions such as: are the Jews more intelligent than others? If so, can this hyper-intelligence be linked to certain diseases prevalent among Jews? Though Entine's book promises to answer compelling questions about Jewish identity, genes, and intelligence, it leaves the reader unfulfilled. Entine, however, cannot be faulted for this. The worlds of genetics, and of religion, are both inordinately large and changing, and though Entine may not address all topics in great depth or detail, his work provides a valuable overview of the current research and discussion about Jewish identity and the questions that accompany it.

Entine simply entitles the first section "Identity," and here he lays the groundwork for the rest of the book. His own quest to reveal the truth behind Jews as a race and genetic community began when several members of his family developed breast cancer, many of the cases fatal. In this section, he addresses the broad questions behind DNA and identity and repeals the anthropological assertion that there is no race. He calls anthropological efforts to underplay DNA "understandable, but misleading" as "DNA ensures that we differ not only as individuals, but as groups."[1] Speaking further of DNA, he says that it "confirms our common humanity and yet challenges deeply held beliefs of equality."[2] Though he discusses other populations of Jews throughout the book, his main focus is on

[1] Entine 8.

[2] Entine 11.

Ashkenazi Jews, whose ancestors are from Central and Eastern Europe and who make up 90 percent of the six million Jews living in the United States today.[3] Though, before the Inquisition, Sephardic Jews were considered the intelligent Jewish population, compared to their downtrodden Ashkenazim brethren, this tolerance actually kept them from becoming good research subjects now. The welcoming attitudes of their new countries allowed for too much genetic mixing; as it is, Dutch Jews are the most genetically mixed of any Jewish group in Europe.[4] It is Ashkenazim, therefore, that are the preferred subject of research and of Entine's writing.

Ashkenazi Jews and the diseases by which they are plagued has long been a favorite subject of scientific study. But, Jews are not the only race with their own associated diseases; cystic fibrosis is common among Northern Europeans, though rare among blacks and Asians. Blacks and some Mediterranean people are more susceptible to sickle cell anemia. One gene mutation accounts for Japanese peoples' sensitivity to alcohol, while another single mutation present in one fifth of Semites helps them break it down.[5] Entine asks, therefore, "why Jews?"

Due to their restrictive practices, the Jews have kept themselves rather untouched genetically, making them a dream come true for DNA researchers.[6] Entine exclaims that, "Only Jews have a set of closely linked genetic markers found in ethnic communities in all corners of the globe… an almost incomprehensible genetic confirmation of religious continuity and solidarity."[7] Jews do not have more defective DNA nor more hereditary diseases than other populations, but living and marrying within the confines of the ghettoes for centuries have produced a "relatively homogenous population in which tiny genetic alterations, or mutations, that cause disease are easy to find."[8] Throughout history, Jewish survival has been based on fidelity to the religion and the spouse, or in genetic terms, consanguinity and endogamy.[9] Jews did not begin to marry outside their communities until the early 19th

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[3] Stolberg 24.

[4] Entine 228.

[5] Entine 12.

[6] Entine 13.

[7] Entine 92.

[8] Stolberg 24.

[9] Entine 18.

century, but even these outside marriages did not harm the pristine Jewish gene pool.[10] These outside marriages have, in fact, had the opposite effect. Those members of the Jewish community who married non-Jews most often did not raise their children as Jews, effectively removing themselves from the Jewish gene pool.[11] This explains how Jews, who wandered without a homeland for 2,000 years, could remain so cohesive a genetic group. At the end of this section, Entine provides a reassuring disclaimer about DNA, almost as if justifying his motives behind writing the book. He says, "Our identity is based on oral tradition, law, culture, custom and not on physical attributes, including DNA. But, genetics can tell us a great deal about origins and common destiny."[12]

In the second part of the book, entitled "History," Entine gives a thorough history of the Jewish people, including the wandering tribes and subsequent Jewish pockets around the globe, as well as a discussion of the Ashkenazi Jews. This section of the book, though the least thought provoking, is well-researched and factually very solid. Entine carefully recounts Jewish biblical and secular history until the present. He even includes some interesting genetic research demonstrating that though throughout history Jewish men often paired with local women, less than 0.5 percent of each succeeding generation of Ashkenazi women had children with non-Jewish Europeans, substantiating the Jewish matrilineal tradition.[13] This knowledge also reaffirms the solidity of the Jewish gene pool. This historical briefing, however, is only background for the true heart of the book, which is the third section. This final section, which is the most controversial and the most scientific, is aptly called "Race."

