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KIPP NASHVILLE COLLEGIATE HIGH SCHOOL

Composition IV

Learning Packet Overview
This learning packet contains all the necessary materials to complete successfully your remote learning PBA. This packet includes the recommended schedule for completion (this schedule will be updated should we be out of school beyond April 3rd) and the necessary readings to tackle to your prompt. Specifically, the following page includes instructions for submission and the necessary deliverables necessary to hit the ground running when we return to school. All materials have additionally been uploaded to Google Classroom for reference. All students should already have access to Google Classroom, but should you need to rejoin, the class codes are below: ▪ Block 5 – k6jmhhb ▪ Block 7 – 5qfiguy

Necessary Materials
In order to complete your essay, you'll need the following items: ▪ Access to Google Classroom (if you do not have access to the internet, reach out to Ms. Garner ASAP) ▪ PBA Readings ▪ Access to Email

How students will be successful during this time	How caregivers can help students be successful
Students will be successful if: ▪ They follow the provided recommended reading and submission schedule (located on following page) ▪ They reach out proactively to Ms. Garner with questions, concerns, or issues ▪ They use the Composition Rubric (located in Google Classroom) to drive their writing	Caregivers can help students be successful by: ▪ Checking in with them to ensure they meet reading and submission deadlines ▪ Asking them questions about the topic they're tackling ▪ Reading over their summary emails, thesis statements, and assertions to ensure correct grammar

Remote Learning Calendar

Expectations:

All readings must be completed by the end of the week, Friday, March 27, 2020 at 11:59pm. Completion of the readings entails a 5-sentence summary for EACH reading emailed to Ms. Garner. See next page for expectations regarding email professionalism. Below is a suggested schedule for completion so the readings don't pile up at the last minute.

Date	Task	Deliverable
March 24, 2020 (Tuesday)	Roth & Ivemark Reading (6)	5 – sentence summary to Ms. Garner by 11:59 PM
March 25, 2020 (Wednesday)	Tsosie & Anderson Reading (11)	5 – sentence summary to Ms. Garner by 11:59 PM
March 26, 2020 (Thursday)	Bahrampour Reading (14)	5 – sentence summary to Ms. Garner by 11:59 PM
March 27, 2020 (Friday)	Boodman Reading (18) Zhang Reading (21)	Choose ONE of the readings for 5-sentence summary due to Ms. Garner by 11:59 PM
March 31, 2020 (Tuesday)	Thesis Statement & Assertions	Completed Thesis Statement and Assertions in Google Classroom by 11:59 PM *You must hit the turn in button!*
April 2, 2020 (Thursday)	Finalized Evidence Selection	Finalized evidence selection in Google Classroom by 11:59 PM *You must hit the turn in button!*

Feedback Turnaround:

- Emailed Summaries – Ms. Garner will email you within 24 hours of receiving your summary to acknowledge its completion.
- Google Assignments – Ms. Garner will provide you feedback within 24 hours of Google Classroom submissions. If submissions are late, Ms. Garner will attempt to provide feedback in a timely manner, but she makes no promises. ☺

Beyond April 3rd:

- All the above tasks must be completed by April 3rd to ensure a smooth transition back to school the following week. However, if we are required to stay at home beyond April 3rd, expect additional communication about next steps.

Send

To: Mariah Garner;

Cc:

Subject: Roth & Ivemark Reading Summary

Hello Ms. Garner,

I hope this email finds you well. Below is my summary for last night's reading.

Pretend this sentence is summarizing the reading. Pretend this sentence is summarizing the reading. Pretend this sentence is summarizing the reading. Pretend this sentence is summarizing the reading. Pretend this sentence is summarizing the reading.

Best,

Mariah Garner (*she, her, hers*)
10th Grade Level Chair
Composition Department Chair
Work Hard. Be Nice.
Trabaja Duro. Se Amable.

Guidelines:

- Subject line that includes last name of author(s)
- Greeting
- Correct grammar and punctuation (avoid using slang or text lingo)
- Sign off

Name: _____ Block: _____

Composition IV

Core Texts

Unit 6
Genetic Ancestry and Race

Composition IV

Unit 6 Essay

Essay Prompt: In 2015, author and professor of law, Angela Onwuachi-Willig, wrote in a *New York Times* article that "Race is not biological. It is a social construct. There is no gene or cluster of genes common to all blacks or all whites."[1]

In a well-written essay, examine the extent to which Onwuachi-Willig's observation applies to contemporary perceptions of race in American society, supporting your position with appropriate evidence.

All papers should be 1,000 words, written in 12pt Times New Roman font with 1" margins. Papers should follow MLA citation and formatting, including a paper title, works cited page, header, and heading.

[1] https://www.nytimes.com/roomfordebate/2015/06/16/how-fluid-is-racial-identity/race-and-racial-identity-are-social-constructs

Genetic Options: The Impact of Genetic Ancestry Testing on Consumers' Racial and Ethnic Identities[2]

Wendy D. Roth and Biorn Ivemark
University of British Columbia

RACIAL DIFFERENCES IN IDENTITY ASPIRATIONS

Genetic options theory identifies mechanisms and social processes that function in similar ways for respondents of different racial backgrounds. But groups of respondents also differ in their identity aspirations and the motivations that lead to accepting or rejecting geneticized identities.

White respondents expressed a desire for greater distinctiveness than other respondents, and many aspired to find something that would add a bit of spice to what they viewed as an otherwise boring background. Whites were practically the only respondents who expressed a low private regard for their pretest identities; this referred not to specific ethnic identities but to a general European or white identity. They considered it too bland or as not providing enough sense of belonging. Louisa, a 46-year-old filmmaker who identified as Chinese and white, claimed: "It's boring to be white. I think that's going on with white people ... in America. There's a real disconnection with a lot of people. ... They just know they're American, and they really don't know anything about their connection to Europe, ... if they're Irish or Celt or German, or whatever." Epitomizing the loss of ethnic connection that Alba (1990) detailed among later generation white Americans, white respondents often expressed a desire for any sense of belonging to something more distinctive than "just white."

