

## Modern population genetics grew out of a shady eugenicist past

[A]s a faculty member at San Francisco State University (SFSU), a public institution that puts social justice at the center of its mission, I continue to struggle with my field's limited reckoning with our eugenic past. Can folks like me, who have built careers that grow from eugenics science, hold ourselves accountable for these roots as we continue scientific research? These questions become increasingly important in a political landscape where scientific ideas about genetic variation and difference are weaponized to support devastating policies, and the atrocities of racial injustice are staring us in the face.

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Today, we are seeing a surge of well-funded studies seeking to determine the genetic basis of traits with clear, well-studied environmental influences like [height](#), [intelligence](#), [sexual behavior](#), and [income](#). These analyses have [received numerous technical critiques](#) that call into question the validity of the scientific inferences, [noting that](#) "while the benefits are far from obvious, the risks of such results being misinterpreted and misused are quite clear." Yet, the persistence of these lines of inquiry belies a familiar preoccupation with inborn differences for traits of social consequence.

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While we cannot sever the connections to our institutional and academic roots in eugenics, with a better understanding of our history, we will be better equipped to both respond to eugenic ideas as they re-emerge, and to create a scientific culture that values justice.

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