In "Race," Entine continues to elaborate on the history of Jews, though now with a purpose: to try and explain why Jews account for a remarkably high percentage of doctors, lawyers, university students, and Nobel Prize winners, while only making up .25% of the world's population.[14] The first element that Entine addresses is cultural heritage, claiming that education is in the Jewish blood. He explains that Jews have always shared a broad commitment to education, because of Judaism's requirement that its holy texts be read. Unlike the low literacy rate

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[10] Entine 19.

[11] Entine 20.

[12] Entine 67.

[13] Entine 220.

[14] Entine 16.

in most rural Christian communities, Jews, by faith, were forced to be able to read every day.[15] According to one scholar, this meant that "being a Jew required being smart."[16]

One of the smartest and most famous Jews, Albert Einstein, advanced a different, yet compatible, theory, saying that "It may be thanks to anti-Semitism that we are able to preserve our existence as a race."[17] Entine, like many other scholars, agrees. They argue that continual discrimination against the Jews actually benefited them in terms of intelligence. One of the first proponents of this idea was Joseph Jacobs, a British anthropologist. In 1885, he published a paper entitled "The Comparative Distribution of Jewish Ability," in which he compared the ghettoes to "genetic jungles," where only the fittest survived.[18] Though many weak and poor Jews did perish in the harsh environment of the ghetto, positive selection occurred at this time, as well. The rich families of merchants and rabbis, considered to be the best and the brightest, married each other earlier and had more children, whereas poor families had fewer children and were also less likely to survive.[19] This form of positive selection encouraged breeding only by the most intelligent members of the community, and it seemed to work. By the beginning of the 20th century, Jews accounted for 50 percent of doctors in Berlin and 60 percent in Vienna, while only accounting for one percent of the population.[20]

Not all of history has been so positive, however, and it is understandable why society often shies away from the concepts of race and racial differences. After the Holocaust, the "notion of biological races, with the implied ranking of human capacities, came under assault."[21] Universalism, embodied by the newly founded United Nations, became the new ideology of choice, with the hope that ethnic and racial problems would yield to egalitarianism.[22] Along with race, genetics came under attack. A group of prominent social scientists created a manifesto called "The

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[15] Entine 232.

[16] Schoffman 41.

[17] Entine 240.

[18] Entine 239.

[19] Entine 232.

[20] Senior 4.

[21] Entine 250.

[22] Entine 250.

Statement of Race," which distanced biology from mental and intellectual differences and declared that genes played little role in shaping cultures.[23]

This new commitment to universalism and the minimization of genetic and racial differences (the nurture side of the nature v. nurture debate) was advanced again in the early 1970s by Harvard zoologist Richard Lewontin. Through studies of genetic markers across populations, he concluded that 85 percent of all human variation is randomly found between individuals with a nation or tribe, setting racial differences at a little more than 10 percent.[24] This study became a useful tool for the nurture side and was used to attack any scientific attempts to study racial differences. This eventually led to the downfall of a very promising project known as the Human Genome Diversity Project.[25] Despite its attempts to be wholly ethical, a small faction of objectors shut the project down.[26] Entine's disappointment in this fact is palpable throughout the section; it is clear that he truly supported the vision of this project. Recently, however, prominent Stanford University geneticist Neil Risch has questioned the 85 percent figure, claiming that this analysis is "based on commonly occurring versions of genes, and rare versions of genes, when measured, may show a greater tendency to be specific to different populations."[27] Like Entine, he emphasizes that every race has its own set of diseases and clinical priorities. He believes that, "We need to value our diversity rather than fear it. Ignoring our differences, even if with the best of intentions, will ultimately lead to the disservice of those who are in the minority."[28]

Not everyone agrees with Risch and Entine, however, as is reflected by the remarks of the scientists who headed the human genome project. In 2000, the human genome map was unveiled, which, surprisingly, dealt another blow to the concept of race. Francis Collins, head of the National Human Genome Research Institute, declared that "Americans, regardless of ethnic group are 99.9 percent genetically identical."[29] J. Craig Venter,

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[23] Entine 250.

[24] Entine 255.

[25] Entine 256.

[26] Entine 257.

[27] Wade, "Race," 1.

[28] Wade, "Race," 1.

