

Skin color and ‘race’: Genetics reveal complicated relationship

For much of recorded history, skin color has been loaded with powerful social meaning. Skin color plays a major part in how we define race. It also plays a significant role in racism. New studies of the genetics of skin color, though, have begun to shed light on how wrong those assumptions about the relationship between race and skin color really are.

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In a new study of indigenous southern African people published ... in the journal *Cell*, researchers ... report that the number of genes involved in skin pigmentation increase in number—and therefore also complexity—the closer they reside to the equator.

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[C]olor lines are, in essence, meaningless. Our skin color is the result of many, many different genes which work together in different combinations to produce different colors of skin. Many of those genes are shared across racial, cultural, and geographic boundaries.

These new studies of skin color also suggest a second theme: In genetics, the vast majority of data has been gathered from Northern Eurasian populations, and that in turn has created a biased and incomplete portrait of how the genetics of things like skin color really work.

[Editor's note: Read [full study](#) (behind paywall)]

Read full, original post: [How the Genetics of Skin Color Challenges Antiquated Ideas About Race](#)