

WHY SHOULD HISTORIANS NOT DISREGARD GENEALOGY? FROM FAMILY HISTORY AND FAMILY MEMORY TO INVESTIGATIVE GENETIC GENEALOGY^[1]

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Abstract: The aim of this study is twofold. On the one hand, the article provides an overview of current research in the field of family memory, amateur family history and (genetic) genealogy, emphasizing a few areas that are of interest for professional historians. These include the close links between the stories transmitted in families and family identity, its functioning and family resilience; the potential of family history to reveal alternative versions of the national past; and finally, genetic (DNA) genealogy, which has won the favour of tens of millions of adherents worldwide and which is able to redefine historically traditional social structures such as family or kinship. Investigative genetic genealogy is a fresh and burgeoning field that gives amateur family history new dimensions by including it into the investigative leads of law enforcement authorities. In the second line, the article provides examples of research done in the Czech Republic that allow for contextualizing the place and status of genealogy and genetic genealogy in the given country. The article contrasts the optimistic views of researchers about amateur family history, based on its position in countries such as the US, Australia, New Zealand and the UK, with the far less favourable situation in the Czech Republic.

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Introduction

Genealogical practice has been long underestimated by professional historians who have not shown any interest in how and why this amateur practice is being made. It has been perceived as the leisure hobby of a minor handful of elderly men or women who as retirees had enough time and resources to dig in the dusty archives and draw family trees and pedigree charts for their more or less involved families.

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What is in many countries called amateur family history has, however, changed rapidly over recent decades. The overall shift to memory as a new paradigm, through which the past is apprehended since the 1980s, has democratized family history and technological advances, allowing the digitalisation of the archives, have permitted online and web-based genealogical investigations that significantly increased the accessibility of archive collections. The surge of interest in family history has been corroborated by the worldwide popularity of the BBC series *Who Do You Think You Are?* in which celebrities searched for their ancestors with the help of professional genealogists.^[2] In the Czech Republic, the show called *The Secrets of the Lineage [Tajemství rodu]* was broadcast in 2013 and 2015 and as a consequence, some archives observed a significant shift in hits per day of their online collections.^[3] Rapidly evolving genetic or DNA genealogy has revolutionized the ways families and kinship may be constructed and investigative genetic genealogy (also called forensic genetic genealogy), combining traditional genealogy and genetic genealogy, has proven to be an effective tool to provide investigative leads in cases involving violent crime and unidentified human remains.

As a completely new practice, unimaginable up to five years ago, investigative genetic genealogy (IGG) moved the use of genetic genealogy from amateur and historical endeavours into criminal investigations (Greytak – Moore – L'Armentrout, 2019). Without the willingness of millions of amateur genealogists who voluntarily uploaded their DNA files into one of the genealogical databases, the investigative leads in criminal practice would not be possible. The boundaries between “amateur” and “professional” have been blurred. Recreational practice turned out to be an extremely useful tool for serious investigations conducted by law enforcement authorities.

In the first part, the article demonstrates the significance of family history and family memory for the identity making and well-being of individuals and entire families and outlines in which ways family memory and stories transmitted in family are connected to family identity, family functioning and family resilience. The second section stresses the critical role of family memory and history for the process of history-making. Amateur family history (called genealogy in the Czech Republic) and its position in the world and in the Czech Republic are considered and the announced “radical potential of family history” is questioned. Genetic genealogy, grown in a massive industry in the US over recent years, allows for a consideration of new notions of family and kinship based on genetic inheritance.

[2] Several studies have depicted the influence of the TV series *Who Do You Think You Are?* on the growth of genealogical communities in the given countries (Evans, 2015; Kramer, 2011).

[3] In the Czech Republic, the show called *Tajemství rodu [The Secret of the Lineage]* appeared in 2013 and 2015. In response to this series, for example, the online registers of the Provincial Archives in Opava recorded a traffic of 12,000 hits per day during February 2013.

In the last section, the study deals with the “nascent” field of investigative genetic genealogy (IGG) and its potential to release amateur family history from the position of a hobby.

