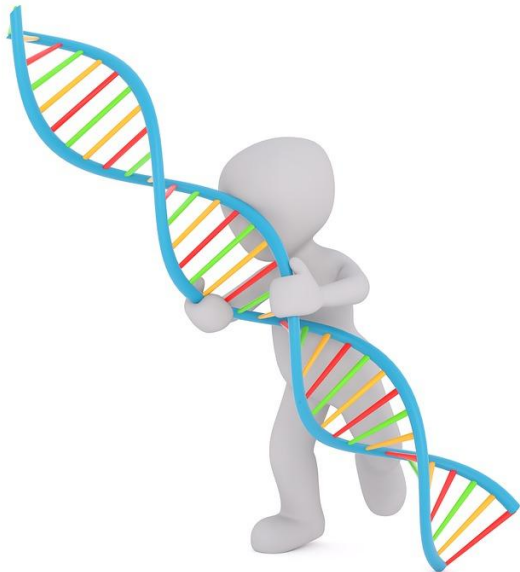


Could Your DNA Solve a Murder?

Is 23andMe or ancestry.com sharing
my DNA?



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SUMMARY

Many people use genealogy databases to find out their heritage or to locate family members. They don't realize that by using genealogy services, their privacy may be compromised. When people send in their DNA to genealogy services such as 23andMe or ancestry.com, they may not know that these services sell access to their DNA to pharmaceutical companies or medical research companies. Also, law enforcement is using these services as "powerful crime-solving tools." They can access these databases by obtaining permission in court. As a result, police can not only find people who upload their DNA, but also anyone who shares the participant's DNA like an aunt, uncle, or cousin. However, privacy experts are concerned that these practices violate the fourth amendment to our Constitution that prohibits "unreasonable searches and seizures."

SIGNPOST

The prevalent signpost in this article was **Contrast & Contradictions** because the article explained that many people use DNA services to learn about their heritage and ancestors or to even find a distant relative. However, within the article, Gina Kohata and Heather Murphy provide several contrasts and contradictions to the benefits of using genealogy services. One example of a **contrast and contradiction** is “That’s how police tracked down DeAngelo. They created a fake profile on GEDmatch and uploaded a sample of the Golden State Killer’s DNA found at the crime scene years ago. The results connected them to DeAngelo’s third cousin, who had at one time signed up for the service. Following the family tree led investigators to their suspect”(16). The authors then contrasted the method of how the killer was found to how it could be an invasion of privacy for the people on the genealogy database. “**Despite** the success in finding DeAngelo, privacy experts say these tactics are concerning for a few reasons. For one, when people upload their DNA to one of these sites, they aren’t exposing just themselves to possible police investigations. They’re also exposing anyone who shares their DNA” (16).

What is the difference and why does it matter?

The difference is that police were able to catch a dangerous serial killer, but the method they used to catch him can be a problem. It shows how people who submit their DNA for ancestry testing can accidentally become genetic informants on their innocent family.

WORD GAPS

Police had linked the **notorious** serial killer to a dozen murders and more than 50 rapes across California from 1976 to '86, yet he eluded all their attempts to find him.

Notorious - famous or well known for a bad quality or deed

It's an **arduous** process, but eventually a skilled genetic detective may be able to find a murderer, even one who's been hiding for decades.

Arduous - difficult and tiring

AUTHOR'S PURPOSE/OPPOSING VIEWPOINT

The author's purpose was to inform the reader that DNA is often used by law enforcement to successfully solve crimes. Police get court permission to access genealogy databases used by more than 1.5 million people in the United States. "With more and more people signing up for these services, though, many in law enforcement see another use for them: as huge databases of DNA, which they can compare with DNA from crime scenes to help them catch criminals" (15).

The opposing viewpoint is that while catching criminals is encouraging, the way law enforcement catches them is a privacy concern. "The question is whether police should be allowed to access genealogy sites, which contain highly sensitive information about their customers and their families" (15).