Nonwhite respondents often wanted to discover new ancestries for historical or genealogical reasons but expressed less desire to adopt new identities. Black respondents frequently took tests to trace their roots to a particular African ethnic group. They were searching for their "Roots moment" (Nelson 2008), the connection to a past beyond the transatlantic slave trade that characterized Alex Haley's genealogical discoveries in his book and miniseries. Such connections would seem to offer the same sense of belonging that white respondents sought. Yet those whose tests reported specific African ethnic origins rarely incorporated them as new ethnic identities— even those who developed symbolic ties to the new group. Charles, a retired African-American medical technician, discovered a haplogroup linked to the Fulani tribe; he proceeded to learn the language and purchase Fulani garments to hang as wall decorations. This type of ethnic consumption and symbolic action fits Gans's (1979) description of symbolic ethnicity. Yet Charles, like others, continued to identify both his ethnicity and race as African American.

African-American respondents typically said the connection to an African tribe or location was extremely meaningful, but it did not change their identity because of the importance of their existing ethnic or racial minority identity, both emotionally and in how it shaped their lived experience. Ervin, an African-American college professor in his forties, felt great joy at being matched to the Bamileke people of Cameroon. Yet, he said, "The history of America is so unique with regards to race relations. There's also a cultural component to

[2] Roth, Wendy D., and Biorne Ivemark. "Genetic Options: The Impact of Genetic Ancestry Testing on Consumers' Racial and Ethnic Identities." *American Journal of Education*, 18 July 2018, www.journals.uchicago.edu/doi/abs/10.1086/697487.

that identity of, for me, being African-American that my entire experiences have been for the most part black." Ervin's identity remained unchanged by our follow-up interview, although additional tests also reported Jewish ancestry. At that time, he explained why he had not indicated his ethnic ancestry or multiracial heritage on the 2010 census but identified as only African-American:

It was really from a sociopolitical standpoint. ... African-Americans number only about maybe, what, 36 or 37 million? ... I don't want to dilute or make that count fall down, because my whole experience has been African-American. I know through oral history, through genealogy, and now confirmed by genetic testing that I am a person of this mixed-race or ethnic background. ... But the reality is the world still sees me as an African-American. And the reality is my parents grew up in a segregated South. And ... that was a very painful history, but I don't want to run away from that. And so I'm African-American.

As much as they desired a connection to their African roots, Ervin and others felt that it did not diminish their sense of commitment or belonging to the African-American community.

In discussing their choice not to claim new African ethnic identities, few black respondents pointed to how others saw them. In the United States, being black may serve as a "master status"—the identity of greatest importance that influences how others view them and that deprives blacks of ethnic options available to whites (Waters 1990; cf. Lacy 2007). In explaining why their identities did not change, black respondents often emphasized positive aspects of their group identity and community membership, such as positive associations with African-American culture or political commitment to the community. This does not mean social appraisals do not also influence them—for instance, whether they believed others would accept a Fulani ethnic identity. When asked, few indicated that others see them as anything but black.

Black respondents emphasized social appraisals and hypodescent more when it came to their discovery of non-African ancestries. They typically expressed little interest in incorporating these because they saw them as fully compatible with their existing racial identity. Because of African-Americans' subsumed multiraciality, they claimed that most African-Americans are racially mixed. For instance, although Marvin's admixture test reported that his ancestry was 57% sub-Saharan African, 33% European, and 10% Native American, he explained: "my identity as a black American or African American ... was not affected unduly because to be of mixed racial ancestry ... does not place you outside of the black group."

For most Latinos as well, a culture of mestizaje, or racial mixing, is a defining characteristic of their Latin American societies of origin. Hispanic/ Latino respondents were typically unsurprised to find multiple ancestries and did not interpret them as challenging a Hispanic/Latino identity. While they sometimes incorporated an additional ethnic or racial identity, none changed their Hispanic/Latino identification because they believed racial mixture defines this identity.

Nonwhite respondents also emphasized the greater importance of culture and upbringing on their identity relative to their genes. Eloise, a 29-year-old Taiwanese-born analyst whose admixture test reported her as 100% Asian, speculated on how she would have felt if it had shown some European ancestry: "I would say your upbringing matters a lot more than your ancestor test. ... Even if I did discover that ... my way of thinking is so deeply rooted in some of the Asian values, I would just find it hard to claim that." Those who feel distinctive because of their cultural and political differences from the majority around them have already satisfied their need for differentiation (Brewer 1991).

While nonwhite respondents suggested that new knowledge would be interesting but uninfluential, white respondents often sought to overwrite an existing and unsatisfying identity. Those who initially identified as white and Native American were unique in that they claimed a minority identity, but one that had little impact on their daily lives. They were socially white— perceived as white and fully integrated into white society. Their Native American identity was already a symbolic ethnicity; their genealogical claims were tenuous, lacking a paper trail or details on Native ancestors. Many had turned to genetic ancestry testing to prove their Native American roots (Golbeck and Roth 2012) and were reluctant to give up their family stories of Native ancestry if it did not. Diane grew up thinking of herself as white and Native American but identified most strongly with her Native ancestry. Her tests did not show any Native American ancestry, and she very reluctantly retracted her identity to just white: "What I know I am now is Irish, English, Scottish ...so it's pretty much [like] everybody else ... and it's just real common. So it's like, so what? There's nothing special about it." She felt that a sense of belonging comes from a less common identity: "Like some tribal thing because it's a smaller unit, because even the largest tribe isn't that big compared to other ethnic groups in America. ... And the dances were really cool and the costumes and, just their traditions and healing stuff, ... they were fascinating to me. ... I felt a little different, and kind of enjoyed feeling different, to tell you the truth, but not anymore." Unlike Diane, most respondents who identified as part Native American maintained their pretest identities; their aspirations to a Native identity were so strong they claimed not to believe test results that showed no Native ancestry. Their search for optimal distinctiveness and a touch of exotic nonwhiteness had been achieved before testing, leading them to reject a geneticized identity lacking this distinctive component.

