

Examples of false balance in reporting on science

Man-made versus natural climate change

Mutations versus vaccination (thiomersal) causing autism

Evolution versus intelligent design

Rhineland versus Khazarian origins for Ashkenazi Jews



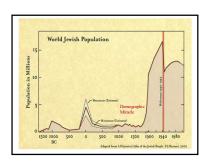
False balance, sometimes called "false equivalency," refers disparagingly of the practice of journalists who, in their zeal to be fair, present each side of a debate as equally credible even when the factual evidence is stacked heavily on one side.

Liz Spayd New York Times Public Editor September 10, 2016

What is the Rhineland Hypothesis?

The Ashkenazi Jews (from the Hebrew word for 'German') moved north of the Alps, probably from Italy, during the first millennium of the Common Era. During the ninth century, the ancestors of Ashkenazi Jews settled in the cities of the Rhineland, where they adopted German as their language. Over time, this developed into a Judeo-German dialect that was relexified with Hebrew and Slavic words and became known as "riddish." In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, Ashkenazi Jews were expelled from the countries of Western Europe and were granted charters to settle in Poland and Lithuania. As a result, the center of Ashkenazi Jewry shifted to the East, where it remained for the following five centuries.

Ostrer, Legacy: A Genetic History of the Jewish People 2012



However, there is no equivalence between the two sides when one is supported by evidence, and the other side with little or no evidence, of which most is of low quality. In other words, in false equivalence, someone will state that the opposing arguments have a passing similarity in support, when, on close examination, there is large difference between the quality of evidence.

 $\underline{\text{https://www.skepticalraptor.com/skepticalraptorblog.php}} \underline{\text{/logical-fallacies/false-equivalence-logical-fallacies/}}$





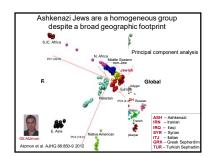
Major points in support of a Rhineland hypothesis for Ashkenazi Jews

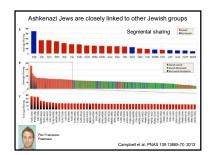
Ashkenazi Jews have dual genetic origins and a distinctive bottleneck

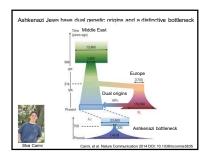
Ashkenazi Jews are a homogeneous group despite a broad geographic footprint

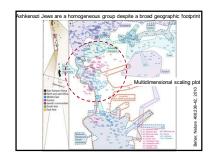
Ashkenazi Jews are closely linked to other Jewish groups

Ashkenazi Jews spoke a Judeo-German dialect, even when living in Eastern Europe







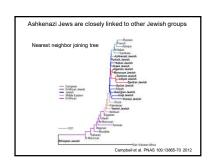


Who were the Khazars?

The Chozars (or Khazars) were a people of Central Asian Turkic origin who ruled a Jewish state between the Caucasus Mountains and the Volga River. They spoke a language in a family of languages that includes Turkish, Kazakh, Uzbek, Ulgur, and Kinghiz, not the Slavic languages. Their kingdom established in most of southern Russia long before the rise of the Russian monarchy, acted as a barrier against the northern advance of the Arabs, then at the height of their expansion. This kingdom flourished for two or three centuries, subjugating other tribes in its region and forcing some of its Stavic neighbors to pay tolls for the use of the commercial routest that it controlled.

Ostrer, Legacy: A Genetic History of the Jewish People 2012





The Khazars' Embrace of Judaism

In the middle of the eighth century, the Khazar king and aristocracy embraced Judaism. Ordinary Khazars retained their traditional beliefs and eventually were converted to Islam or Christianity, Around 965 C.E., the Russians overcame the Khazars, destroying their capital and other cities.

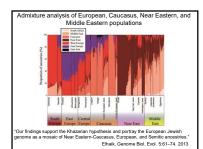
Ostrer, Legacy: A Genetic History of the Jewish People 2012

The Fate of the Khazars

The fate of the Khazarian Jews, following the destruction of their kingdom, has been the subject of much speculation. The last of the Khazar kings, George Tzula, was taken prisoner. Some of the Khazars fled to the Crimea, Hungary and even Spain, but the great mass of the people remained in their native country.

In 1976, the Hungarian-English novelist, Arthur Koestler, published a book, *The Thirteenth Tribe*, in which he advanced the controversial thesis that the masses of Ashkenazi Jews were not descended from the Israelites of antiquity via Italy and the Rhineland, but Italher from Khazars who moved westwards into current Russia, Ukraine and Poland.

Ostrer, Legacy: A Genetic History of the Jewish People 2012



Stampfer: Exchange of letters between the Spanish Jewish leader Hasdai ibn Shaprut (915–c. 975) and Joseph, king of the Khazars may be inauthentic

"The Khazar kings built synagogues and study halls and gathered many Jewish scholars, giving them great wealth;.. however, none of the scholars are named, no other sources refer to grand synagogues or Jewish study halls, and no archaeological remains of Khazar synagogues have been found.

