

Seminar - Economic History  
The Ethnic Past in US: Single Ancestry Identification  
among Higher Generation and Their Life Outcomes - H.  
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## **1 What is the main question raised in the paper?**

Undoubtedly, ethnic identity will affect one's life outcomes in many aspects and through many mechanisms, for example, language, belief and value. The author is trying to investigate the ethnic effect on the life outcomes of third or higher generation Americans originated from Europe. The lifetime outcomes are classified into two categories - family and socioeconomic outcomes.

## **2 Why should we care about it?**

From the paper, we could roughly estimate the impact of ethnic identity on people's life outcomes, which would help us further investigate the mechanism behind the phenomenon. It also tells us that the effect of ethnic identity is long-lasting, despite the degree of assimilation is high. This paper points out the advantages and disadvantages of single ancestry, which helps us interpret the other findings in sociology.

## **3 What is the author's answer?**

If we regard oneself with only one ethnic group as having a stronger ethnic identity, then ethnic identity is not just symbolic but produces real effects on life outcomes of individuals. The author finds that individuals reporting single ancestry are associated with more favorable family outcomes but less favorable socio-economic outcomes. That is, they have higher chance of getting married and lower chance of being divorced, but they have lower level of educational achievement and their households earn less.

Also, the author finds that the men who identify themselves with only one ancestry are more likely to be married and have more than two children compared to their counterparts reporting multiple ancestries. For both men and women reporting single ancestry, they

have lower educational attainment and household income. The lower household income may derived from the lower educational attainment.

## 4 How did the author get there?

The author uses Ordinary Least Squares(OLS) regression for the main analysis. The regression is

$$Y_{is} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 SingleAncestry_{is} + \beta_2 SouthernEuropeans_{is} + \omega X_{is} + \alpha_s + \epsilon_{is}$$

where  $Y_{is}$  is the outcome variables (whether the individual owns a home and; whether he/she is divorced, married and whether the individual has two or more children).  $X_{is}$  is a vector of control variables, including age, age squared, education dummies, gender and regional dummies.

The author also performs two-stage least squares (2SLS) regressions by instrumenting the likelihood of individuals reporting a single ancestry with whether they spoke a language other than English at home as children. In this two stage least square (2SLS) model, the first stage is

$$SingleAncestry_{is} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 ChildLanguage + \beta_2 SouthernEuropeans_{is} + \omega X_{is} + \alpha_s + \epsilon_{is}$$

where  $ChildLanguage$  is a binary variable that is one if the individual also spoke a language other than English at home as a child and zero otherwise.