Our white respondents, as the racial majority, tended to embrace identities that offered them greater individuality. Many satisfied this need by incorporating new ethnic identities within the boundaries of whiteness—such as Judith, quoted earlier, who rejected a Middle Eastern identity but embraced a Norwegian one. Among our respondents who initially identified as only white, nearly one-quarter adopted new European ethnic identities. Optimal distinctiveness theory (Brewer 1991) offers a compelling account for the psychological motivations behind this desire for belonging and individuality for whites, especially those who have lost their connection to their ethnic origins and see themselves as part of an undifferentiated white majority (Alba 1990).

But another quarter of our "white only" respondents embraced new nonwhite racial identities. These respondents often expressed a desire for the exoticism and excitement of a connection to non-European ancestry specifically, one that goes beyond optimal distinctiveness, similar to Diane's sense of exoticism about Native American traditions. As Hughey (2012) argues, these nonwhite traditions and cultures offer a form of "color capital," allaying concerns of white blandness among whites who have assimilated into mainstream culture. Hughey focuses on how whites appropriate the objects, cultures, and discourses of nonwhite groups, yet genetic ancestry testing offers a way to incorporate a deeper sense of primordial belonging to the groups themselves. Furthermore, testing offers the opportunity to internalize a costless exoticism without having to experience the social consequences of visible, embodied nonwhiteness. Shirley, the Southern white woman who incorporated a black identity, expressed this, explaining that "[it was not that hard] for me to find out that I was black because I don't have black skin. And not everybody knows. Maybe that's it. Maybe not everybody knows that I'm actually black. I've told people and ... it doesn't seem to be a big deal but I mean I don't have to write it down on a piece of paper, I don't have to classify myself as that." As Shirley explained earlier, a black identity offers her a sense of belonging. It is unlikely that she would also experience any discrimination or racial

disadvantage because, as she notes, she does not have to identify herself that way to others. Genetic ancestry tests have provided her with an equivalent of symbolic ethnicity in the form of symbolic racial options, which likewise do not have to be revealed unless it is advantageous to do so.17 Nonwhite respondents also embraced symbolic racial options, but our white respondents were unique in their aspirations to 17 Of course, people may share their genetic ancestries with others thinking it will be advantageous only to find later that they are wrong, as the case of Cleon Brown illustrates (Eligon 2017). Genetic Options use genetic ancestry testing to discard or embellish their existing racial identity. That aspiration itself likely derives from the privileged social position of never having to think about race as something with structural consequences. Genetic ancestry testing reinforces their white privilege by offering geneticized racial identities in a symbolic, optional form, removed from structural inequalities.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Genetic options theory accounts for the ways that people's identities are put to the test by genetic ancestry testing. Test consumers do not wholly swallow whatever the tests say, despite their allure of "objective" scientific authority; rather, they make identity choices through two particular mechanisms: their identity aspirations and social appraisals. They assess their old and potential new geneticized identities and choose to embrace only those that offer distinctiveness and provide social or psychological value. They also weigh the social cost of others questioning or rejecting their geneticized identity claims, considering how their appearance, personality, or social interactions make them socially acceptable as new members of the group. Our findings support Nelson's (2008) concept of affiliative self-fashioning and articulate a set of mechanisms for how and when people engage in that self-fashioning or forgo it, as well as the differential dynamics that influence people from different racial backgrounds. These mechanisms limit which genetic ancestries are adopted, producing a selective rather than indiscriminate geneticization.

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In these ways, genetic options theory posits that geneticization is not preordained, despite widespread speculation that genetic ancestry tests will advance the hegemonic role of science in shaping racial and ethnic identity. In this, we contribute to a growing body of work that shows how social processes entwine with and shape interpretations of genetic science (Shostak, Conrad, and Horwitz 2008; Bliss 2012; Benjamin 2013; Hauskeller, Sturdy, and Tutton 2013; Nelson 2016). Our test consumers use genetic ancestry tests in the same way as traditional knowledge passed down within families; scientific knowledge does not necessarily trump other drivers of identity construction.

Test consumers' prior racialization also influences their engagement with the science. Racial awareness or privilege shapes the very identities they aspire to, and their willingness to see genetic information as not only meaningful for their race or ethnicity but transformational. It may seem ironic that our white respondents, those arguably at the top of America's racial hierarchy, express low private regard for their existing racial identity and a desire to transform or embellish it with something less boring. But the experience of being in the majority, and at the top of the racial hierarchy, allows them to see their race as normative and unexciting. The racial privilege that makes whiteness invisible pushes them to aspire to be something else, to foster a more distinctive identity and sense of belonging. Yet in fostering even the option to adopt symbolic racial identities, the tests promote the idea that race can be costless and exist separately from the social and structural consequences with which society has imbued it. Those who incorporate new geneticized racial options can

benefit from symbolic racial identities without the negative consequences, which may support a view that race is inconsequential today. In this way, genetic ancestry testing can reinforce race privilege among those who already experience it. Nonwhite respondents, even those who adopt new racial identities, rarely view race this way because their lived experience has taught them otherwise.

Indeed, because of the subsumed multiraciality of many nonwhite groups, their discovery of new "racial" ancestries is not necessarily surprising or interesting. It is because of the structural imbalance of how racial mixture has historically been classified—with whiteness associated with racial purity— that white respondents react differently to its discovery different from many nonwhites'. And yet their reactions to that information signal a significant shift in the meaning of whiteness. For them, having multiple racial ancestries no longer has to negate a white identity. Those who embraced new racial identities rarely discarded their old ones. Practically no one felt that ancestry from a new racial group challenged an existing racial identity but rather supplemented it. For our white respondents, it is not being nonwhite that is most desirable but having a bit of something nonwhite. This suggests a growing acceptance, and even desirability, of multiraciality. People are now accustomed to the possibility of checking more than one race on the census and are increasingly aware of the growing multiracial population. Furthermore, multiraciality can offer a certain cultural cachet. In advertising and popular media, ethnic ambiguity is the new chic, and multiracial people are associated with beauty and exoticism (Ferla 2003). An important avenue for future research will be to determine whether this portends growing white acceptance of those who acknowledge a mix of white and other racial ancestries within the boundaries of whiteness (see Roth 2018).

