Are Races Like Constellations?
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Richard Lewontin famously discovered that approximately 85% of all genetic variation was found among individuals within small populations, with 10% of the remaining variation existing between groups within the same "continental races," and only 5% across continental races. This robust result is typically interpreted as showing that races are not real. AWF Edwards (2003) coined the term "Lewontin's Fallacy" in arguing that clusters or groups can be identified with even a tiny amount of across-group variation provided we investigate *many* genes. This brute possibility of reliable clustering according to certain methods, data, and assumptions has been interpreted as an argument for the reality of race.

In asking about the reality and meanings of race, an analogy from a much less politically, ethically, and ontologically fraught area would be useful for exploring intuitions about clustering. How is the grouping of stars into constellations like—and not like—the clustering of peoples into "races"? I endorse a pragmatic conventionalism about clustering. Just like we are not obligated to carve out particular stellar constellations as natural kinds, and just like there are many other ways to classify and cluster stars (e.g., age, type), so reifying race as a human kind (Ian Hacking's term) is a conventional historical and social choice not forced upon us by biological data or theory. Indeed, in desiring a postracial society, we can yet undo "social race" and "biogenomic race" (Kaplan and Winther 2013) by pointing to how their making in particular configurations has been as optional, perhaps, as drawing constellations. Even if I am wrong, analogies such as constellation-race can help motivate intuitions and encourage helpful dialogue.