



CENTER *for*
GENOMICS *and* SOCIETY
at UNC-CHAPEL HILL

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**“The Discourse of DNA:
What Subjects Say about Participating in Genetic Biobanks”
-an interdisciplinary seminar-**

Presented by: John Conley, J.D., Ph.D., Professor of Law at UNC-
Chapel Hill

Tuesday, October 20, 2009, 11:00am -12:00pm

Health Sciences Library, room 527

This talk will present results from a qualitative discourse analysis of interviews with people who were invited to contribute DNA samples to the Environmental Polymorphisms Registry. In lengthy, semi-structured interviews, they were asked generally about their decisions to participate or decline. The method of discourse analysis allows the concerns of the subjects to emerge, as opposed to simply eliciting their responses to the a priori concerns of the researchers. A number of the issues that have arisen have been unexpected, including the characterization of "consenting" as a discursive process rather than an event, the treatment of the sample contribution transaction as a kind of trade secret license, and the subjects' folk theories of DNA.

The Center for Genomics and Society was established to examine the ethical, legal and social implications (ELSI) unique to large-scale genomic science. Major ELSI questions emerge in association with large-scale studies such as the creation of centralized DNA banks, use of genetic technologies in public health screening, and the rise of gene-based personalized medicine.

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