Genetic ancestry testing and consumers' identity choices have reverberations beyond identity itself. Uncovering unexpected ancestral origins may influence social attitudes toward the groups to which one discovers a connection. Adopting new geneticized identities may shape social networks and racial interactions. Those who incorporate new racial identities may seek out and build ties with members of those communities. Patterns of identity change from genetic testing may also affect the administration of affirmative action policies if significant numbers draw on test results to self-identify with groups covered by those policies. Most of our respondents who changed their racial identity reported that they indicated that change on the 2010 census, suggesting a potential impact on demographic projections. Although we cannot draw conclusions from this finding, such statements offer motivation to gauge these patterns numerically with additional research testing genetic options theory in a representative study of test consumers.

Two Native American geneticists interpret Elizabeth Warren's DNA test[3]

Krystal Tsosie and Matthew Anderson

October 22, 2018 9.40am EDT Updated October 25, 2018 8.36am EDT

Dr. Carlos Bustamante, a prominent population geneticist, recently concluded that Senator Elizabeth Warren had "a Native American ancestor." While geneticists agree on the validity of the test, which is based on established statistical models of DNA inheritance, we as two Native American geneticists find the interpretation to be problematic.

The reasons have to do with what we see as Warren's motives, the genetic variants informing the comparison and overall concerns Native Americans have with genetic testing.

Because Bustamante used Indigenous individuals from Central and South America as a reference group to compare Warren's DNA, we believe he should have stated only that Warren potentially had an "Indigenous" ancestor 6-10 generations ago, not conclusively a "Native American" one. The distinction might seem hypercritical to most, but to the sovereign tribal nations of the United States it's an important one.

Genetic controversies

Our concern stems from the historical power imbalances around how genetic material has been collected.

Bustamante's analysis utilized genetic data collected from Indigenous individuals as part of the 1000 Genomes Project. The project's broad goal was to catalog genetic data from worldwide populations to advance knowledge of human diversity.

For Indigenous groups in the U.S. and globally, this approach has always been a concern. There is a cultural disconnect between Indigenous origin stories and the practice of tracing human origins through DNA.

Adding to this, earlier ventures of cataloging Indigenous genetic variants, such as the Human Genome Diversity Project and Genographic Project, were denounced by the United Nations and Indigenous nations worldwide for a lack of engagement and transparency. The control and collection of genomic information from marginalized Indigenous groups led to concerns that such information could be used for commercial gainand opened the projects to accusations of exploitation. A declaration in 2007 was passed calling for the cessation of genomic studies collecting Indigenous biomarkers.

While the 1000 Genomes Project learned from its predecessors and adopted more extensive consent procedures, it and other large-scale ancestry projects publicly disclose the genomic information they collect, which is meant to advance research. But Indigenous groups' concerns about having commercial companies profit from their genetic material without their inclusion has endured.

[3] https://theconversation.com/two-native-american-geneticists-interpret-elizabeth-warrens-dna-test-105274

Data from the 1000 Genomes Project and Human Genome Diversity Project, for instance, are used to inform percent Native American ancestry estimates as advertised by direct-to-consumer tests 23andMe and AncestryDNA, the latter of which posted a billion dollars in revenue in 2017.

Because of this and other recent genetic controversies impacting Indigenous communities, Native Americans in the U.S. have been wary of participating in genomics research. Some tribes, like the Navajo Nation, have long-standing moratoriums on genetics research. As such, Native American individuals constitute the lowest ethnic or minority group recruited into genomic studies. (We point to an ethical frameworkfor engaging Indigenous communities that can address these concerns, developed by Indigenous geneticists.)

Genetic testing principles

For these reasons, Bustamante could not use U.S. tribal groups in his analyses of Warren's DNA. But how does this affect the interpretation?

These studies compare the genetic variants that an individual possesses to a reference group. In Bustamante's analysis, he used 37 Indigenous individuals from Mexico, Peru and Colombia. Indigenous communities and nations across both continents exchanged goods, migrated and intermarried, and can be culturally linked. But considering that Indigenous peoples of Central and South American have important different population and genetic histories from tribes of the U.S., one can see that he utilized a proxy.

Importantly, most genetic tests sample only a subset of a person's DNA at certain locations, or loci, on a person's chromosomes. Often, a set of markers across a genomic region are passed onto progeny with other regions due to physical proximity on the DNA, although this is not the case for all parts of the genome. Statistics are then used to determine which loci are more likely to be co-inherited with others.

Although these tests utilize our best understandings of genetics and statistics, they are still predictions. And statements of statistical inferences should be in respect to the reference group sampled. So the conclusion, at its most conservative, is that Warren has a high statistical probability that her DNA points to an Indigenous ancestor.

Demonstrating ancestry

Warren claimed that her DNA test result corroborates family lore of a certain Cherokee ancestor but genealogical records show "no proof" that her great-great-grandmother was part Cherokee. Thus, Warren has not demonstrated a direct lineal descent from an enrolled tribal member, a requirement for citizenship by all three of the federally recognized Cherokee tribes. Even further, the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma denounced DNA tests as insufficient for determining lineage and "inappropriate."

There are hundreds of thousands of Americans who self-identify as Cherokee or claim to have a Cherokee ancestor, and finding evidence can be difficult.

Determining which tribal census record – for instance, the Dawes Roll or 1924 Baker Roll used by the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma and Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians, respectively, for enrollment – requires specific knowledge of the ancestor in question. Even though the Dawes Roll has an extensive

record of past enrollees, as Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma tribal member McKalee Steen told one of us (Tsosie), “there were a lot of people [who] were too afraid to sign it.” Those that refused voluntary enrollment were ultimately coerced or forced against their will to sign, according to Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma citizen and genealogist Twila Barnes. In the following years, harsh assimilation policies and inconsistencies in federal documentation of racial status led many Cherokee to dissociate from previously-held tribal affiliation. The implications of this lasted well into the mid-20th century in Oklahoma, where Sen. Warren was raised.