[29] Entine 259.

another chief scientist on the project, added that "race has no genetic or scientific basis."[30] These have been the mainstays of the nurture argument, and anthropological and sociological communities across the country have embraced them. Entine does a good job of putting this percentage into perspective, explaining that these numbers alone can paint a misleading picture.

Though all humans are 99.9 percent identical, which seems like a great deal to any layman, it is important to note that bone marrow extracted from Neanderthal skeletons show that they were 99.5 percent identical to modern day humans. Mice, dogs, cattle, and elephants share close to 90 percent of human DNA, while daffodils, members of an entirely different natural kingdom, share 35 percent.[31] When put into context, this information implies a very different conclusion. Given that each human has six billion base pairs of DNA per cell, even 1/1000 of six billion base pairs is still six million different base pairs per cell, and therefore, though each person differs from another in a very tiny proportion of their DNA, they differ by a large number of DNA bases.[32] Entine also points out that this information might even be inaccurate, as well as misleading. In a new study that examined blocks of gene sequences, instead of mere genes, researchers estimated that percentage of differences can vary from 0.1 to 0.3 percent, which is a drastic difference in terms of DNA sequencing. They also concluded that the greatest differences appear in the most complex organs, like the brain.[33]

The brain, particularly the Jewish brain, and its relation to Jewish health and intelligence, is Entine's focus for the rest of the book. He begins by discussing health, race, and the Jewish community in broad strokes. His first reference is to a 2002 study led by Risch, which determined that there are five different main races and that each of these races had their own collection of diseases and reactions to drugs. Risch, one of the only scientists willing to discuss and study race and genetics, stated that "Ignoring racial and ethnic differences in medical and biomedical research does not make them disappear."[34] He argued that race is a "valid area of medical research because it reflects the genetic differences that arose on each continent after the ancestral human population dispersed from its

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[30] Entine 259.

[31] Entine 260.

[32] Crow 83.

[33] Entine 262.

[34] Entine 265.

African homeland."[35] An interesting article that Entine includes in his notes but does not cite is a *New York Times Magazine* piece by a female doctor who declares that she is a "racially profiling doctor," because "it is not in the patients' best interests to deny the reality of differences."[36] Though Entine cites Risch and his study as one supporting the existence of racial differences and their importance to global health, which it is, he fails to address Risch's opposition to the positive selection theory that Entine seems to support. Risch is a strong supporter of genetic drift and not positive selection, but Entine conveniently omits this, as it is not directly related to discussion of the study.

Risch's study is important, however, because it affirms that there are racial dimensions to health, which was one of Entine's main goals in writing the book. Though he focuses more later on the diseases of the nervous system, he also discusses breast cancer, and more importantly, the breast cancer gene, in depth. Though breast cancer afflicts the American population at large, striking every one in eight American women, three gene mutations have been discovered that make it even more common among Jewish women.[37] Two of the three mutations are BRCA1 and BRCA2, and they are all particularly common among Jewish women. Though one in every 800 women (0.1 percent) in the general population carries the mutation, this number increases to one in forty (2.5 percent) for Jewish women. A gene for colon cancer has also been found in six percent of Ashkenazi Jews, raising a carrier's chances of getting colon cancer by about 10 percent.[38] For carriers of one of the breast cancer mutations, the mutation makes them five to fifteen times more likely to develop breast or ovarian cancer than the rest of the population, raising their lifetime risk of developing breast cancer to 85 percent and of ovarian cancer to 50 percent.[39] Why has this gene never been removed among Jewish populations, despite its horrific effects? One theory advanced by University of Chicago geneticists is that BRCA1 may be positively linked to brain development, which is why it has been

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[35] Wade, "Gene Study," 37.

[36] Satel 6.

[37] Entine 271.

[38] Stolberg 24.

[39] Entine 273.

positively selected and persisted among Jews.[40] This idea is similar to the one advanced by Gregory Cochran about Jewish diseases of the nervous system.

