

# Anonymous sperm and egg donor privacy vs. the child's right to know essay sample



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“ About 40, 000 children are born each year through donor eggs and sperm, according to rough industry estimates” (Harmon, New York Times, 2006).

With a number as large as that, it is no wonder that there are so many arguments over the donor’s anonymity. One day all these children will discover that they are different from the other people they know. For naturally conceived children the people who they call “ Mom” and “ Dad” are the same two people that gave them life. For artificially inseminated children one of the people that they call “ Mom” and “ Dad” isn’t their actual parent. In the case of egg donated children, their mother did indeed give birth to them, but the egg that gave them life was not hers.

Their life-giving egg was from a woman whose identity will most likely remain a mystery for the child’s entire life. In the case of sperm donated children, their “ Dad” is the man who raised them. Their actual father is a man, whose identity is secret, who sold his sperm to a sperm bank. These donors will remain in the shadows unless something or somebody changes the way our government views donor privacy. “...behind the many successful outcomes there is a tissue of unresolved questions about the legal rights and obligations of the parties involved, from the clinics to donors to parents to the children themselves...” (Boston Globe, pg. C8, 2009) Artificially inseminated children, whether they are born through donated egg or sperm, and their families have the right to know who the mystery donor parent really is.

Knowing that half of one’s biological history is purposefully being withheld can be a hard burden for anyone to bear. “ Children born under this system will have a natural curiosity about their biological roots” (Boston Globe, pg.

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C8, 2009). The lack of information on donors can lead to various negative consequences. An example would be is donor conceived child contracted a hereditary genetic disease from the donor parent, or if there is a life or death situation. That is the only way the government will willingly give up the donor identity to the family. “ The only exception should be for life itself. In rare instances, otherwise fatal diseases can be cured by transplants from biological relatives” (Boston Globe, pg. C8, 2009). It should not have to come to that for the child to at least know the name of the person that helped give them life. “ Troubled by the health history and backgrounds of some anonymous egg and sperm donors, leaders in the fertility industry have said in recent weeks that they would create a national registry to track donors and birth outcomes...a girl from Rancho Mirage, conceived with the help of an anonymous egg donor, was born with Tay-Sachs.

She is nearly 2, and the neurological disease probably will kill her before she turns 5. The gay couple that chose the donor did not know that she was a carrier of the Tay-Sachs mutation... After learning about the child with Tay-Sachs, neither the egg donor nor the agency that hired her attempted to contact the other families and agencies that used the donor’s eggs... No system exists to alert couples to such problems or to prevent donors from continuing to provide eggs or sperm after they have been found to have genetic disorders or other problems... The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, does not keep track of individual donors’ histories, diseases, or other problems, nor donors it link names to outcomes” (Heisel, Los Angeles Times pg B-1, 2008). Since the names and genetic information of donors are withheld there is no way for any potential parent interested in a donated

egg, or sperm, to know if their child will be safe from contracting some type of rare disease from the donor. "... not all genetic disorders can be screened for, and there have been case reports in the medical literature of clusters of patients with rare blood disorders and kidney abnormalities that were traced back to a handful of prodigious donors" (Siegal, Los Angeles Times pg. E1, 2011).

But by putting in a tracking system with names and detailed information, which would include possible genetic mutations and diseases, families can trace a donor that they are interested in. Knowing who the donor is and their genetic background can make the difference between having a healthy child that will be able to live a full life and having a child that will most likely die before the age of five. However, there are those who are very adamant about the donor remaining anonymous. " Nearly 20 years ago, in England, all donors were promised anonymity... Beginning Friday, April 1, 2005, sperm and egg donors in Britain will no longer have the shield of anonymity...Men who oppose law fear that they might get a knock on the door from offspring they did not know existed" (Gardner, Christian Science Monitor, 2005). " But those regulations have resulted in a steep decline in donors, which has made sperm banks and fertility clinics here more determined to oppose mandatory identity disclosure. ' If that was required, it would devastate the industry,' said William W. Jaeger, vice president of the Fairfax Genetics & I. V. F. Institute in Virginia, one of the nation's largest fertility clinics, which routinely turns down offspring who ask if their donor might be open to contact.