"A native Khazar would have thought in the Khazar language (likely a Turkic language), and what he wrote would reflect his mother tongue. However, the letter is written in a beautiful literary

"A king should be familiar with the geography of his kingdom. However, Joseph's letter does not display this kind of knowledge





No Evidence from Genome-Wide Data of a Khazar Origin for the Ashkenazi Jews

Refutation: "We find that the Ashkenazi Jews carry no particular genetic similarity to the South Caucasus any more than do many other populations from the Middle East, Mediterranean Europe, and particularly, several of the Middle Eastern Jewish populations.

"Therefore, it cannot be claimed that evidence of Ashkenazi Jewish similarity to Armenians and Georgians reflects a South Caucasus origin for Ashkenazi Jews without also claiming that the same South Caucasus ancestry underlies both Middle Eastern Jews and a large number of non-Jewish populations both from the Middle East and from Mediterranean Europe."

Behar, et al. Human Biology Open Access Pre-Prints. Paper 41. 2013

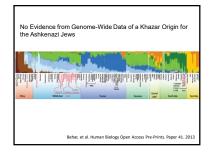


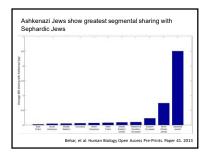
Did the Khazars Convert to Judaism?

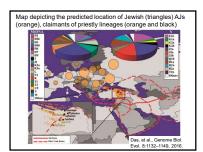
"The view that some or all of the Khazars, a central Asian people, converted to Judaism at some point during the ninth or tenth century is widely accepted. A careful examination of the sources, however, shows that some of them are pseudepigraphic, and the rest are of questionable reliability. Many of the most reliabile tontemporary texts that mention Khazars say nothing about their conversion, nor is there any archaeological evidence for it. This leads to the conclusion that such a conversion never took place."

Pseudepigraphica - spurious or pseudonymous writings, especially Jewish writings ascribed to various biblical patriarchs and prophets but composed within approximately 200 years of the birth of Jesus Christ

Stampfer, Jewish Social Studies: History, Culture, Society n.s. 19, no. 3 (Spring/Summer 2013): 1–72







Conclusion: The Khazarian origins hypothesis is a false equivalence.

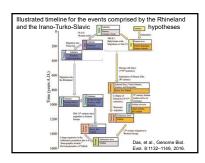


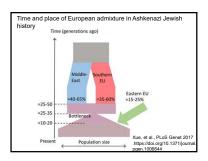
Pitfalls of the Geographic Population Structure (GPS) Approach Applied to Human Genetic History

Refutation: In our view, there are major conceptual problems with both the genetic and linguistic parts of the work. We argue that GPS is a provenancing tool suited to inferring the geographic region where a modern and recently unadmixed genome is most likely to arise, but is hardly suitable for admixed populations and for tracing ancestry up to 1,000 years before present, as its authors have previously claimed.

Flegontov, et al., Genome Biol. Evol. 8:2259-2265, 2016.

Other journalists have not engaged in false equivalencies





"That disagreement over the interpretations of Middle Eastern DNA also pits Jewish traditionalists against a particular strain of secular Jewish ultra-liberals who have joined with anti-Israeli Araba and many non-Jews to argue for an end to Israel as a Jewish nation. Their hero is the Austrian-born Shlomo Sand—and now Elhalik. His study gained buzz in neo-Nazi websites and radical anti-Israeli and more radical pro-Palestinian blogs. For example, the notorious former Ku Klux Klansman David Duke actually attacked Elhaik in his latest anti-Jewish rant—Duke's anti-Semilito beliefs hang on the fact that Jews are genetically cohesive and conspiratorial.

Jon Entine, Forbes, May 16, 2013

The rebuke of Elhaik's study apparently has irked the beleaguered and brash researcher. He's launched a new offensive—the double entendre is intentional—as chronicled in the Jewish Forward. Elhaik is now calling the world's top geneticists "ilars" and 'frauds. "When I weighed in on the magazine's discussion board, Elhaik responded with academic restraint, claiming my reporting was no better than the geneticists he trashed, saying it shared "common ground with the Nazism (sic) ideology."

Jon Entine, Forbes, May 16, 2013

"It was a great pleasure reading your group's recent paper,
'Abraham's Childrein in the Genome Era,' that illuminate[s] the
history of our people, "Elnaik wrote to Ostrer." Is it possible to
see the data used for the study?"
Ostrer replied that the data are not publicly available. "It is
possible to collaborate with the team by writing a brief proposal
that outlines what you plan to do," he wrote. "Criteria for
reviewing include novelty and strength of the proposal, nonoverlap with current or planned activities, and non-defamatory
nature toward the Jewish people." That last requirement, Elnaik
argues, reveals the bias of Ostrer and his collaborators.
Allowing scientists access to data only if their research will not
defame Jews is 'peculiar," said Catherine DeAngelis, who edited
the Journal of the American Medical Association for a decade.
What's this guy trying to hide?"
Rita Ruben, Jewish Daily Forward May 7, 2013