

Introduction samples
held in the database.
having convicted



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Introduction

The late 20th century has been characterized by unprecedented changes which have been made possible by novel technological advancements witnessed in this period. However, these great advancements have also made it possible for crime to become more prevalent and sophisticated as criminals utilize technology to engage in their mischief.

Crime fighters have therefore had to make use of advances in all fields to combat criminals. One tool which is proving to be of great use in crime fighting is DNA analysis. The power of DNA analysis to make significant contributions to the criminal investigation task is becoming more apparent and with this, it can be plausibly deduced that DNA analysis will play an even bigger role in crime fighting in the future. However for DNA profiling to be used successfully, there has to be a DNA database where tissue samples, genetic information and personal data is stored indefinitely. This brings about the real fear that this information may be misused therefore leading to

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an infringement on the rights afforded to the individual. This paper shall research on DNA analysis in a bid to show that this technology is primarily a very important crime-fighting tool and that while fears of invasion of privacy are real, they pale in comparison to the great benefits to be reaped from exploiting DNA analysis.

DNA Analysis: the Ultimate Crime Fighter

DNA databases function by first of all storing DNA information in computerized system. Genetic material lifted from a crime scene is then matched against the profiles which exist in the databank therefore producing a “ cold hit” (Polonsky 1332).

Unidentified samples are also stored for future use. In essence, DNA databanking is the computerized storage of private information for an indefinite period of time. The move by most countries to utilize DNA databases has been undoubtedly encouraged by the success of Britain’s systems of biologically tracking offenders which has given Britain law enforcers an edge over criminals when fighting crime (Polonsky 1335). At onset of DNA analysis, DNA profiling was solely used to confirm the identity of an individual who was already been held as a suspect on a crime.

However, the population and eventual use of offender DNA databases has revolutionalized crime solving. With the help of these databases, very small amounts of DNA recovered from a crime scene can be used to link otherwise faceless suspects to a crime by cross referencing the crime scene sample to the samples held in the database. Having convicted offenders in the DNA database is necessary to maximize the crime-solving potential of DNA and

for this reason, the government should invest more on increasing the scope
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of DNA databases. A contentious issue with regard to DNA analysis has been the practice of using voluntary DNA samples to link the donor to some unsolved crime.

This has been seen by opponents of DNA analysis as an abuse of the confidentiality afforded to the volunteer. While the confidentiality of an individual should be respected, the confidentiality can be disregarded if a person perpetrates a crime (Staley 6). Crime fighters propose that it would be absurd to avoid arresting a criminal since the DNA sample that links him/her to the crime was obtained without his consent. In crime fighting, the credibility of evidence given by an eyewitness may be diminished with time as a result of natural factors such as fading memories. This means that when solving old cases, the reliance of eye witnesses' accounts may be challenged. Ashcroft, Danies and Hart declare that DNA evidence helps overcome such limitations since DNA analysis remains reliable decades after the crime was committed (3).

DNA analysis is therefore the most relevant tool in dealing with crimes that were committed in the far past. Arguably the most important role played by criminal justice system is deterrence. This is because the most desirable function of punishments should be to deter would be wrong doers thus leading to a harmonic society. In an ideal environment, punishments should never have to be executed but their mere presence should cause all to abide to the rules and regulations in place therefore peacefully coexist. DNA analysis can be a great deterrence tool if DNA testing is made universal.

Proponents of mandatory DNA testing asset that it would lead to great deterrence from crime for all members of the community since the risk of <https://assignbuster.com/introduction-samples-held-in-the-database-having-convicted/>

getting caught by the police would be greatly increased as a result of the universal DNA databanks (Rosen 44).

DNA: An Infringement on Privacy

There exist fears that DNA analysis could constitute an invasion of privacy. These are not baseless fears for as Rosen confirms, the danger with DNA databases is that they provide an “ inescapable means of identification, categorization and profiling” (39).

What this means is that DNA provides genetic information unique to a person that has the potential of revealing to a third party “ a person’s predisposition to illnesses or behaviours without the person’s knowledge” (Rosen 39). With this in mind, it is evident that the fears that the people who are opposed to DNA databases are very well founded Arguably one of the most controversial issues as with regard to the science of DNA analysis is the DNA “ dragnet” tactic which involves police officers obtaining DNA samples from a specific group of people in an attempt to solve a crime. Dragnets are based on a reasonable suspicion that each member of the sample group might indeed be involved in the crime in question. Polonsky documents that this so call “ voluntary” taking of DNA samples causes great mistrust from the selected group who feel pressured by the police to give their samples so as to exonerate themselves from the crime in question (1332). This negates the “ voluntary” basis on which the samples are taken and is seen by many as an infringement of the individuals civil rights. Our society is built on the foundation of democracy and equal and fair treatment of all. As such, acts such as discrimination and racial profiling are seen as undesirable. However,

some utilization of DNA analysis leads to this ills as well as invading the privacy of a person and his near relations.

This method of utilizing DNA to assist in crime fighting is called familial DNA searches. Dempsey and Forst highlight that Familial searches are based on the assumption that close relatives of criminals are more likely than others to break the law (501). This categorization of relatives to a criminal lead to the invasion of their privacy for unsubstantiated reasons.

Discussion

Most of the fears that arise from DNA analysis are with regard to the privacy protection of the databanks which house the DNA. While in some cases these fears are justified, a leading figure in DNA fingerprinting in the USA declares that DNA databases are more highly regulated and protected than any other kind of databanks in the world (Rosen 42). While there is always the risk that unscrupulous people might retrieve a person's DNA report and use it for malicious purposes, the probability of this happening are marginal and as such should not be used to shoot down this very effective method of fighting crime.

Another issue raised by opponents of DNA analysis is that it results in the taking of DNA from innocent people. This is an inevitable reality in any investigative process for as Dempsey and Forst asset, ' investigations always yield talking to and suspecting people who turn out not to be guilty" (501). All police investigation efforts lead to the investigation of many suspects and persons of interest and it is unavoidable that most of these suspects will be innocent.

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Conclusion

The survival of any civilization hinges on the establishment of laws and codes of conduct and the subsequent obeying of the same by the society's members.

Crime therefore threatens our civilization since it results in a disregard for this law and codes of conduct. It is therefore a matter of uttermost importance to ensure that crime is curbed through all available means. This paper set out to demonstrate that DNA analysis offers a versatile tool for fighting crime and therefore ensuring the success of our civilization. As has been demonstrated in this paper, DNA can both implicate and eliminate a suspect from a crime. This makes DNA analysis a powerful tool that should be exploited even further so as to ensure that the justice system works effectively for the good of the entire society.

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