' The agreement we have is that the donor is forever anonymous'" (Harmon, New York Times, 2006). Some men may fear that their entire way of life will <https://assignbuster.com/anonymous-sperm-and-egg-donor-privacy-vs-the-childs-right-to-know-essay-sample/>

be altered by a random stranger showing up at their door claiming to be their child. In the US, where anonymity is still only an option, Sean Tipton, spokesman for the ethics committee of the American Society for Reproductive Medicine, emphasizes the importance of maintaining existing contracts. ““ The worst- case scenario would be forcing the identification of someone who donated saying they wanted to be anonymous,’ he says ‘ We are very concerned that agreements in effect stay in effect, unless all the parties concerned agree to the change.’” (Gardner, Christian Science Monitor, 2005). Once the initial donation is complete, the donors move on with their lives and sometimes start their own families. Those families may not ever be aware of their previous donation. “ Dr. Joseph Feldschuh, president of Idant, a New York sperm bank that does not offer identity release, says he sees the benefit in some cases – such as children being raised by single parents who want to find their biological fathers.

But for couples and donors who have gone on to have families, it could be disruptive” (Wronge, Mercury News pg. 1A+, 2002). So if a person shows up claiming to be their long lost child, then that could highly disrupt both the child’s family life and the donor’s life. The donor asked to be anonymous for a reason, and that reason should be respected. After they gave their egg or sperm the donor gave up all rights and connections to whatever children were produced through their donation. “ Some fertility experts say they advocate anonymity to protect both donors and customers from being caught up in the murky issues of custody and liability” (Harmon, New York Times, 2006). Donors do not want to be held financially liable or be forced into taking custody of a child they never knew existed. “ Sperm banks fear

potential donors will get cold feet if they think they may be held financially or legally responsible for the children they helped produce” (Siegal, Los Angeles Times pg. E1, 2011). “ But most states have laws protecting donors. In cases at the Sperm Bank of California, a contract signed by the mother and donor relinquishes any claims” (Wrong, Mercury News pg. 1A+, 2002). So if a contract is involved then the donor should have no fear of having any responsibility over the child.

So the excuse of child support, or any other type of financial support, is completely invalid when it comes to the child wanting to meet the donor at least once. “...donors need to understand that ‘ anonymity cannot be enforced,’ Caplan adds. ‘ When children, for emotional or health reasons, want to find their ‘ biological’ parents, records are unsealed and they do.’ Kids trump parents, Caplan concludes, and their need to know is more important” (Siegal, Los Angeles Times pg. E1, 2011). An example of an emotional need for the child to know their biological parent is shown in the “...proactive study by the Commission on Parenthood’s Future, titled ‘ My Daddy’s Name is Donor,’” it “ surveyed 485 donor offspring and concluded they were more troubled and depression-prone than other young adults in comparison groups, and recommended an end to anonymous sperm donation” (Crary, Newsday, 2010). If the child is never told about how they were born then that could lead to serious emotional problems. “...the effect on families when children discover the truth accidentally, as a result of a medical test, or when a parent dies, could be severe... the secrecy typical of the past is disappearing” (Laurance, The Independent pg. 6, 2012)

“ Since 2008, Lindsey Greenwait, 25, has been chronicling her quest on a blog, ‘ Confessions of a Cryokid.’ One of the most wrenching entries came Thanksgiving 2009, when she addressed the oft-repeated refrain that donor-conceived children ought to be grateful they were born. ‘ If I had to choose between never being conceived with half my identity and half of my kinship deliberately denied from me for eternity – or never being born – I’d choose never being born,’ she wrote. ‘ We were created to carry a loss. A loss that no human being should have to endure.’” (Crary, Newsday, 2010). Donor anonymity is both a blessing and a curse. On one side, the side that is alright with the donor remaining anonymous, the child will be eternally grateful to the mystery donor that gave them life. But on the other side, the side that yearns to know the true identity of the donor, the child will never give up the hope that one day they will be able to meet their other parent. The urge to know both of one’s birth parents is something that will never go away, no matter what anyone says. Since donor children have no idea of who their other parent is, they make up their own.

They get an idea in their head of who they think that anonymous donor is and they live with the illusion they have created until they either have the chance to meet the real parent face-to-face, or have any type of communication with them, or until the day they die. Even if the child does meet with the parent, “ Some reunions are good. Many are a huge disappointment” (Crary, Newsday, 2010). Sometimes “...the fantasy is much better than the reality” (Siegal, Los Angeles Times pg. E1, 2011). But even if the parent is the total opposite of what the child expected, they were able to meet them. That small hole in the heart of every artificially inseminated child

can be filled with just one simple meeting. The child can finally say that they know both of their parents. Children born through artificial insemination have as much right to know the other side of their family as any other person.

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