DNA & Uncovered Secrets:
Help and Support

Richard Weiss
www.DNAAdoption.org
GENETIC GENEALOGY STANDARD NINE

ISOGG

...PRIVATIZE OR REDACT THE NAMES OF LIVING GENETIC MATCHES FROM PRESENTATIONS UNLESS THE GENETIC MATCHES HAVE GIVEN THEIR PRIOR PERMISSION OR MADE THEIR RESULTS PUBLICLY AVAILABLE

...DISCLOSE ANY PROFESSIONAL RELATIONSHIPS THEY HAVE WITH A FOR PROFIT TESTING COMPANY
The Genealogist’s Goal:

To recreate and detail families lost to time

but not all parts of a family are lost to time
they are lost due to Secrets
[DNA] Testers are uncovering **Secrets**
Every...
Single...
Day...

Blaine Bettinger – DNA & the Aftermath of Uncovered Family Secrets

DNA Tidal Wave Concept courtesy of Donor Sibling Registry
…uncovering family secrets helps recreate and detail families…

Blaine Bettinger – DNA & the Aftermath of Uncovered Family Secrets
DNA can reveal ancestors' lies and secrets

As the testing becomes more commonplace, families sometimes learn painful facts. And that can raise ethical issues.

January 18, 2009 | Alan Zarembo

[...but] **Secrets have an effect**

Blaine Bettinger – DNA & the Aftermath of Uncovered Family Secrets
The Secrets

…What are the Secrets?

**Adoption…**

**Seen At 11: DNA Tests Kits Help Adoptees Track Down Biological Family Members**

Home DNA tests have exploded in popularity, but could they reveal more about your family than you ever imagined or even wanted to know?

NEW YORK, CBSLOCAL.COM | BY CBS NEW YORK

**Whoops. How DNA Site 23andMe Outed Parents Who Gave Their Baby Up For Adoption.**

Kashmir Hill, FORBES STAFF

Welcome to The Not-So Private Parts where technology & privacy collide

FULL BIO

Opinions expressed by Forbes Contributors are their own.

**ANALYSIS | Foundling's father: DNA unlocks secrets of serial baby abandonment case**

‘He had no idea about me at all. There was shock and sadness’

By Yvette Brand, CBC News | Posted: May 21, 2017 7:03 AM PT | Last Updated: May 25, 2017 10:47 AM PT
The Secrets

Secrets and lies: why donor-conceived children need to know their origins

She Found Her Biological Father On Ancestry And 23andMe

DNA tests will expose parents staying mum about donor babies: Doctors say rise in 'relative finder' kits will lift the lid on how children are conceived

- Parents who have babies using donor sperm or eggs will have to tell kids
- Currently many parents 'keep mum' about their child's true parentage
- But fertility doctors say the rising popularity of affordable DNA tests is threatening to blow the lid on their secrets

Are Sperm Donors Really Anonymous Anymore?

DNA testing makes them easy to trace.

By Rachel Lehmann-Haupt
Mum discovers three secret siblings, dad is not her biological father after taking a DNA test

...Misattributed Parentage

When An Ancestry Test Tells You Your Dad isn't Your Dad
Secret adoptions, hidden affairs, and past relationships—all a DNA test away.
TONIC.VICE.COM

DNA test helps Calif. woman uncover long-lost family secret

That’s when she learned - and confirmed through additional testing - that her real father, a man named , was very much alive and living in Florida.

Another surprise: her heritage was African-American.
Case Study and Examples

CASE STUDY

Family Historian is asked to take DNA test to help an Adoptee search

Adoption likely involves a Secret

Does she want to get involved?

Agrees to Test (Help Search)
While waiting for her test results, the Family Historian mentions to a 2nd cousin that she is helping an adoptee.

Her 2\textsuperscript{nd} Cousin volunteers to help by testing.
Family Historian Matches Adoptee

Cousin 1's DNA Matches

3rd-4th Cousin
Shared DNA: 129 cM across 6 segments
That’s Closer than the Company Prediction!

Definitely a Secret somewhere
Wow!
That’s Close
The Secrets

1776 cMs  54 segments

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Relationship</th>
<th>Total cMs</th>
<th>Avg cM</th>
<th>Total Segement</th>
<th>Average of shared Segments</th>
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<td>2536</td>
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<td>1602</td>
<td>54-89</td>
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<tr>
<td>Half Siblings</td>
<td>1381-2033</td>
<td>1667</td>
<td>52-85</td>
<td>68</td>
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</table>

Close Relationship

Unknown to Family

It’s a Mystery and…
A SECRET HAS BEEN UNCOVERED...
or
YOU’VE BEEN ASKED TO HELP...