Throughout this, Warren has stated that she understands the “distinction between citizenship and ancestry” and she does not seek tribal enrollment in the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma. But even with the backlash by Native Americans, she still defends her decision to release her DNA test results. Her response, “I have an election,” and her immediate call to a bet with President Trump illuminates her political motives in trying to demonstrate a Native American ancestry.

Our concerns about DNA ancestry

From our perspective, Warren has taken a complex and harmful historyof “Indian” blood quantification – a system we see as meant to dilute our existence – and reduced it to a political ploy. As such, we ultimately see the test is about her own political gain.

In fact, we wish to be excluded from any conversation that conflates DNA ancestry with Indigenous or Native American identity. And the distinction is an important one – “Native American” is not just an ethnic term but it is a cultural and political designation. Tribal sovereignty, the ability to self-govern, is constructed on a special nation-to-nation relationship with the federal government and requires the ability to determine citizenship. To have this biologically reified and reduced to biomarkers from a broad definition of Indigenous peoples that each have their own histories is to threaten the very sovereign status that enables Native American cultural and traditional ways of living.

They considered themselves white, but DNA tests told a more complex story[4]

By Tara Bahrampour

February 6

As more Americans take advantage of genetic testing to pinpoint the makeup of their DNA, the technology is coming head to head with the country's deep-rooted obsession with race and racial myths. This is perhaps no more true than for the growing number of self-identified European Americans who learn they are actually part African.

For those who are surprised by their genetic heritage, the new information can often set into motion a complicated recalibration of how they view their identity.

Nicole Persley, who grew up in Nokesville, Va., was stunned to learn that she is part African. Her youth could not have been whiter. In the 1970s and '80s in her rural home town, she went to school with farmers' kids who listened to country music and sometimes made racist jokes. She was, as she recalls, "basically raised a Southern white girl."

But as a student at the University of Michigan: "My roommate was black. My friends were black. I was dating a black man." And they saw something different in her facial features and hair.

"I was constantly being asked, 'What are you? What's your ethnic background?' "

While African Americans generally assume that they may carry non-African DNA dating back to the rape of African slaves by white slavetraders and owners, many white Americans like Persley grow up believing that their ancestry is fully European, a belief manifested in things from kitschy "100 percent Irish" T-shirts to more-sinister racial "purity" affiliations.

Now, for under $100, it has become increasingly easy to spit into a vial and receive a scientifically accurate assessment of one's genetic makeup. Companies such as 23andMe and Ancestry.com provide a list of countries or regions where the predominant genetic traits match those of one's forebears. (There is no DNA category for race, because a genetic marker for it does not exist.)

In recent years, multiracial Americans have increasingly entered the national consciousness. Between 1970 and 2013, the portion of babies living with two parents of different races rose from 1 percent to 10 percent, the Pew Research Center found. From 2010 to 2016, those who identified as being of two or more races grew by 24 percent, according to census data, a jump that could have had as much to do with the changing way in which Americans identify themselves as an actual increase in the racially mixed population.

But when the mixing happened several generations back, it can take people by surprise. While little data exists comparing people's perceptions with the reality of their ethnic makeup, a 2014 study of 23andMe customers found that around 5,200, or roughly 3.5 percent, of 148,789 self-identified European Americans had 1 percent or more African ancestry, meaning they had a probable black ancestor going back about six generations or less.

[4] https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/social-issues/they-considered-themselves-white-but-dna-tests-told-a-more-complex-story/2018/02/06/16215d1a-e181-11e7-8679-a9728984779c_story.html?noredirect=on&utm_term=.887f07836e1a

The discovery elicits a range of emotions. Given the fraught history of slavery and racism, finding out that one is part African makes some people feel vulnerable, even defensive, while others celebrate the discovery. At the DNA Discussion Project, an initiative at West Chester University in Pennsylvania that surveys people about their perceptions of their genetic makeup before and after DNA tests, 80 percent of the 3,000-odd people they have surveyed self-identify as white. Of those, two-thirds see themselves as of only one race, and they are more likely to be shocked and unhappy with unexpected African ancestry than those who identify as mixed or other races, according to a peer-reviewed paper conducted by the project.

But for some, white identity trumps DNA. If the test result is too disruptive to their sense of self, they may rationalize it away. One white supremacist who discovered he had African DNA claimed on the white nationalist website Stormfront.com that the testing company was part of a Jewish conspiracy to "defame, confuse and deracinate young whites on a mass level." Members of white nationalist groups have advised those who discover non-Aryan heritage to rely more on genealogy or the "mirror test," as quoted in a sociological study of Stormfront members discussing ancestry-test results. ("When you look in the mirror, do you see a jew? If not, you're good," one commenter wrote.)

"For me, the number one takeaway is how easily people reject science," said Anita Foeman, a professor of communication studies who co-directs the DNA Discussion Project, whose respondents are mostly in and around Philadelphia. (In a sample of 217 self-identified European Americans from the project, 22 percent learned that they had African DNA.)

"Many whites would get a new story and say, 'I'm still going to call myself 'white,' or 'I'm still going to call myself 'Italian,' " Foeman said. "They started to less see race as genetic and more a question of culture and [physical appearance]."

The project found certain groups — younger people and women, for example — to be more open to the news. "Women just tend to be more flexible in terms of racial identification," Foeman said.

Reassessing the past

In an era when technology is partly blamed for an increased sense of polarization, it is perhaps ironic that a technological advance is helping to blow up some of that. And because users can connect with relatives on the DNA registries, some white test-takers have been fascinated to find fourth or fifth cousins who are black.

The test results can present an intriguing puzzle. When a significant amount of African DNA shows up in a presumably white person, "there's usually a story — either a parent moved away or a grandparent died young," said Angela Trammel, an investigative genealogist in the Washington area. "Usually a story of mystery, disappearance — something."

For Persley, 46, the link turned out to be her grandfather, who had moved away from his native Georgia and started a new life passing as white in Michigan. He married a white woman, who bore Persley's father.

But in researching her genealogy after college, Persley discovered that her grandfather's brother, her great-uncle, continued to identify as African American back in Macon and became a celebrated architect. A recent genetic test confirmed that Persley's DNA is around 8 percent African.