Family History, Family Memory and Identity

Family history is perhaps the world’s most popular hobby and its popularity is rapidly growing (Evans, 2011).^[4] In the US up to 60 % of citizens are on a search for their roots and family history is the fastest growing hobby in England (Yakel – Torres, 2007). In the Czech Republic, a similar boom has been observed. According to the last survey provided by a non-profit organisation Post Bellum, 86 % of Czechs believe it is important to know their roots (but only 44 % of them really search for their ancestors).^[5] Approximately one in eight Czechs comes from a family where someone is working on their family tree (Vinopal, 2012). Additional research published in 2012 highlighted the interdependence of the interest in family history and other aspects of family functioning. In families where knowledge of ancestors goes further back in time, family memorable objects (also known as family jewels) are preserved and passed down from generation to generation. There is also someone who is involved in family history in these families (Vinopal, 2012). The simultaneous action of these factors leads to a strengthening of family identity, and, in turn, the intergenerational bonding of family members leads to a greater interest in family history.

The reasons for studying family history coincide with the ways identities are influenced by memories shared in families. Researchers around the psychologist Robyn Fivush have highlighted the critical role of the knowledge of the family past for an adolescent’s psychosocial well-being and their higher level of identity development (Fivush, Bohanek and Zaman, 2011). The term “intergenerational self”, meaning the self embedded in a larger familial history, has been advanced to express that children develop a sense of self that is connected to previous generations through the telling and sharing of family stories (such as those recollected by parents and grandparents) (Fivush – Bohanek – Duke, 2008; Bohanek – Marin – Fivush – Duke, 2006). If a child can anchor himself securely in his family history, it gives him a sense of security and background. This is conducive to the development of good self-confidence, an awareness of self-esteem and a sense of self-competence.

[4] In 2014, Time Magazine listed genealogy as the second most popular hobby worldwide, after gardening, and the second most searched category on the internet, <https://time.com/133811/how-genealogy-became-almost-as-popular-as-porn/> (2 June 2023).

[5] <https://www.postbellum.cz/2016/12/pruzkum-cesi-touzi-znat-svou-rodinnou-historii-vetsina-proto-vsak-nic-nedela/>, published 27. 12. 2016 (5 June 2023).

The need to study family history and genealogy is linked to the critical role of family in identity making and well-being and this should not omit historians writing biographies and scholars working with ego-documents such as diaries, correspondence or memories. The developmental psychologists Barbara Fiese and Michael Pratt have been dealing with family stories, their transmissions between generations, family rituals and their protective function in connection with family functioning (Fiese, 2006; Fiese et al, 2002; Pratt – Fiese, 2004). They advanced the idea that family stories carry family values and are interconnected with family relations and family legacy. The function of family stories about the past is not only to recollect family past events but also to transmit family values, family beliefs, information about how to live properly, how to look at the world and what to work towards. Family values lie at the basis of family identity.

As concerns Czech research combining family values, family identities and family functioning, two books on family memory have been published recently (Švaříčková Slabáková – Sobotková, 2018; Švaříčková Slabáková – Sobotková – Filipowicz – Zachová – Kohoutová – Petrů, 2018).^[6] Švaříčková Slabáková and Sobotková, a historian and a psychologist, analysed interviews provided separately by three generations of thirteen families in order to explore the phenomenon of family memory, its content, functions, meanings and methods of transmission (Švaříčková Slabáková – Sobotková, 2018). The researchers focused on family stories and their role in strengthening family relations, family values and family identity. Their analysis resulted in a conclusion about the close connection of family stories to many aspects of family functioning, and to personal and family resilience.

Resilience is a well-known feature in developmental psychology. Family resilience can be described as the capacity of the family, as a functional system to withstand and rebound from stressful life challenges – emerging strengthened and more resourceful (Walsh, 2016). Individual resilience has attracted the attention of researchers involved in studying the Holocaust and other violent events but family resilience studied through family stories about the past and their content has yet to be explored. The fact that the ancestors were able to manage in difficult times is an important value transmitted to the following generations (Švaříčková Slabáková, 2021). Family stories about the enduring times that were overcome reflect family resilience. Stories emerge as sources of the stability of the family and of its force. When shared, family stories function as a resilient factor. The younger participants can appreciate the ability of their ancestors to find a way out of adversity, be proud of their ancestors and gain inspiration for their own life.

[6] Other studies highlighted different aspects of family memory and family stories such as identity created through migration (Kreisslová – Nosková – Pavlásek, 2020).