But, what other factors could contribute to the wealth of diseases that seem to plague Jews? In general, Jews have historically been perceived by Christians as "congenitally enfeebled," and medicine has always played a special role in Jewish culture.[41] Due to their cohesive history, it is not surprising that Jews suffer disproportionately from many disorders; this can be attributed to inbreeding, the founder effect, positive selections, and cultural insularity in general.[42] These diseases, however, are only present in the Ashkenazim populations, as the Sephardic and Oriental Jewish populations intermingled, and interbred, more with other populations, thereby losing many of the disease causing genes.[43]

In addition to the aforementioned cancers, there are also several nervous system diseases, such as Tay-Sachs and Gouchers, which are abnormally common in Jewish populations. Tay-Sachs, caused by buildups of fatty substances in the brain, was so prevalent in one New York Jewish neighborhood (an estimated one out of sixteen people carried the mutation), that the rabbi began to screen for the disease.[44] The screening system was enormously successful and has been implemented across the country, effectively eliminating Tay-Sachs among the Jewish community; it now appears more often in non-Jews than in Jews, a previously inconceivable situation.[45] Could the diseases of the nervous system be a result of the founder's effect and inbreeding, like the cancers? Or, could it be related to positive selection for Jewish intelligence? Do the same reasons that cause certain "Jewish diseases" also account for raised levels of Jewish intelligence? Before addressing the linkage between these two issues, Entine tackles intelligence.

Are Jews really more intelligent than other populations? And, as Entine's chapter's title asks, is it a result of Jewish mothers, or Jewish genes? It has long been considered a part of Jewish cultural heritage that the smartest boys of the shtetl married the daughters of the richest men, but could this account for a type of natural selection

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[40] Entine 318.

[41] Entine 274.

[42] Entine 275.

[43] Entine 276.

[44] Entine 279.

[45] Entine 281.

among Jews? In 1975, the Harvard University biologist Edward O. Wilson published *Sociobiology: The New Synthesis,* which explained how Darwin's theory of natural selection could extend to behavior and how it would work in many different species, including people.[46] Though sociobiology, also called evolutionary psychology, has often been considered lacking in empirical evidence, it has gained steam and support in the past decade. Entine fails to explain this thoroughly and should have delved deeper into the science surrounding this issue, addressing the controversial question of how much intelligence can even be passed through genes. Apparently, there has been quite a consensus about this issue recently, and other resources note that twin and sibling studies, which can sort genetic from environmental factors, have suggested that more than half of the variation in IQ scores is genetic.[47] This paves the way for Entine's argument that Jewish intelligence is passed down from generation to generation, but how can this be quantifiably measured?

One simple way to compare intelligence among young Americans is through their scores on the SAT. According to the College Board, the non-profit organization that administers the test, Jews scored the second highest among any religious or ethnic group with an average score of 1161. [48] Though Entine tries to claim that the Jews scored the highest, he footnotes that Unitarians scored higher with an average score of 1209. He may have done this because the number of Unitarians (2,354) compared to Jews (27,120) taking the test was so much smaller, but he does not note nor explain this.[49] The national average among all groups in the US is 1020. Other stark statistics include the fact that 87 percent of college eligible Jews are enrolled in college, compared to 40 percent of other eligible Americans, and that 23 percent of Ivy League students and 30 percent of Ivy League faculty are Jewish.[50] It is important to note, which Entine does not, that only two percent of the US population is Jewish.[51] Further demonstrating society's belief that Jews are smarter, an article that Entine included in the notes but did not cite described a 2002 phenomenon in which universities attempted to recruit Jewish students to "raise their academic

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[46] Entine 294.

[47] Saletan 1.

[48] Entine 295.

[49] Golden 1.

[50] Entine 296.

[51] Golden 1.

standing."[52] In one example, the newly hired director of admissions of Vanderbilt University determined that the university was on par with two competitive universities in everything but Jewish enrollment, which he determined was the cause of their lower rankings.[53]

On a more global, if not older, scale, in 1939, Jews had overcome prejudice to account for one-quarter of university graduates and one-fifth of physicians and scientists, while remaining at just 0.25 percent of the entire population.[54] And in terms of international recognition, Jews have a 12 times higher success rate than other whites for winning Nobel Prizes, accounting for 36 percent of all American winners. Fifty-four percent of the world's chess champions have also been Jewish.[55] Though Entine omits the fact that these numbers are compiled by considering people with even a single Jewish grandparent to be Jewish, the numbers are still quite impressive.[56] Despite these obvious successes, the question of nature v. nurture remains unanswered, and therefore, Entine moves on to discuss the controversial topic of IQ.