“That was a bombshell revelation for me and my family,” said Persley, now an artist and real estate investor in Boca Raton, Fla. She doubts her father knew. “My father had already passed away, so I could not ask him. It would have been, I think, a very difficult conversation to have with him, and I don’t think he would have been pleased. . . . I’m absolutely proud of my genealogy and my heritage, but I think my father would have thought I was dishonoring his father, because it was a secret and I dug it up.”

Her mother was flabbergasted.

“Her jaw dropped,” Persley said, “and she said, ‘Oh my gosh, I was married to a black man and I didn’t even know it!’ ”

Persley now recalls hints in her father — his laugh, his mannerisms — that remind her of black friends and make her sad about connections that were lost.

“To me, that’s the real tragedy of it,” she said. “His father had to completely reinvent himself and cut everyone in his family off, and that’s so tragic.”

For Brendan Lordan, 18, of Wallingford, Pa., the test also helped fill in missing family lore. He grew up believing that he was German and Irish, and had known about all his relatives except for a great-great-grandmother.

“Nobody knew her name or who she was,” Lordan said. She had had three sons, but they were taken away from her as infants. “When she was on her deathbed, one of them was allowed to go in and talk to her for a few minutes, but only with the light off.”

The family assumed it was because she was socially inferior to the boys’ father, perhaps a prostitute. But when Lordan’s DNA test came back 4 percent African, another narrative emerged: that she was black but her sons had been light enough to pass as white.

Hope in a vial

Comparing his test results to the family history made the fair-skinned Lordan reconsider his assumptions.

“The rule in the Old South was a drop of African blood makes you African,” he said. But now that the drops can be measured, “it sort of made race seem a lot more arbitrary. You’d never think I had African heritage just by looking at me. . . . It’s sort of made me disregard race more.”

Still, those drops have had a potent effect on people’s identities. For some whites, even a smidgen of African ancestry was commonly referred to as “the taint,” said Harvard University African and African American studies professor Henry Louis Gates Jr. “That said it all: that it was something to be ashamed of, something dark and dirty.”

Gates, whose PBS show “Finding Your Roots” helped actor Ty Burrell and singer Carly Simon discover that they had African ancestry, said he hopes that mounting awareness of the complexity of DNA will help lead to greater understanding across racial and ethnic lines.

“One of the pleasures I get from doing ‘Finding Your Roots’ is to show that we’re all mixed and that for 50,000 years everybody’s been sleeping with everybody — and that makes me blissfully happy, because my enemy is racism,” he said.

Often, African DNA is hard to source. Lisa Gross, 55, a sixth- or seventh-generation Kentuckian, grew up hearing she had Native American ancestry, a common narrative for families with unexplained dark complexions. So, in 2014, she mailed in her saliva sample to find out.

The results showed her to be mostly European, but while there was a trace of Native American DNA, "the bigger surprise was that I have a significant amount of sub-Saharan markers," she said. "I was thrilled. I thought, 'Wow — where's that? Where did that come from?' . . . It's someone within the last 10 generations. That would go back to about 1600."

Gross's relatives came to the New World in the mid-1700s, so the African DNA contribution may have happened in Europe, she said.

"In the best-case scenario, it's someone who is not in servitude, who was not a slave," she said. "It's a free person who enters into the relationship of their own free will, who is not coerced, who is not commanded. That is what I hope. But history tells us that that is probably not the case."

As DNA tests become more commonplace, Foeman hopes that they will help shift the cultural paradigm. "We are living at a time when people think they have to stick in their camps, but I think people are getting exhausted by that," she said. "It's an opportunity for us to reboot the conversation about race."

For Persley, it did.

"I felt kind of like a spy, because if I was in a group of white people and they were throwing around the n-word or racist jokes, I felt like I couldn't idly stand by anymore," Persley said. "I became kind of an activist. I'd say, 'Don't talk like that around me. It offends me — stop.' "

Gross, too, said that the discovery made her realize how artificial some cultural narratives can be.

"In this day and time," she said, "I think that we need to be open to these experiences, and when you think about the concept of race and 'I'm 100 percent this,' it's almost laughable."

White Nationalists Are Flocking to Genetic Ancestry Tests--with Surprising Results[5]

Sometimes they find they are not as "white" as they'd hoped

Eric Boodman, on August 16, 2017

It was a strange moment of triumph against racism: The gun-slinging white supremacist Craig Cobb, dressed up for daytime TV in a dark suit and red tie, hearing that his DNA testing revealed his ancestry to be only "86 percent European, and ... 14 percent Sub-Saharan African." The studio audience whooped and laughed and cheered. And Cobb—who was, in 2013, charged with terrorizing people while trying to create an all-white enclave in North Dakota—reacted like a sore loser in the schoolyard.

"Wait a minute, wait a minute, hold on, just wait a minute," he said, trying to put on an all-knowing smile. "This is called statistical noise."

Then, according to the Southern Poverty Law Center, he took to the white nationalist website Stormfront to dispute those results. That's not uncommon: With the rise of spit-in-a-cup genetic testing, there's a trend of white nationalists using these services to prove their racial identity, and then using online forums to discuss the results.

But like Cobb, many are disappointed to find out that their ancestry is not as "white" as they'd hoped. In a new study, sociologists Aaron Panofsky and Joan Donovan examined years' worth of posts on Stormfront to see how members dealt with the news.

It's striking, they say, that white nationalists would post these results online at all. After all, as Panofsky put it, "they will basically say if you want to be a member of Stormfront you have to be 100 percent white European, not Jewish."

But instead of rejecting members who get contrary results, Donovan said, the conversations are "overwhelmingly" focused on helping the person to rethink the validity of the genetic test. And some of those critiques—while emerging from deep-seated racism—are close to scientists' own qualms about commercial genetic ancestry testing.

Panofsky and Donovan presented their findings at a sociology conference in Montreal on Monday. The timing of the talk—some 48 hours after the violent white nationalist rally in Charlottesville, Va.—was coincidental. But the analysis provides a useful, if frightening, window into how these extremist groups think about their genes.