Family History, National Memory and the Construction of the Past

An important motivation to study family history concerns the process of history-making and the ways individuals make use of the family past. A monumental European Youth and History survey of 32,000 15-year-old students from 27 countries (von Borries, 1998) stated that family history is the most attractive source of knowledge about the past for adolescents. Stories recounted by older generations were preferred by 12- to 18-year-old students in a survey organized in the Netherlands (Vijfvinkel, 2006, cited in Van Nieuwenhuysse, 2017). Family stories were even ranked over historical documentaries and films and over stories from teachers, that ranked third. Interestingly, school textbooks as an attractive source of information about the past ranked as low as ninth in this survey. Researchers in the US, Australia and Canada have also stated that individuals tend to derive their historical knowledge from family rather than from history in school education (for the US Rosenzweig and Thelen, 1998; for Australia Hamilton and Ashton, 2003; for Canada Conrad et al., 2013).

In the Czech Republic, a similar survey is lacking but the close links between genealogy and the newly established Czechoslovak Republic in the first half of the 20th century suggest a different relationship between genealogy and national history. From the 1920s onwards, genealogy began to be perceived in Czechoslovakia on both the Czech and Sudeten German sides as one of the tools for strengthening national consciousness, and in the Czech case its importance for the consolidation of Czechoslovak statehood was emphasised (Pánek, 2018). The results of genealogical research (the term “rodopis” was used at that time) had to serve the nation.

Under the Nazi occupation of the country (1939–1945) genealogy became a tool of racial politics. Everyone in the civil service, upon getting married, and in general wherever they met the authorities had to provide proof of “Aryan”, i.e. non-Jewish, descent, up to the third generation. Czech genealogy, in contrast, intensified its efforts to strengthen its significance for national history, particularly in the first years of the occupation. After the war in 1946, a survey was organized by the Czechoslovak Institute for Public Opinion Research on the relationship of Czechs to their national past (Pánek, 2018). Very interestingly, the results showed that the impact of Czech genealogy on activation of Czechs’ relationship to their own family history was minimal. Only 10% of respondents answered positively to the question as to whether they kept a family chronicle at home. A survey that would depict how Czechs at the present construct their national past and the role of family history in this process is, however, still lacking.

In 2011, Tanya Evans, an Australian public historian, argued for the “radical potential of family history” (Evans, 2011; Barnwell – King, 2020). This radical potential of amateur family history lies in the fact that it allows ordinary members of the public to contribute to national narratives and to offer alternative histories.

Family history is a way to bring marginalized people into history, such as women or indigenous people, give them importance and connect them to national history. In Australia, Tanya Evans asserts, family history contributed to fight the myth about the European origin of Australians, the myth remaining undisclosed by academic history, by revealing many families with Aboriginal ancestry. The topic previously neglected by academic history was brought to the fore thanks to family historians.

The interaction between family and national memory is a key theme here. Family histories and memories have the power to disrupt national narratives and provide an alternative version of the past (more examples are provided in Barclay – Koefoed, 2021). Family history and memory is constantly interacting with national history and can thus challenge and change national history from below. Indira Chowdhury has recently demonstrated how memories of displaced families in postcolonial India have been maintained and in which ways they sharply contrast with the history of nation building that newly independent India had adopted (Chowdhury, 2021). Other studies have pointed out how family memories implicitly critique the national identity bestowed by the state (Muti – Gürpınar, 2023).

Historians should be aware of the fact that family histories are only seemingly inherited from the past: what is recounted in the families is shaped by the present-day needs and the social, cultural, political and economical conditions of the present. Ashley Barnwell has observed a generational conflict in Australian family histories and connected it to the work of memory (Barnwell, 2017; Barnwell, 2020). A convict ancestor is not a source of secrecy and shame any longer but a reason for pride and intrigue. This shift, still unacceptable for older generations, derives from social changes and the effort to form a national identity separate from British dominance. Convicts are no longer remembered as savage criminals, but as the victims of oppressors.

Family memories both shaped and are shaped by national memory, as it was documented by the team around German social psychologist Harald Welzer in their ground-breaking book *Opa war kein Nazi* (Welzer – Moller – Tschuggnall, 2007).^[7] Focusing on family conversations in three-generational perspective, the authors found a profound discrepancy between the official and the private cultures of remembrance of the Holocaust and Nazism in Germany. One of the significant findings of the German researchers was the fact that although German society at the national level has been coming to terms with Nazism and the Holocaust for several decades and openly talking about the crimes committed, stories that tell of family members' resistance to Nazi crimes appear in family memory, as if

[7] Many scholars have used family settings to document the intergenerational transmission processes of difficult memories, associated particularly with World War II, Holocaust, Nazism and trauma.

the Nazis did not exist in their own families (hence the title of the book *Grandpa Was Not a Nazi*).

