

## Viewpoint: Consumer genetic tests may reinforce ‘fiction’ of race concept

After what feels like a decade of hype and underwhelming sales, direct-to-consumer (DTC) genetic testing seems to be [taking off](#), for better or worse. In the hope of discovering more about themselves, [millions](#) of people have sent DNA-filled tubes of spit to commercial testing companies.

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If you believe the marketing campaigns, you will, as AncestryDNA [declares](#) on its website, “discover what makes you uniquely you.” You will, as another [DTC company suggests](#), discover more about your “DNA tribe.” And you will, as [virtually every ancestry company](#) promises in one way or another, [learn about your](#) “ethnic origins.”

While I understand the interest in exploring one’s family history, the marketing associated with these studies goes well beyond finding long-lost relatives. A consistent, underlying theme is that biological difference matters.

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This “biology matters” perspective, which sales figures suggest people are embracing, is a significant step backward, both scientifically and socially. [W]e shouldn’t forget that the concept of “race” is a [biological fiction](#).

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[W]henver biology is attached to a rough human classification system (ancestry, ethnicity, etc.), the public, researchers and the media almost always gravitate back to [the concept of race](#). In other words, the more we suggest that biological differences between groups matter — and that is exactly what these companies are suggesting — the more the archaic concept of race is perceived, at least by some, as being legitimate.

*Editor’s note: Timothy Caulfield is Canada Research Chair in Health Law and Policy at the University of Alberta*

**Read full, original post:** [Is direct-to-consumer genetic testing reifying race?](#)