In 1904, the French psychologist Alfred Binet developed Intelligence Quotient (IQ) tests to evaluate learning disorders in children. This test was modified by the Stanford psychologist Lewis Terman to measure cognitive ability or general intelligence (*g*).[57] Since these tests began to be administered, Ashkenazi Jews have consistently scored higher than the norm. Many studies set, on average, Ashkenazi Jews at a score of 107-117, which is a full standard deviation above the white European average of 110 and makes them the highest tested population in the world.[58] In addition, Jews are six times more likely than European whites to be considered a genius (earning a score of 145 or above).[59] Approximately 25 percent of white Americans that have this level of IQ are Ashkenazim.[60] Entine fails to address the fact that the legitimacy and utility of IQ scores has been questioned in

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[52] Golden 1.

[53] Golden 1.

[54] Entine 297.

[55] Entine 302.

[56] Senior 4.

[57] Entine 299.

[58] Entine 301.

[59] Entine 302.

[60] Entine 302.

the past, though it is almost unimportant, as recent studies have confirmed that IQ scores can accurately can predict the likelihood of different races of children at finishing high school, staying employed, and avoiding poverty, welfare, or jail.[61]

Though nature or nurture alone are far too simple of methods to explain human development, they do matter, as well as DNA. Many gene functions are expressed or activated by environmental triggers, and though genes are not the only important factor, they do matter a great deal. Though Entine does not mention it, other sources cite studies of identical twins raised separately after adoption, for which there has been an astounding correlation of .72 for general intelligence as reflected in IQ scores, making even some skeptical social scientists acknowledge that genetics play a major role in intelligence.[62] Some scientists believe that the heritability of the brain is as high as 90-95 percent, though Entine wisely acknowledges that "the fact that individual intelligence is highly heritable does not necessarily mean that group differences are."[63]

There are those, however, who do think that Jewish intelligence is a genetic phenomenon, and Entine focuses on one study in particular. In the summer of 2005, Henry Harpending, an evolutionary anthropologist at the University of Utah, and Gregory Cochran, a physicist turned genetic theorist, published a paper in the *Journal of Biosocial Science* called the "Natural History of Ashkenazi Intelligence."[64] Entine does not note the important fact, however, that though the journal is published by Cambridge University, its title had been *The Eugenics Review* until 1968. This might have given the study a different, though possibly undeserved, undertone.

These men honed the Jewish folk theory that Jews are smart because they are born that way, referring to Jewish historical roles in non-agricultural positions. They named Jewish intelligence as a by-product of Jewish discrimination, separateness, and a commitment to education.[65] The American evolutionary biologist and author, Jared Diamond agreed, suggesting that mutated lysosomes might have been positively selected in Jews "for the intelligence putatively required to survive recurrent persecution and also to make a living by commerce, because Jews were barred from the agricultural jobs available to the non-Jewish people."[66] Due to restrictions on Jews from

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[61] Saletan 2.

[62] Saletan 3.

[63] Entine 310.

[64] Entine 312.

[65] Entine 311.

[66] Wade, "Researchers," 21.

owning land and restrictions on Christians from having money-related professions, Jews often survived by usury or collecting taxes on behalf of the nobility.[67] One startling record indicates that in 1270, 80 percent of the 228 adult Jewish males in Perpignan, France, made their living through lending.[68]

Cochran argues that these medieval Jewish professions were those that put a premium on intelligence and therefore primed Jews to be smart through positive selection. Though it is impossible to measure the intelligence required for medieval professions, current studies have shown that intelligence is highly correlated with jobs in banking.[69] According to Cochran, throughout history, Jews "experienced unusual selective pressures that were likely to have favored increased intelligence."[70] And the most gifted young Jewish scholars were married early to the daughters of the richest Jewish men, allowing these wealthier, and presumably smarter, members of the community to have more children, who would also have a higher likelihood of survival.[71] Could this have fostered the breeding of "smart Ashkenazi Jews?" Necessarily, Entine gives several explanations of why the non-Ashkenazi Jews did not develop the same levels of intelligence. In addition to the higher level of tolerance for other Jews and, therefore, higher levels of intermarriage, there was not the same taboo against money-related professions in the Muslim or Oriental worlds, and therefore Jews were given such dirty jobs as tanners and hangmen, which did not require concentration or a high IQ.[72] Entine also attributes Ashkenazi intelligence to selective survival, as European Jews were more persecuted than the others.[73]

As for the Cochran study, after describing the cultural factors they believed led to increased Jewish intelligence, they then attempted to, on what some have called shaky science, demonstrate linkages between the brain and the nervous system diseases that persist among Jews, known as lysosomal storage diseases (LSDs). They speculated that the only way these diseases had persisted among the Jewish population would be that they offered some sort of evolutionary advantage to the carriers. They proposed a comparison to sickle cell anemia, which is a common disease among West Africans. Though this disease is debilitating to those in whom it matures, those who

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[67] Entine 318.