Research on family memory and family history inform us about how the population chooses to construct their narratives about the past and how these narratives are negotiated and legitimized in intersection with the official national narrative. The dynamic and constantly changing nature of family memories should not be disregarded by any oral historians and scholars working with witness interviews. Although historians are largely aware of the shortages and unreliability of individual memory, the way national narratives interact with family and individual narratives in a longer-term perspective is a complicated and complex question that needs careful elaboration.

Family History or Genealogy? Geographical Perspectives

Amateur family history has the strongest position in countries with a large-scale migration history such as Great Britain and in settler societies like Australia, New Zealand and the US. Amateur family history in Australia in particular has become the target of several studies and the Australian family history boom was declared to exceed that of Great Britain and US already several years ago.^[8] Australian and British public historians have produced the largest body of research on the motives of people who are seeking to connect with their ancestral past.^[9] Tanya Evans has been recently interested in the ways in which family construct, reconstruct and disseminate family memories and how they share them. She interviewed family historians in Australia, Great Britain and Canada and demonstrated many parallels between family history and oral history (Evans, 2020a; Evans, 2020b). She highlighted the potential of family stories to be harnessed to open up new modes of historiography and national memory. British sociologist Wendy Bottero described family history as a collectively ordered social practice that shapes the actions, motivations and rewards of those engaged within it (family history was not for her the outcome of personal choice or individual creativity). To acquire knowledge about the reasons for undertaking family research also motivated a recent Australian survey in which 1,406 participants took part (Shaw, 2019).

[8] A recent book, dedicated to family history in Australia and New Zealand, asserts the role and the exceptional position of this amateur practice in both countries (Allbrook – Scott-Brown, 2021).

[9] Very interestingly for researchers from Central Europe, the articles use the word family history without giving any explanation of which family history – amateur or a scholarly one – they mean. Family history is automatically connected with the amateur practice, which is the proof of the ways the work of genealogists has become a phenomenon in these countries. In the Czech and Central European context, the word “family history” elicits a sub-discipline of historical science, i.e. history focused on family, often connected with historical demography. Compare: (Clark, 2014; Clark, 2016), for United Kingdom: (Nash, 2003; Kramer, 2011).

In contrast to previous studies that emphasized the macro-motivations of family history research such as issues of nationhood and belonging, of postcolonial impact, of societal division and of religion. This survey brought to the fore the micro-motivations, i.e. the personal motivations of those who are “delving into the past” in Australia.

Tanya Evans has considered in which ways family history and academic history coincide (Evans, 2018). She observed the loosening of the sharp distinction between family and academic history in the trend of historians publishing work based around their own family histories. She noticed this “flurry” in Great Britain, US and Australia, and to a lesser extent in Canada.^[10] Alison Light’s *Common People: The History of an English Family* published in 2014 and highly acclaimed in the media, can serve as an example. In the book, Tanya Evans argues, the author succeeded in combining the micro-narrative of her family ancestors’ life with a macro-narrative of British history in the 19th century. Family history is an important part of the national cultural and historical heritage in New Zealand and this can be documented by the Family History collection held in the National Library in Wellington. As Anna Green has mentioned, the open shelves of the National Library display over a thousand self-published family histories and more can be found in other separate collections or secure library location.^[11] In this case, family history is considered an important contribution to national history. The same, however, cannot be said for many other countries.

The optimistic view of Tanya Evans about the dissolution of boundaries between amateur family and academic history cannot be shared in the context of the Central European countries. In the Czech Republic, curiosity about and fascination with the presumed ancestral country of origin is mitigated by the fact that the majority of the citizens’ ancestors were born in the same country, very often in the same region of this country. The boundaries between amateur family history (called exclusively genealogy) and academic history have not yet been challenged. The terminology used emphasizes the amateur origin of the work of genealogists who produce “family chronicles”, in contrast to historians who do academic history and produce “history”. Democratization of history has rarely taken place here.