[5] https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/white-nationalists-are-flocking-to-genetic-ancestry-tests-with-surprising-results/

RECKONING WITH RESULTS

Stormfront was launched in the mid-1990s by Don Black, a former grand wizard of the Ku Klux Klan. His skills in computer programming were directly related to his criminal activities: He learned them while in prison for trying to invade the Caribbean island nation of Dominica in 1981, and then worked as a web developer after he got out. That means this website dates back to the early years of the internet, forming a kind of deep archive of online hate.

To find relevant comments in the 12 million posts written by over 300,000 members, the authors enlisted a team at the University of California, Los Angeles, to search for terms like "DNA test," "haplotype," "23andMe," and "National Geographic." Then the researchers combed through the posts they found, not to mention many others as background. Donovan, who has moved from UCLA to the Data & Society Research Institute, estimated that she spent some four hours a day reading Stormfront in 2016. The team winnowed their results down to 70 discussion threads in which 153 users posted their genetic ancestry test results, with over 3,000 individual posts.

About a third of the people posting their results were pleased with what they found. "Pretty damn pure blood," said a user with the username Sloth. But the majority didn't find themselves in that situation. Instead, the community often helped them reject the test, or argue with its results.

Some rejected the tests entirely, saying that an individual's knowledge about his or her own genealogy is better than whatever a genetic test can reveal. "They will talk about the mirror test," said Panofsky, who is a sociologist of science at UCLA's Institute for Society and Genetics. "They will say things like, 'If you see a Jew in the mirror looking back at you, that's a problem; if you don't, you're fine.'" Others, he said, responded to unwanted genetic results by saying that those kinds of tests don't matter if you are truly committed to being a white nationalist. Yet others tried to discredit the genetic tests as a Jewish conspiracy "that is trying to confuse true white Americans about their ancestry," Panofsky said.

But some took a more scientific angle in their critiques, calling into doubt the method by which these companies determine ancestry—specifically how companies pick those people whose genetic material will be considered the reference for a particular geographical group.

And that criticism, though motivated by very different ideas, is one that some researchers have made as well, even as other scientists have used similar data to better understand how populations move and change.

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"There is a mainstream critical literature on genetic ancestry tests—geneticists and anthropologists and sociologists who have said precisely those things: that these tests give an illusion of certainty, but once you know how the sausage is made, you should be much more cautious about these results," said Panofsky.

A COMMUNITY'S GENETIC RULES

Companies like Ancestry.com and 23andMe are meticulous in how they analyze your genetic material. As points of comparison, they use both preexisting datasets as well as some reference populations that they have recruited themselves. The protocol includes genetic material from thousands of individuals, and looks at thousands of genetic variations.

"When a 23andMe research participant tells us that they have four grandparents all born in the same country—and the country isn't a colonial nation like the U.S., Canada, or Australia—that person becomes a candidate for inclusion in the reference data," explained Jhulianna Cintron, a product specialist at 23andMe. Then, she went on, the company excludes close relatives, as that could distort the data, and removes outliers whose genetic data don't seem to match with what they wrote on their survey.

But specialists both inside and outside these companies recognize that the geopolitical boundaries we use now are pretty new, and so consumers may be using imprecise categories when thinking about their own genetic ancestry within the sweeping history of human migration. And users' ancestry results can change depending on the dataset to which their genetic material is being compared—a fact which some Stormfront users said they took advantage of, uploading their data to various sites to get a more "white" result.

J. Scott Roberts, an associate professor at the University of Michigan, who has studied consumer use of genetic tests and was not involved with the study, said the companies tend to be reliable at identifying genetic variants. Interpreting them in terms of health risk or ancestry, though, is another story. "The science is often murky in those areas and gives ambiguous information," he said. "They try to give specific percentages from this region, or x percent disease risk, and my sense is that that is an artificially precise estimate."

For the study authors, what was most interesting was to watch this online community negotiating its own boundaries, rethinking who counts as "white." That involved plenty of contradictions. They saw people excluded for their genetic test results, often in very nasty (and unquotable) ways, but that tended to happen for newer members of the anonymous online community, Panofsky said, and not so much for longtime, trusted members. Others were told that they could remain part of white nationalist groups, in spite of the ancestry they revealed, as long as they didn't "mate," or only had children with certain ethnic groups. Still others used these test results to put forth a twisted notion of diversity, one "that allows them to say, 'No, we're really diverse and we don't need non-white people to have a diverse society,'" said Panofsky.

That's a far cry from the message of reconciliation that genetic ancestry testing companies hope to promote.

"Sweetheart, you have a little black in you," the talk show host Trisha Goddard told Craig Cobb on that day in 2013. But that didn't stop him from redoing the test with a different company, trying to alter or parse the data until it matched his racist worldview.

A Man Says His DNA Test Proves He's Black, and He's Suing[6]

A case in Washington questions how the government defines race.

SARAH ZHANG

SEP 19, 2018

In 2014, Ralph Taylor applied to have his insurance company in Washington State certified as a "disadvantaged business enterprise." The DBE program at the U.S. Department of Transportation was originally designed to help minority- and woman-owned businesses win government contracts. So as proof of his minority status, Taylor submitted the results of a DNA test, estimating his ancestry to be 90 percent European, 6 percent indigenous American, and 4 percent sub-Saharan African.

Government officials reviewing Taylor's application were not convinced. They saw that he looked white. They noted that he was unable to directly document any nonwhite ancestors. They doubted the underlying validity of the DNA test. And, most relevant to the purpose of the program, they found "little to no persuasive evidence that Mr. Taylor has personally suffered social and economic disadvantage by virtue of being a Black American." They refused to certify his company. So Taylor decided to sue—out of principle, he says, because other business owners who look white have won DBE certification before. *The Seattle Times* first reported on the case in detail last week.

Taylor is now challenging how racial groups are defined for this program. "Black Americans," according to the federal regulations for DBEs,"includes persons having origins in any of the Black racial groups of Africa." The lawsuit calls this definition "impermissibly vague" and criticizes the lack of "any minimum percentage of DNA, or other objective criterion." "He considers himself to be Black based upon DNA evidence," Taylor's lawyer asserted in a letter included in the lawsuit, which also called DNA "objective" and "unalterable."

