

From: [Bolnick, Deborah](#)
To: [Cat's Prodigy](#)
Cc: [Reign Clark](#); [REDACTED]; [helen.graham](#); [Abigail Eve Fisher](#)
Subject: Re: An Effort to ID Tulsa Race Massacre Victims Raises Privacy Issues
Date: Tuesday, September 20, 2022 10:36:04 AM

Hi Catrina,

Great, glad to hear these topics are on the agenda for the conversations with both companies.

All the best,

Deborah

On Sep 20, 2022, at 10:16 AM, Cat's Prodigy <catrina_whitley@prodigy.net> wrote:

Message sent from a system outside of UConn.

Hi Deborah,

The main problem with the Tulsa Massacre studies is that they are using GEDmatch. Use of that company is what is causing the uproar. Yes, there are risks, but they come with subpoenas with the other companies and not free access by anyone like at GEDmatch.

The topic you are bringing up is already part of the conversation I planned to have with Family Tree and African Ancestry. I was already concerned about this issue and who would have access.

We will be sure to address the issue.

Catrina

Sent from my iPhone

On Sep 20, 2022, at 8:02 AM, Bolnick, Deborah
<deborah.bolnick@uconn.edu> wrote:

Hi Reign,

I fully agree. The comparisons are obviously critical and must be done; there's no question about that! I just think that we have an

ethical obligation to consider the benefits and risks of the various possible approaches, and be up front about those potential risks and benefits with those who are considering participating, so they can offer input and make an informed decision about their participation. The risks of providing one's genetic data to an online database has arisen as a concern in the Tulsa Massacre context, so it's possible that it might matter to some of our stakeholders as well. It also might not. If it does, though, it would probably be helpful to know sooner rather than later, so we can find the best path forward for effectively identifying connections while simultaneously protecting individual's genetic data.

When we talk to FamilyTreeDNA and African Ancestry, we can ask about what privacy controls they have, what limitations they place on the use of individuals' genetic data, and whether comparisons could be done without adding individuals from this project into their broader database for use in other unrelated analyses. Different companies may have different policies, and that could be helpful to know in considering who to work with.

All the best,

Deborah

On Sep 20, 2022, at 8:43 AM, Reign Clark
<reignclark@gmail.com> wrote:

Message sent from a system outside of UConn.

Deborah,

I agree that different paths to making comparisons should be explored. We have been receiving a clear message from the descendant community for years now that comparisons must be made. I think that making clear the privacy risks associated with taking part in the comparisons is enough. If there is a more private way of doing this, that is fine, but if people are making an informed decision to take part, I see little issue here. We and the descendant community that have voiced their opinion so far want progress and I think the most effective means of identifying connections should be used.

Thanks again,

RC

Sent from my iPhone

On Sep 20, 2022, at 7:27 AM, Bolnick, Deborah <deborah.bolnick@uconn.edu> wrote:

Hi Reign and all,

Thanks for sharing these thoughts! I think my concern is a little different – it's not that we ourselves will get into any hot water, so to speak, if we are taking samples from individuals and sending them to a DTC genetic ancestry company, but rather that we might be inducing community members to take on risks that they might not otherwise choose. Specifically, if we tell them that they have to send their DNA to a genetic testing company in order to be compared with the Sugar Land 95, then they have to accept the risks of giving up their DNA to that private company. That company may then be able to do whatever they want with the person's DNA – such as use the DNA in unrelated projects or for profit – and the individual's genetic data could potentially end up in the hands of law enforcement officers even if the individual would not have otherwise agreed to that. These are ethical considerations that we should discuss further, I think. It may that community members are not concerned about this at all. But I think it would be important to share the pros and cons of different possible approaches, and give community stakeholders the opportunity to weigh in.

It might also be helpful to find out if there is any way to compare the Sugar Land 95 and present-day community members to these private databases without turning over their genetic data to become part of the company's databases.

All the best,

Deborah

On Sep 20, 2022, at 8:00 AM,
Reign Clark
<reignclark@gmail.com>
wrote:

Very good article and good point, Deborah. Thank you for sending it. I see some differences in that we are working under TAC permit after an opinion was issued by the State Attorney General. Of course, that doesn't give us any more protection regarding our interactions with possible descendants.

One way we could proceed is to instruct that interested parties go directly to the genomics firm themselves if they want to compare their own DNA to our group. We can even provide funds for people to take part at little or no cost. In fact, I would think there are advantages to reduce the cost to the participant to a dollar so that there is at least some record of payment from the individual indicating election of participation.

I see no danger in comparing our group to existing available databases. The danger arises if we get in between the possible descendant and the genomics firm. We need to discuss this issue further, no doubt.

Thanks again,

Reign

Sent from my iPhone

On Sep 20, 2022, at 6:24 AM, Bolnick, Deborah
<deborah.bolnick@ucom.edu> wrote:

Hi all,

You may be interested in this recent article, if you haven't seen it yet:

<https://www.wired.com/story/an-effort-to-id-tulsa-race-massacre-victims-raises-privacy-issues/>

It raises some concerns about the risks associated with commercial genetic genealogy databases, which may be relevant for our conversations about how best to proceed with the Sugar Land 95 analysis. The databases of companies like FamilyTreeDNA and African Ancestry are not publicly accessible in the same way that GedMatch is, but law enforcement entities do use subpoenas to access their databases. Providing the data of the Sugar Land 95 to any of these companies does therefore contain risks, as Sam raised in her email last week, as does asking community members to send their own DNA to the companies. Community members may be comfortable with these risks, but this is something that they should have the opportunity to weigh in on, I think. There are alternative approaches we could take if the risks are thought to outweigh the benefits of sending samples to one of these companies.

All the best,

Deborah

Deborah A. Bolnick Professor and