[10] She provides the book of Alison Light as an example (Light, 2014). Alison Light used her own family history to “make the micro, macro” and to show through the life of her ancestors a wider history of England’s 19th century. The book was shortlisted for the 2014 Samuel Johnson Prize in Non-Fiction. It was a Book of the Year in the Times, Telegraph, Scottish Herald, Spectator, History Today, and the Financial Times, <https://alisonlight.org/common-people/> (15 May 2023).

[11] Family histories were compiled by a family member, most of them have been published since 1990 (Green, 2021).

In the Anglo-American world, a number of courses are organised to instruct the public how to write family history. The focus on how to find relevant demographic data in the archives and draw a family tree has been made in the Czech Republic. Very interestingly, the only course on how to write a “family chronicle” is offered not by a history department, but as “Creative Writing” by the Department of Czech Literature at Charles University in Prague.^[12] Family history, taught at US and Australian universities and resulting in certificates, modules and diplomas is unknown at Czech universities. This is in all probability due to the very weak or almost non-existent position of public history in this country. The only course in public history is opened as a PhD. Program at the Pedagogical Faculty of Charles University.^[13] The program reveals, however, that family history is not included, public history is understood instead as the intersection of history and cultural and collective memory. The International Federation of Public History has announced an institutional membership of the University of Wrocław, Poland (while no membership of the Czech Republic is known). A two-year MA program is listed, consisting of “oral history, exhibitions, historical installations, locating and developing”.^[14] Family history is not featured in the program either.

Genetic (DNA) Genealogy

A new realm opened for genealogists in 2009 when a major USA public genealogical database launched a microarray-based relative matching test (called at that time Relative Finder, now known as DNA Relatives). The company 23andMe was followed shortly by other important DNA testing companies such as Ancestry.com (USA), Family Tree (USA) and MyHeritage (Israel).^[15] Genealogists received a powerful tool to expand their family trees and find long-distance ancestors and missing relatives by comparing their DNA sample with other DNA profiles already uploaded in the database and receiving thus information about the amount of genetic material shared. The family trees could increase in a manner unexpected before. Genetic genealogy has achieved since massive popularity: over 41 million people have uploaded their genetic profile into the public genetic genealogical

[12] Tvůrčí psaní: Jak se píše rodová kronika, FF UK, Ústav české literatury a komparatistiky, <https://www.ff.cuni.cz/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Tv%C5%AFr%C4%8D%C3%AD-psan%C3%AD-Jak-se-p%C3%AD%C5%A1e-rodov%C3%A1-kronika.pdf> (10 June 2023).

[13] Program Historie ve veřejném prostoru, PdF UK, <https://pedf.cuni.cz/PEDF-2066.html> (10 June 2023).

[14] International Federation for Public History, <https://ifph.hypotheses.org/ifph-institutional-members> (10 June 2023).

[15] Other major public genealogical database made genetical testing accessible as follows: Family Tree allowed DNA testing in 2010, Ancestry.com in 2012 for US and 2015–2016 for other 33 countries and MyHeritage in 2016 (Kling – Phillips – Kennett – Tillmar, 2021).

databases^[16] and the growth is exponential: AncestryDNA's customer DNA database increased from around 3 million users in 2016 to over 15 million in 2019 (Stallard – Groot, 2020) and in 2022, the number of users in the database was estimated at 21 million (Glynn, 2022).

Genealogists, accustomed to working with written sources and historical material, had to face new challenges: they had to acquire basic skills in genetics, including the understanding of the principles of genetic inheritance and working with statistical tools and charts. Scholars, on the other hand, became interested in how this new practice changed amateur family history and what was the impact of the massive DNA testing on the traditional notions of family and kinship. Researchers have pointed to the fact that the definition of family has changed because “each discovery of a new family member or branch of the family, whether living or dead, close or distant, reconfigures to some extent the definition of who is or isn't family and the way in which the researcher imagines their relationship to other, past or present, family members” (Stallard – Groot, 2021). It has been even argued for a new “genetic kinship”, in the form of Y-chromosome genetic brotherhood, Mitochondrial DNA clan membership and global genetic kinship (Nash, 2004). Several studies have, however, revealed the potentially disruptive effect of DNA testing and emphasized the need to explore the impact of DNA test results on biological and family identities (Guerrini, 2022; Theunissen, 2022). DNA databases can return unexpected findings, however, such as the father they thought was their biological father is not, or they have siblings they had no idea about.^[17]