NOW WHAT???
FIRST

DEVELOP UNDERSTANDING
Who Is Involved

• **The Keeper** – person who creates/keeps the secret

• **The Discoverer** – person who uncovers the secret
  • Secret was Discovered by someone or Searched for

• **The Subject** – person who is subject of the secret

• **The Affected** – people affected by the secret

• **The Enablers** – Individuals, Governments and Agencies who help keep the secret. Some may disclose the secret
Who Is Involved

Subject

- Child
- Adoptee
- Foundling
- Donor
- Conceived
- Mis-Attributed

Keeper, Discoverer, Affected, Enabler

- Parent
- Sibling
- 1C or closer
- 2C or further
- Friends & Helpers

- Aunt Uncle
- Niece
- Nephew
- Grand Parents
- Great Grand Parents
- 3C
- 4C
- 5C
- 6C or More

Includes ½ relationships

Everyone Could Have Multiple Roles
Who Is Involved

What Role are You In

- Keeper(s)
- Discoverer(s)
- Searchers(s)
- Affected

Friends & Helpers

Enablers

- Keeper(s)
- Disclosers
- 21
CASE STUDY

Adoptee
  – Subject & Discoverer

Family Historian / Cousin 1
  – Discoverer

Cousin 2
  – Discoverer

All Are Affected

• The Keeper – person who creates/keeps the secret
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• The Affected – people affected by the secret
• The Enablers – Governments and Agencies who help keep or disclose the secret
IMPACT & INTENSITY

How much is each person affected?

Perspectives

Birth Family
Donor Family
Bio Parent Family

Adoptive Family
Donor Conceived Family
Known Family

2C or further
1C or closer
Sibling
Parent
Subject
Parent
Sibling
1C or closer
2C or further

Friends & Helpers

IMPACT & INTENSITY WILL AFFECT RESPONSES & CHOICES
Why the Secret Was Kept (social norms, self-protection)

Avoiding intense feelings (Shame, Guilt, Fear...)

Entrenched Beliefs (anonymity, social & familial “norms”)

Different perspectives about Uncovering a Secret, DNA, and Searching are possible

Anonymity and Privacy are NOT the same thing – often confused

Anonymity not recognized by the Courts
Don’t assume you know the cause of the Secret

Wide variety of reasons are possible

AGE OF THE SECRET KEEPER & SUBJECT

How Old Are They Now?

- 70s Plus
- 50s & 60s
- 30s & 40s
- 18 to 20s
- Minor

COMMUNICATIONS METHOD

Contacted or Contacting?

- Letter
- Phone
- Email
- Social Media
- Via 3rd Party

Factors that Influence Responses and Probability for a Positive Outcome
Perspectives

Godsend
(Wanting to be found)

Disbelief
(This can’t be true)

Violation
(False Anonymity belief)

All Will Be Initially Surprised

DNA Tidal Wave Concept courtesy of Donor Sibling Registry
UNDERSTANDING
Does Not Mean AGREEMENT with Perspectives of Others

UNDERSTANDING Enables Respect, Courtesy, Compassion, Patience & Informed Choices
I’ve Uncovered a Secret

What Else Should I Consider To Help Me Decide What to Do?
Considerations

Universal Truths
(Lessons Learned from the Adoption and Donor Search Communities)

Applicable to Everyone

Goal: Enable the Best Opportunity for a Positive Outcome
Considerations

You Are Not Alone or Unique
Many Have Walked These Paths Before

Get Experienced & Reputable Help
Use the Decades of Experience - What Works and What doesn’t Work

It is Okay to Get Professional Help

Going It Alone Lowers the Possibility of A Positive Outcome
Considerations

There are no Guarantees

What You Want may *not* Work for Someone Else

What Someone Else Wants might *not* Work for You

Sometimes You Can Meet in the Middle, Sometimes You Can’t
Assumptions Will Get You in Trouble

You Don’t Know

The Circumstance of Other Parties
Family Dynamics
Who Knew or Didn’t Know
Why Someone is Searching or not Searching

Recognize and Challenge Your Own Assumptions and Beliefs
Considerations

Adults Get To Make Their Own Choices

Making Decisions on Behalf of Other Adults without their Knowledge and Consent usually doesn’t End Well for Anyone

May Require the Secret to be Revealed
Example

Disappearance of Bobby Dunbar

Bobby Dunbar disappeared in 1912

Months later a child was found with Mr Walters who claimed he was a Ms Andersons’ son – others claimed he was Bobby

Mr Walters charged with Kidnapping – Denies Charges

Mr Walters Convicted of Kidnapping

Child returned to Dunbar family as Bobby Dunbar

www.thisamericanlife.org/352/the-ghost-of-bobby-dunbar
Case Study and Examples

Disappearance of Bobby Dunbar (cont)

Bobby’s grandchild initiated DNA testing to prove Bobby was a Dunbar and not an Anderson

DNA proved Bobby was an Anderson, not a Dunbar

Dunbars are shocked, many reject results

Assumptions, No Guarantees, Secret Revealed

www.thisamericanlife.org/352/the-ghost-of-bobby-dunbar
Disappearance of Bobby Dunbar (cont)

With Tester’s concurrence Grandchild discloses results to Anderson and Walters families over objections of other Dunbars