[68] Senior 1.

[69] Economist 92.

[70] Senior 3.

[71] Entine 319.

[72] Entine 320.

[73] Entine 320.

simply carry it are protected against malaria, a deadly disease in the region. For this reason, the mutation has never evolved out of the gene pool. Cochran speculated that the LSDs were similar to this; if one parent was a carrier, the child benefited from greater intelligence, though if two parents were carriers, the child suffered from one of several debilitating diseases.[74]

All of these sphingolipid-storage diseases, Tay-Sach's, Gaucher's, and Niemann-Pick, involve the extra growth and branching of the protuberances that connect nerve cells together, which too much of is extremely damaging to the brain. It is possible, however, that if only one copy of the gene were present, it would yield better linkage between brain cells, and thus, increased intelligence.[75] Though Entine might overstate its importance, a 1995 study of rats with Gaucher's demonstrated that if both parents were carriers, the rat's brain grew at a wild and debilitating pace, but if only one parent was a carrier, the brain grew at a controlled rate.[76] Later studies did show that among the 250 or so Israeli adult Gaucher's sufferers, a disproportionate number worked at jobs that required a "high level of intelligence," such as engineers, physicists, and scientists.[77] Furthermore, the concept behind the study is no longer unreasonable, as recent studies have shown that the brain has continued to evolve adaptively, growing in size,[78] and that brain size is related to intelligence. [79]

But, can this theory explain why Jewish diseases have not been erased by natural selection? Though the Cochran theory may seem far-fetched, many mainstream geneticists support his theory over Risch's theory of genetic drift and founder effect, as they agree that it would be unlikely that four sphingolipid diseases would be randomly common to Jews.[80] As Harvard University cognitive scientist Steven Pinker said, "It would be hard to overstate how politically incorrect this paper is, but it's certainly a thorough and well-argued paper, not one that can easily be dismissed outright."[81]

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[74] Entine 313.

[75] Economist 92.

[76] Entine 314.

[77] Entine 314.

[78] Lahn 1.

[79] Saletan 3.

[80] Senior 4.

[81] Wade, "Researchers," 21.

After describing this groundbreaking and extremely controversial study, though probably not at the depth readers would like, Entine discusses the potentially shared genetic lineage of Jews and Palestinians, another controversial subject. In the appendix, he includes a list of "Jewish diseases," methods for obtaining one's own DNA breakdown, and a further review of genetics. And though Entine may not have fully addressed all of the controversial aspects of new scientific studies, the notes to the book reveal a wealth of articles and books that elaborate upon the subject.

After its release, critics applauded Entine's careful review of Jewish history and culture, though some admitted that despite his best efforts, "In his attempt to give us a full picture of the events comprising Jewish history, the author sometimes wanders."[82] They were also quick to point out some carelessness in his DNA analysis and scientific sections, saying that "his account of genetic science and DNA analysis is vague." [83] Another review also cites its "less than solid science," nonetheless maintaining its status as a "quite interesting" read.[84] Kirkus Reviews called it an "epic tale" of 'The Chosen People'" and cautions that "because the author's approach is broad and inclusive, the book is sure to cause controversy, but it serves as an excellent catalyst for discussion as many continue to ask the question, "What does it mean to be Jewish?"[85] This is wholly true of Entine's work; though it broadly addresses many issues, its true value lies in the questions that it raises.

Despite Entine's efforts to tout the book as the next controversial assertion of Jewish intelligence, it became more of a historical primer in Jewish history and identity. Perhaps the scientific evidence was not strong enough, as attested to by many of the book's reviewers, but those who hoped for a review of the controversial, if shaky, science surrounding the links between Jewish genes, intelligence, and disease may be disappointed. Overall, however, the book is an interesting glimpse into the issues surrounding Jewish identity, and the notes provide access to an incredible collection of resources. As the world becomes more and more interconnected, there are fewer isolated populations like the Ashkenazi Jews, and now is the time to study, learn, and write about them. Though the book may leave the reader with more questions than answers, perhaps that is the point.

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[82] Schindler 1.

[83] Publisher's Weekly 1.

[84] Amazeen 1.

[85] Kirkus 1.