The British scholar Jerome de Groot has recently pondered on the impact of genetics on the practice of history (Groot, 2023). The discovery of King Richard III's remains under the car park in 2012 and the revelation of Thomas Jefferson's relationship with his slave, Sally Hemings, as probably the publicly most known discoveries connected with DNA, have served for him as proof of the power of DNA evidence to challenge and reverse established historical narratives. Genetic genealogy may also contradict oral family traditions (important for every family historian) as in the case of the descendants of President Thomas Jefferson who strongly believed they were the biological heirs of the President on the basis of their family stories that were transmitted from generation to generation.^[18] DNA genealogy may question traditional relationship-based social organizations with

[16] The total is counted for just the top four public databases: AncestryDNA, 23andMe, MyHeritageDNA and FamilyTreeDNA (Glynn, 2022).

[17] Dani Shapori reported how she, at the age of 54, learned that her father was not her biological father. It took her only 36 hours to find the man who was her biological father after this discovery (Shapiro, 2019). See also (Kubant, 2022).

[18] The results of a DNA study showed that Thomas Jefferson was the father of the youngest child of the slave Sally Hemings, but not of her eldest son, Thomas Woodson, who was the most

the principles of genetic inheritance and this involves important moral and ethical issues that still have to be solved. It may harm, harass or embarrass individuals and raises issues linked to ethnic and racial identity (Scodari, 2017).

It is noteworthy that the success of DNA testing companies and the growth of the DNA genealogy “massive industry” is the largest in countries with well-established genealogical traditions and the need to search for the ancestors’ country of origin, such as the United States, Canada, Australia or Israel (Abel – Frieman, 2023). If we were to compare database users by country of origin, the US would come in first well ahead of the others (65 %) (Kling, 2020). The UK comes second in terms of the country of origin of users (9 %), followed by Canada (6 %), Australia (4 %) and France (2%). Countries such as Germany, Sweden, Ireland, New Zealand and the Netherlands each account for 1 % of all users (Scodari, 2017).

In the Czech Republic, a recent study dated 2018 suggested that only a minority of those practising genealogy are interested in genetic genealogy.^[19] The reasons advanced were a language barrier (not all testing companies have their websites in local languages including Czech), the price of tests and the lesser popularity of genealogy in general in comparison with the US. The website of the newly founded Association for Genetic Genealogy states that “a few tens of thousands” of Czechs have been tested by one of four major DNA testing companies.^[20] The Czech Facebook Group Genetic Genealogy, created in 2018, which claims on its profile to be the largest genetic genealogy community, has 5.5 thousand members (this number represents 0.055 % of the population in the Czech Republic). Another Czech Facebook Group Genealogy CZ + SK, founded in 2017, is a private group of about 11.1 thousand members but does not provide any section of Genetic Genealogy.

In the Czech Republic, the project Genetics and Surnames [Genetika a příjmení] started in 2007 and is still ongoing.^[21] Its aim is to find out if the bearers of the same surname are relatives. So far about 4,000 people have been tested.^[22] Genetic genealogy has been used when exploring endemic neurodegenerative

strongly believed as being so. The Woodson descendants were shocked by the study’s finding, objected to the results and questioned their authenticity (Williams, 2005).

[19] Lucie Pokorná Ročňáková studied two discussion groups on Genealogy.Taby.cz and Okoun.cz. While genealogy.taby.cz has 7,214 participants and 3,389 posts, its section Genetic Genealogy, created in 2017, has only 183 posts. The second online genealogical community on okoun.cz has 38,899 posts but the section Genetic Genealogy, created in 2016, has only 457 posts and the section Popular Genomics, created in 2015, has 223 posts (Pokorná Ročňáková, 2018).

[20] The Association was founded in the spring of 2023. Czechs prefer using the FamilyTreeDNA database and GEDmatch, <https://gengen.cz/spolecnost-pro-gg/o-spolku> (10 June 2023).

[21] Genetika a příjmení, <https://gap.genebaze.cz/> (10 June 2023).

[22] Information provided by Vlastimil Stenzl, one of the founders of the project. Interviewed by the author of the article on 14 June 2023.

parkinsonism in ten villages in a small remote southeastern Moravian region of the Czech Republic (Bartoníková, 2018). Although no single “founder” of parkinsonism has been found in the given genealogical pedigrees, genealogy and genetics represent a fruitful terrain for further investigation.