In its four-decade existence, the DBE program has long wrestled with questions of how to determine if someone is a minority. Proof of race and ethnicity "has been a thorn in the side of the DBE program for years," said a 2001 article in the magazine *Government Contractor*. But Taylor's case appears to be the first time, according to Jennifer Sommerville, a lawyer who has written about DBEs, that DNA evidence has come up in a lawsuit over eligibility for the program.

According to several legal experts I spoke with, it might also be the first time a genetic ancestry test is being cited as evidence of race in any type of court case.

Currently, in situations like DBE certification, the legal system generally lets people identify their own race. Title VII employment-discrimination lawsuits are another common scenario where a person's race is relevant. Richard Levy, an attorney who worked on a $98 million class-action lawsuit alleging racial bias in the New York City Fire Department, says the case relied on self-identification to decide who was eligible for the money. "If they identified as black, they were," he says.

[6] https://www.theatlantic.com/science/archive/2018/09/dna-test-race-lawsuit/570250/

If DNA evidence somehow seems more tangible and less subjective than self-identification, consider the problems it would also pose.

For one, the accuracy of DNA tests are unproven—and the specific test Taylor took in 2010 is now widely seen as outdated. Today's leading test companies, such as AncestryDNA and 23andMe, examine around 700,000 DNA markers, comparing them to a database of thousands of people around the world. Still, customers have found that different companies will return different results. And companies also frequently tweak their proprietary algorithms, so results can change from software update to update.

In contrast, the AncestryByDNA test Taylor took looked at just 176 DNA markers, according to government documents, less than one-thousandth of the current industry standard. Despite a similar name, the test has little to do with the more popular one from AncestryDNA. And in fact, a Google search of AncestryByDNA brings up dozens of angry reviews calling it a "waste of money" and warning customers about the confusing name. Taylor has offered before to take another DNA test at the government's expense, but nothing has come of it.

Even if a perfectly accurate genetic ancestry test did exist, it would not easily settle questions of race. The percentage breakdowns of a test do not map neatly on to racial categories. How many African DNA markers does a person need to have to be considered black? Four percent? Twenty-five percent? Fifty percent? There are no universal cutoffs. Genetic variation is real, but the boundaries of racial categories are socially determined and have constantly shifted over the course of American history. "You cannot rely on DNA evidence alone to decide what is really a socially constructed concept," says Sheryll Cashin, a law professor at Georgetown University.

A pair of Supreme Court decisions in the 1920s, says Sherally Munshi, also a law professor at Georgetown, is particularly revealing of how racial categories have been drawn. Under U.S. law at the time, only "free white persons" and "persons of African nativity or persons of African descent" could be naturalized as U.S. citizens. A Japanese immigrant named Takao Ozawa brought a case arguing that his white skin qualified him as white. In 1922, the Supreme Court ruled against Ozawa because white persons only referred to Caucasians. Race scientists at the time excluded Japanese from the Caucasian race.

Then, in 1923, a similar case involving an Indian immigrant named Bhagat Singh Thind also reached the Supreme Court.* Since race scientists considered Indians to be Caucasians, he argued that he was eligible for naturalization. The court ruled against him, too. This time, it held that "white person" meant "what is popularly known as the Caucasian race." The court, in a span of months, appealed to and then discarded the science of its time in constructing an idea of whiteness.

With the advent of genetic ancestry tests, people are once again asking if and how the latest science should be incorporated into an understanding of race. "There are close parallels," Munshi says. And the answer is far from settled.

Taylor also identified himself as Native American in his DBE application, noting the results of his DNA test. (He says he grew up with stories of Native American ancestors from his father's family but has no documentation.) As part of the lawsuit, his lawyer filed a public-records request unearthing emails discussing the DBE certification of another business owner with a tribal card showing him to

be 1/256 Native American. Taylor's lawsuit cites this as evidence of the arbitrary criteria of the DBE program.

But Kim TallBear, a professor at the University of Alberta, says this is a misunderstanding of how Native American identity works. Unlike racial categories of black or white, tribal-enrollment criteria is actually quite clear. Each tribe gets to determine who belongs, and membership is often based on tracing direct ancestry to other members of the tribe.

"It might be all these people have Native American ancestry," TallBear says. "My question is: Who cares? If there's a particular ancestor that is close enough you can find living family, then you can do that. If there's nobody for you to find and no tribal community that's going to claim you, it doesn't really mean anything."

Tribal-enrollment offices do use genetic tests to establish parentage. But ancestry tests are irrelevant for enrollment, despite their growing popularity. "Members of the public have been showing up to tribal-enrollment offices and showing them ancestry DNA tests," says TallBear. "And they're like, 'I don't know what this is. Who are you trying to link?'"

Taylor's lawsuit is also seeking to void the definition of Native Americans in the federal DBE regulations, which includes "persons who are enrolled members of a federally or State recognized Indian tribe, Alaska Natives, or Native Hawaiians."

Taylor's case will be heard in the Ninth U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in the next few months.

When reached by phone this week, Taylor readily admitted he didn't think DNA was an objective standard either. "If you've got to be 50 percent, what if somebody is 49?" he asked. Ultimately, he just wants to expose the DBE program as unfair. He believes it should be race-blind. The Washington State Office of Minority and Women's Business Enterprises, which runs the state's DBE-certification program, did not respond to a request for comment.

It's one thing to recognize that race cannot be measured in percentages of DNA and that racial categories are not always separated by bright lines. It's another to say race is entirely irrelevant. The DBE program's race-conscious policies have been challenged in court before. In a 2005 case, *Western States Paving v. U.S.*, the court ultimately ruled that the DBE program could only apply to groups if they are actually experiencing discrimination. To comply, Washington has had to conduct disparity studies.

The latest disparity study, from 2017, concluded that minority and female business owners continue to face stereotypes, discriminatory attitudes, negative perceptions of competence, and exclusion from industry networks. White men are still more likely to start businesses and make more money.