Bobby’s Grandchild ostracized by many Dunbars

Tremendous relief for Anderson and Walters families

Mr Walters Criminal Record is Expunged

Secrets Remain – What Happened to the Real Bobby Dunbar?
Considerations

Don’t Be in the Middle

Other People’s Relationships are Not Your Business

Messages Get Mixed Up

Good Intentions Do *Not* Guarantee Positive Outcomes
Go To The Secret Keeper(s) First

- Respect
- Courtesy
- Compassion

Give Them an Opportunity to Handle the Secret
Don’t Try to Force the Outcome You Want

Everyone Has a Right to Make Contact

No One has a Right to a Relationship

What Works for You May Not Work For Someone Else
Considerations

Patience

Go Slow

When In Doubt, Go Slower

Give The Other Person Lots of Time to Catch Up
Honor Each Person’s Choice

“Positive Outcome” may be Different for each Person Involved

You Don’t have to Honor a Choice made on Behalf of another Adult without their Knowledge

Let the Other Person Know What You Are Going To Do Before You Do It
People Change Their Mind

The First Answer Might Not Be the Final Answer

There May Be More than One Change of Mind Over Time
Privacy and Anonymity are Not the Same

Usually Confused
Anonymity – Name, Contact Info
Privacy – Hobbies, Interests

No Legal Standing for Anonymity

https://www.firstmotherforum.com/2014/07/time-to-end-myth-of-first-mothers-right.html?m=1
Case Study and Examples

Example

Donor Father is found, demands Donor Person tell no one.
Donor Person goes along for two years.

After two years Donor Person informs Donor Father she will reach out to siblings after specific waiting time.
Donor Person reaches out and forges relationship with siblings.

Donor Father ends relationship for letting the Secret out.

Go to Keeper, Let the Other Know, Informed Adult Choices, Different Outcomes.
Case Study and Examples

Example (cont)

After several years Donor Father re-initiates contact

After several more years Donor Person chooses to end relationship with Donor Father but keeps relationships with Siblings
CASE STUDY (cont)

Gentleman receives letter from stranger
Mentions DNA and two people with the same surname as him
One person mentioned is his Brother
Gentleman Calls Brother
Brother Closely Matches Adoptee
Definitely a Secret Who Knew?

Meanwhile, the Letter Sender Waits

Become Informed, Challenge Assumptions, Patience
Case Study and Examples

Close Relationship – High Impact & Intensity

Baby Scoop Era – Social & Familial Stigmas Beliefs?

Making Initial Contact - High Impact & Intensity

Understanding
## Case Study and Examples

### Gentleman's DNA Matches

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Groups</th>
<th>Filters</th>
<th>Search</th>
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#### Parent/Child

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Adoptee</th>
<th>Parent/Child</th>
<th>9,583 People</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Shared DNA: 3,468 cM across 44 segments</td>
<td>Common ancestor</td>
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</table>

#### Full Sibling

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Brother / Cousin 2</th>
<th>Brother</th>
<th>9,063 People</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Shared DNA: 2,707 cM across 51 segments</td>
<td>Common ancestor</td>
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</table>
Case Study and Examples

Gentleman

Cousin 1/ Family Historian

Cousin 2 / Brother
Afterward

It’s Not Over,
It Is Just Another Step on Your Journey

The Morning After Affect

Limbo

Reconciliation

Your Path Doesn’t Stop with Fantasy, Finding, and First Encounters

The 5 Stages of Reunion from “Birthright” by Jean A.S. Strauss
Where can I Get Reputable & Experienced Help and Support?
Help and Support

www.originscanada.org

www.pacer-adoption.org

www.dcnetwork.org

www.NPEFellowship.org

www.mixedrootsfoundation.org

[Birth Mother] First Mother Forum
Where first/birth/natural/real mothers share news & opinions. And vent.

www.firstmotherforum.com

ADOPTION & BIRTH MOTHERS*
~ BUILDING BRIDGES TO ADOPTIONS TRUTHS ~

www.adoptionbirthmothers.com
If You Test, You will be Touched by Secrets

Develop Understanding

Exercise Respect, Courtesy, Compassion, & Patience

Make Your Own Informed Decisions

It is okay to not get involved
Summary

If You Decide to Help A Searcher

Provide your family tree
Use Shared / ICW Matches to find an MRCA
Transfer your DNA to GEDMatch and other Sites

Encourage them to NOT go it alone
Instead, get reputable & experienced help for searching, contact, and reunion

There are no Grantees
We need your help. Please submit your data today!

Predicted relationships between matches can be an important clue when verifying trees, working on brick walls, or searching for family.

Differences in the algorithms and chips affect both the amount of shared DNA reported and the predicted relationship - making research harder.

Using the data you submit, we will help the genetic genealogy community understand these impacts.

https://relationship.dnaadoption.org
How You Can Help

Go to www.DNAAdoption.org

Donate directly or purchase through the links to our wonderful affiliates

No Cost to You      Sales Honored      Discounts from Legacy Tree Genealogists
Make DNAAdoption your AmazonSmile Charitable Organization