Investigative Genetic Genealogy

A true breakthrough for public genetic genealogy and law enforcement authorities alike took place on 24 April 2018 when the US police arrested Joseph James DeAngelo, a retired policeman, known as the “Golden State Killer” (García, 2021). This was one of the so-called “cold cases”, a long unsolved case. Between 1976 and 1986, the GSK committed 13 murders in California, more than 50 rapes and more than 100 robberies (Katsanis, 2020; Phillips, 2018). The police investigated thousands of suspects but no one was convicted. In late 2017, Detective Paul Holes decided to use not a common technical tool, which means a STR genetic database created for the purpose of criminal investigation, but a public one designed for recreational purposes.^[23] He uploaded the SNP data into GEDmatch, a free public database.^[24] The data revealed potential distant kin, great-great-great grandparents. The perpetrator could be any of their descendants, which in this case was a group of about a thousand people. Traditional genealogical research followed. A team of genealogists, led by Barbara Rae-Venter, limited the data down to two men (Katsanis, 2020). A subsequent DNA STR testing convicted the culprit. A case that had not been solved in 44 years was solved in less than five months by a team of six people using this new method.

Since 2018, the nascent and burgeoning field of investigative genetic genealogy has become a favourite approach of law enforcement authorities in resolving cold cases and identifying cadaveric remains. In the USA, over 400 (Rogalla-Ładniak, 2022) or even 500 cases (Glynn, 2022)^[25] have been solved with the help of IGG and the number is constantly growing. Serious ethical and legal questions have been, however, raised. Where is the border between a private hobby and legal prosecution? Do state authorities have the right to benefit from databases that were not intended for prosecution? The problem also lies in the fact that if an individual makes his genetic profile available for searching within the database, he/she indirectly makes a decision for his/her relatives, who share part of his/her

[23] Forensic DNA Analysis has traditionally worked with STR (Short Tandem Repeats) DNA markers while investigative genetic genealogy uses SNP (Single Nucleotide Polymorphisms) as DNA markers (Glynn, 2022).

[24] GEDmatch was created in 2010 to store the results obtained from other testing DNA companies.

[25] The author adds that there is no exact data available as there is currently no required reporting of its use.

DNA, and also for his/her future offspring.^[26] Without diminishing the potential of IGG (FGG) for crime solving, it should be noted that this technology can involve errors and human bias, innocent people can be labeled criminals (Dror – Hampikian, 2011), privacy rights may be violated and racial disparity issues can emerge (Machado – Silva, 2022).

Through introducing IGG, the work of leisure-time genealogists has been given a new dimension that transcends the boundaries of private recreational research. What used to be a hobby is, in the case of the IGG, an essential part of the investigation, even the most important part. The massive family trees of relatives must be built and compared to narrow the data and find the searched person. The traditional craft of genealogists is needed here and knowledge of the usage of demographic information such as birth, marriage, death and census lists, etc.

Not all DNA databases permit their use by law enforcement authorities. Unlike 23andMe, Ancestry.com and MyHeritage, FamilyTreeDNA and GEDmatch are open to investigative leads. The policies have been, however, changed since the first successful cases have been solved with the help of these databases. The FamilyTreeDNA has as a default option permission for searches for violent crime suspects and the identification of cadavers, but in Europe, the company has an opt out as the default option here. The reason is the different legal policy in Europe concerning personal data. In contrast to the US, the European Union has accepted the GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation) policy which hinders the use of IGG in Europe (García, 2021). In Germany, for instance, this type of forensic searching is forbidden and IGG is impossible (Samuel – Prainsack, 2021).

Although the first National DNA Database was launched in Europe in the United Kingdom in 1995, it is Sweden where an IGG search was applied as the first country in Europe in 2020 (Rogalla-Ładniak, 2022). The case concerned the double murder of an eight-year-old boy and a 56-year-old woman who were found stabbed to death in October 2004 in Linköping (Tillmar – Fagerholm – Staaf – Sjölund – Ansell, 2021). Using the IGG, the police was able to solve the case after fifteen years of unsuccessful investigation. Consequently, the Swedish Police decided to implement IGG into its practice. The success of this case confirmed that the international databases in which the majority of US citizens have uploaded their genetic profiles, may also be used to solve the cases in Europe (US citizens' ancestors who come from Europe).

