ASHG Denounces Attempts to Link Genetics and Racial Supremacy

The American Society of Human Genetics (ASHG) is alarmed to see a societal resurgence of groups rejecting the value of genetic diversity and using discredited or distorted genetic concepts to bolster bogus claims of white supremacy. ASHG denounces this misuse of genetics to feed racist ideologies. In public dialog, our research community should be clear about genetic knowledge related to ancestry and genomic diversity. To that end, ASHG affirms the following:

- Genetics demonstrates that humans cannot be divided into biologically distinct subcategories. Although there are clear observable correlations between variation in the human genome and how individuals identify by race, the study of human genetics challenges the traditional concept of different races of humans as biologically separate and distinct. This is validated by many decades of research, including recent examples. 1-6
- Most human genetic variation is distributed as a gradient, so distinct boundaries between population groups cannot be accurately assigned. There is considerable genetic overlap among members of different populations. Such patterns of genome variation are explained by patterns of migration and mixing of different populations throughout human history. In this way, genetics exposes the concept of "racial purity" as scientifically meaningless.
- It follows that there can be no genetics-based support for claiming one group as superior to another. Although a person's genetics influences their phenotypic characteristics, and self-identified

- race might be influenced by physical appearance, race itself is a social construct. Any attempt to use genetics to rank populations demonstrates a fundamental misunderstanding of genetics.
- The past decade has seen the emergence of strategies for assessing an individual's genetic ancestry. Such analyses⁸ are providing increasingly accurate ways of helping to define individuals' ancestral origins and enabling new ways to explore and discuss ancestries that move us beyond blunt definitions of self-identified race.

Through its support for research at the leading edge of human genetics, ASHG will continue to advance scientific knowledge and debunk geneticsbased arguments promoting racial supremacy. ASHG also encourages all society members to be active as citizens in political, policy, and social advocacy organizations that reflect their values. This is a perfect complement to their scientific contributions to this debate through ASHG.

ASHG will continue to foster dialog in the field on the impact, value, and implications of diversity and ancestry within the research agenda, including through ASHG's primary forums for scientific debate and discussion: The American Journal of Human Genetics and the ASHG Annual Meeting. Recognizing that the invocation of genetics to promote racist ideologies is one of many factors causing racism to persist, ASHG will focus in the public arena on contributing new fundamental knowledge to the societal dialog about ancestry, supporting greater diversity in research, continuing to engage the field and public to build genetic literacy, and addressing misconceptions of genetics and ancestry.

Acknowledgments

The statement above has been reviewed, edited, and approved by the ASHG Executive Committee on behalf of the ASHG Board of Directors. They alone are responsible for its content. The statement was informed by input from ASHG members with expertise and interest on the topic but does not necessarily represent the views of those members. ASHG thanks them for their contributions, dedication, and input.

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