



**Abstract**

Self-identification is the hallmark of racial/ethnic identity and it reflects how individuals perceive themselves. Racial/ethnic self-identification frames one’s culture, beliefs, perceptions of self and others (Phinney & Ong, 2007). The identity development models emphasize that self-identification may change as one explores and commits to their identity. Because of the role self-identification in internalizing cultural identity, this proposed study hopes to investigate the possibilities of how knowing true heritage could impact one’s view of self, others, community, and challenge one’s belief system.

**Research Questions**

The research questions for this proposed study are:

- How does genetic heritage, confirmed by DNA test, impacts one’s self-reported ethnicity?
- How does genetic heritage impact one’s perception of self, others, and community?

**Biopsychosocial Impacts  
and Implications of Research Study**

- We hope to contribute to the literature on cultural identity as linked to confirmation of genetic heritage.
- We hope participants will engage in cultural exploration to better understanding of themselves, others, and the community.

**Self-Identification of ethnic heritage  
vs. genetic ethnic heritage:  
Does knowing one’s genetic ethnic  
heritage impact perception of self,  
others, and community?**

Teresea Higham & Samantha Kohlman

**Are You Who You Think You Are?**



**What’s Your Heritage?**

**Research Design**

- Pre-testing surveys and interviews
- Genetic heritage analysis via Ancestry.com
- Post-testing review of results and interviews of participants’ reactions

**Data Analysis & Interpretation**

We are recruiting 18 participants for this study. Upon completion of this study, we will be able to survey and analyze how the DNA results will affect participants’ knowledge of themselves, others, and community.

We anticipate participants of this research will find the information beneficial in learning more about their ethnic heritage.

**Anticipated Outcome**

The research team anticipates that a portion of the participants will be surprised by the results of the DNA testing and begin to question their self-perceptions and beliefs. The researchers hope to assist the participants in exploration of their views of self, others, and their community. The researchers further hope to confirm self-reported ethnic heritage or enrich the participants with knowledge about their genetic heritage. This research could shed light on how the long-term effects of confirmation of genetic heritage could impact community demographics by how individuals self-identify on government or institutional forms (e.g., census data). Finally, the proposed study will contribute to the growing literature on cultural identity development and the understanding of diversity and multiculturalism.

**References and Thanks**

- We would like to thank the **Office of Student Research (OSR)** for the opportunity to explore our education in diversity , believing in our research , and funding this project
- We would like to thank **Cris Craig** in the Finance Department for assisting us along the way and always being helpful.
- A special thank you goes out to **Dr. Cheryl Warner** for agreeing to mentor us during this project, helping us troubleshoot obstacles, and believing in our research.

Lee, Y. L., Teitelbaum, S., Wolff, M. S., Wetmur, J. G., & Chen, J. (2010). Comparing genetic and Self-reported race/ethnicity in a multiethnic population in New York City. *Journal of Genetics*, 89-4, 417-424. doi:10.1007/s12041-010-0060-8

Phinney, J. S. (1996). When we talk about American ethnic groups, what do we mean? *American Psychologist*, 53-9, 918-927. doi: 10.1037/0003-066X.51.9.918

Phinney, J.S. & Ong, A. D., (2007). Conception and measurement of ethnic identity: Current status and future directions. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 54-3, 271-281. Doi: 10.1037/0022-0167.54.3.271.