Apart from Sweden, however, there has not been any other IGG investigative lead reported in Europe. In the UK, a study was held to test the usefulness of genetic genealogy in the UK (Thomson et al., 2020). The DNA profile of ten

[26] It has been shown, that using genealogical triangulation, for over 50% of targets, their DNA can be identified using genetic genealogy databases record even when the database contains as little as 1% of the population (Ellenbogen – Narayanan, 2019; cited in Rogalla-Ładniak, 2022).

volunteers was uploaded anonymously to the GEDmatch genealogy website and afterwards, a team of experienced genealogists was in charge of identifying the donors of the data sets. They worked with birth, marriage, death and census records, social media, they constructed family trees and finally, four of ten donors were identified. This study endorsed the potential of using the international databases outside the US despite the prevalent use of the databases by US citizens. Australia is another country where operationalising forensic genetic genealogy is considered for potential future use (Scudder – Daniel – Raymond – Sears, 2020).

In the Czech Republic, researchers have tackled IGG in a recent overview article (Korabečná – Šimková – Stenzl, 2021). A new project entitled Creation of an Information Base for Future Implementation of Methods of Forensic Genetic Genealogy and Forensic Genomics into Criminalistic Practice funded by the Ministry of Interior has been running in the years 2023–2025. The project involves an interdisciplinary team of researchers and criminalists, including professional historians specialized in genealogy whose aim is to prepare conditions for the future involvement of IGG into police practice.

The new burgeoning field of IGG has changed the role of genealogists. New skills and special education are required that concern the field of genetics, biochemist and criminalistic practice. Expertise in IGG requires interdisciplinary perspectives but must build on strong genealogical knowledge. There is as yet no standard as to what is required to meet if someone is to become a IGG specialist. As has already been stated, a promising Board of Certification for Investigative Genetic Genealogy has been announced (Rogalla-Ładniak, 2022). Three programs and trainings are offered currently in the US. The Investigative Genetic Genealogy Center at Ramapo College New Jersey states on its website that it is the first of its kind in the world.^[27] The Center offers an IGG Certificate Program and starting in the Spring of 2023 a 15-week remotely delivered program to participants from the US and the world. The program emphasizes that the bulk of IGG relies on traditional genealogy in combining public records to fill out the family tree. A ten-month (33 weeks) certificate graduate program is opened at the University of New Haven and it is announced as the first program of its kind in the world.^[28] United Data Connect, a private company based in Denver, provides a one-week training course on site (Denver or Largo) entitled Fundamentals of Investigative Genetic Genealogy.^[29] The program is designed

[27] <https://www.ramapo.edu/igg/> (15 June 2023).

[28] <https://www.newhaven.edu/lee-college/graduate-programs/certificates/forensic-genetic-genealogy/index.php> (15 June 2023).

[29] <https://www.uniteddataconnect.com/investigative-genetic-genealogy-training> (15 June 2023).

for Medical Examiners, Coroners, Crime Analysts, Detectives, Investigators, in-house genealogists and DNA Analysts.

Conclusion

Family memory, family history and genealogy are fields of research that have only recently gained the attention of professional historians. Their interest in these topics corresponds to the need to obtain a more comprehensive knowledge of the past and understand the complexity of historical phenomena. For several decades now, historians have turned their attention to “history from below”, whether this involves women, workers, indigenous people or other marginalized groups. This new perspective has reshaped our view of the past. Current families, their histories and memories deserve no less attention given the enormous popularity of this public history activity.

The aim of the article was to emphasize the reasons behind this upsurge in interest and why these fields should not be ignored in the future. The study points to the close connection between family history and the study of memory and identities, which is also related to the phenomenon of marginalization of memory, the “erased” parts of which, at the national level, are often accessible through family memory and family histories. The article addresses the area where professional (academic) history, on the one hand, and public (family) history, on the other, can meet and views this overlap as one of the signs of the democratization of history.

New technological advances allow the genetic industry to boom and provide investigative leads unimaginable five years ago. The article highlighted the critical role of amateur family history in providing necessary data for law enforcement authorities in the case of IGG and the need for genealogists and family historians to learn new skills and expertise when working with genetic genealogy. Family historians have often been dismissed by academic historians and their findings seem to be irrelevant to historical science. This might have changed, given the role of family history and family memory, for identity building, for the construction of the national past and with regard to new genetic discoveries.

The article pondered about family history as a global phenomena and drew attention to the regional and historical differences, in particular to the Czech context, that have to be taken into account when exploring this fascinating topic.

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