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The Peculiar Positioning of African American Identity:
A Comprehensive Examination of Identity and Ancestry

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines how African Americans exemplify concepts of double consciousness, liminality, and racial construction while taking ancestry DNA tests along with the transformative effects those tests have on the formation of identity amongst African Americans. It includes the results of extensive interviews with celebrity African Americans guests, who have taken DNA tests, from the show Finding Your Roots with Henry Louis Gates, Jr. By utilizing a data-driven coding method, the initial visual and verbal responses of the guests were analyzed and then grouped by the emerging themes that began to present themselves within the data. The research shows that the African Americans guests conclude these segments with various interpretations of self and identity. Some described experiencing fulfillment while others gained a sense of belonging. I revisit the aforementioned concepts, revealing the latent motivations African Americans have for taking such lengths to discover who they are.