



I'm the black sheep
of the family



& proud of it!

Uncovering Black Sheep Ancestors

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Background Facts to Consider

- 1. Historical terminology**
- 2. Skeletons**
- 3. Applicable worldwide**
- 4. Applicable to all ethnic groups**
- 5. Large families**
- 6. Likelihood increases based on family size and historical context**

Recognizing Potential Black Sheep Ancestors

- 1. Ignored in written or verbal accounts**
- 2. Brief terse comments**
- 3. Incidents involving family or community**
- 4. Misinformation**
- 5. Desertion**
- 6. Banished or disinherited**

Research Scenarios

- 1. Family stories about an unpopular ancestor**
- 2. Unexplained disappearance from the family**
- 3. Listed in prison on a census**
- 4. Possible or suspected divorce**
- 5. Possible criminal activity**

Usual Family Cover-Up Strategies

- 1. Denial**
- 2. Vilification**
- 3. Social norms/mores**
- 4. Family cover-up**
- 5. Transferral of guilt and shaming**
- 6. Conveniently deceased**

Hidden or Ostracized Ancestors – The Most Common Scenarios

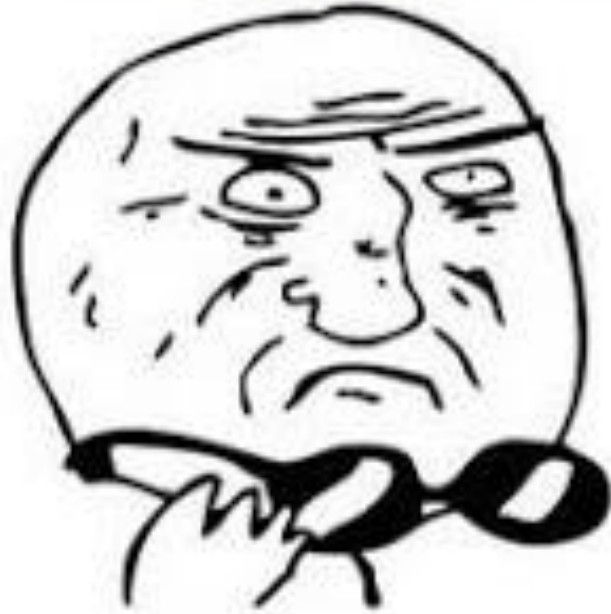
- 1. Criminal lifestyle and/or conviction**
- 2. Refusal to follow a family directive or customs**
- 3. Unplanned/unwanted pregnancy, miscarriage, mental or physical illness**
- 4. Wealth and Success**
- 5. Extramarital affair**
- 6. Homosexuality**

Hidden or Ostracized Ancestors – The Most Common Scenarios

- 7. Dishonorable military service or patriotism**
- 8. Mental or medical disability**
- 9. Marriage**
- 10. Occupation**
- 11. Failure to achieve family goals/expectations**

**Strategies for Dealing With Family Members
Who Refuse to Discuss the Ancestors
(Stonewallers)**

“No comment”



is a comment

Strategies for Dealing With Family Members Who Refuse to Discuss the Ancestors (Stone Wallers)

- 1. Share information**
- 2. “Verifying” information**
- 3. Appeal to their ego**
- 4. Talk, talk, talk!!! (Windbag Syndrome)**
- 5. Two sides to every story**

Strategies for Talking/Interviewing Ostracized or Black Sheep Ancestors

- 1. Be polite**
- 2. Understand their feelings**
- 3. Set the record straight in their own words**
- 4. They might be telling the truth**
- 5. Be persistent and diplomatic**
- 6. Black Sheep study guide supplemental guides on oral history research**

Interviewing Strategies When Dealing With Touchy and/or Embarrassing Subjects

- 1. Skeletons everywhere**
- 2. Human nature**
- 3. Social and societal norms have changed**
- 4. Historical context**
- 5. Assume issues exist**
- 6. Timing**
- 7. “Soft” questions.**
- 8. Gradually move on to more subjective topics**

Interviewing Strategies When Dealing With Touchy and/or Embarrassing Subjects

- 9. Handling the touchy subject**
- 10. Toss and wait**
- 11. Gentle/persistent**
- 12. Play Perry Mason, Barnaby Jones, or
Matlock**
- 13. Handling the squirm-factor**
- 14. Try #12 again in a subtle manner**

Interview Strategies – Final Reminders

- 1. Positive Spin and Empathy**
- 2. Don't interrupt**
- 3. Open mind**
- 4. Reassurance**
- 5. Ego and fairness**

Questions



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