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I INTRODUCTION

Presentation

The use of donor semen is growing rapidly, and although the technique of inseminating women with donor semen has been practiced in Denmark since the 1940's, there are still many unresolved ethical questions related to the practice – especially the question about whether it should be legal or illegal to use anonymous semen, and if the child has a right to know of its donor origin. The issue has been, and still is, heavily debated and there are no international guidelines, thus leaving the area a patchwork of different national legislations. Although there is a rich body of literature concerning assisted reproduction technologies there are hardly any studies on the children who are donor-conceived. As the years go by, more and more children are growing up as donor children (dansk fertilitetsselskab samlet årsrapport) and when the advice of the health care personnel changes from secrecy to openness, more children will most likely be aware of their donor origin. Still, we hardly know anything about the thoughts and experienced realities when growing up as a donor-conceived child. By far, the majority of studies and articles about sperm donation are seen from the perspective of *the grown ups*, as an interlocutor said during our interviews. If we are to find out whether the continued use of anonymous sperm donation is a justifiable practise onwards, we need to know how the donor offspring experience their situation. To uncover this issue and enhance our understanding of what implications it might have to be a donor child, we need more academic research as well as embedding the perspective of donor offspring in the field of assisted reproduction in general.

I will in this report try to shed some light on what it means to grow up having an anonymous donor, and in doing so contribute to the small, but growing, body of literature concerning donor offspring.

My motivation and interest in the field

With a background in anthropology I have always felt drawn to the never ending debate about kinship. From Morgan to Strathern – the list of anthropologists having paid important contributions to the debate about kinship is almost endless. Within this vast debate lies the field of assisted reproduction and how the technological development has turned the

dichotomy of nature and culture upside down. Concerning the use of sperm donation many questions relate to the way we understand nature, nurture and kinship.
A recurring debate is on the use of anonymous or known donor and the implications it might have within the family. The intriguing part, in my opinion, is that we hardly know anything about how the children who are donor-conceived actually think about family and kinship.

The field of techno anthropology provides the possibility to explore how modern technology is affecting our way of thinking about taken for granted social phenomena.
Although the technology behind insemination with donor semen is very low-tech, it has had a profound impact on our way to think about and act out relations of family and kinship. Within this framework I have tried to make clear some of the problems that might arise when our way of understanding social processes are lacking behind the way we actually practice them.

I have tried to grasp what the important issues are to the donor children themselves by interviewing five donor offspring. I have been interested in finding out what aspects they hold as important in relation to their donor origin. How do they think about the donor in relation to the understanding of family; do they think about donor-siblings, and what importance – if at all – does it have in relation to their self perception? A recurring theme turned out to be the damage in the parent/child relation that the secrecy about the way of conception has caused. This is something that is also described in the literature – that there is an important distinction between knowing that you are donor-conceived and knowing who the donor is.

Research question

I have chosen to use a quite broad research question that reads as follows:

> *How do donor-conceived offspring experience their situation?*

The use of an open-ended question gave me the possibility of exploring what the donor-conceived offspring themselves hold as important in relation to their origin. Instead of having preconceived ideas of what might be of importance I have kept an open mind

towards the material and have to some extent let the data guide me in my work as topics have been brought up in the interviews that I had not foreseen.
I have structured the report with the point of departure of three main themes:

- The impact of secrecy in the family
- Identity crisis when finding out that you are donor-conceived
- The look upon family and the importance of biology in this relation.

These themes will be explored in depth each in their own chapters. In the report I will give a brief outline of the use of donor insemination in Denmark and some of its ethical aspects, present the anthropological methods of data collection and introduce a minor part of the approaches to kinship and assisted reproduction within the field of anthropology.

Chapter 1 is centred around secrecy. Most of my interlocutors did not know of their donor origin before reaching adulthood, and some found out only by accident. The impact that the non-disclosure of important information has had to the parent/child relationship has in most cases been severe. The inherent family secret is causing a limbo for the donor children to manoeuvre when having to keep track on their parents' secret. In this chapter I will take a point of departure in the empirical material and look at my findings in relation to the existing literature.

Chapter 2 is concerned with the loss of identity and the deconstruction of the self when finding out that you 'have been living a lie'. With a social constructivist approach I will try to understand why the realisation of having another familial affiliation is potentially problematic. We are also to explore how the interlocutors are trying to regain control over their situation by using their donor number and the social media to once again hold a position of agency.

Chapter 3 is exploring the interlocutor's approach toward kinship. In this chapter I will draw on some of the fundamental concepts of kinship understanding within anthropology when trying to find out what the interlocutor's hold as 'real' kinship. I will show how they navigate between the spheres of biological and social affiliation, and if they think differently about their parents[1] when knowing of the donor.

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[1] I will use the term 'parent' with reference to the mother and father who raised the child

Limitations of the study and delimitation of the field

There is in Denmark today no central registry on donor-conceived children. When looking for subjects I therefore turned to already established social communities of donor children. I addressed three communities: a Facebook group called “Donorbarn - sæddonor - ægdonor”, another Facebook group called “Barn af donor” and the website www.seedsibling.org – a forum connecting donor children and adults in Scandinavia. When recruiting interlocutors from groups that are made solely for donor-conceived persons and parents thereof, who are all seeking to get in contact with donor relatives or someone in the same situation as themselves, it is a reasonable assumption that this is affecting the kind of feedback I get. People who are already engaged in groups like these probably have somewhat of a similarity in their comprehension of what it means to be a donor child, as they have all actively chosen to be part of a community of others with relation to donor conception. Only having interlocutors from communities like these clearly creates a bias and is something that I am very aware of probably have had a profound impact on the empirical material that I have gathered. The preferable solution would be to have interlocutors from outside such groups as well, some who might rank it as unimportant to join into a community centred around sperm donation. However, due to a limited amount of resources I have not been able to find interlocutors of this kind.

Although my interlocutors are recruited from the same communities, their background and stories are quite varied, and with only five interlocutors I am aware that it is not possible for me to conclude anything on the group of donor-conceived adults as a whole. Even so, I think that my material point to some similarities in relation to how the adult donor children have much of the same experiences regarding their unknown donor origin that are difficult to ignore, and would be worth looking further into on another occasion.

In the study I will refrain from going into religious issues, technological possibilities or the overarching ethical debate concerning limitations of technological procreation, nor do I want to enter the discussion of genetic selection, manipulation of foetuses and ‘designer-babies’. I will also avoid addressing the issue from the perspective of how parents and donors might feel about the debate.

Instead, I am trying to offer an insight to the debate as it looks from the perspective of the donor-conceived children themselves to increase the understanding of the consequences of today's practice. I have done my best to voice their hopes and fears, their challenges and the way they are met and misunderstood. The report is therefore to be seen as a contribution to the debate on continued anonymous sperm donation as it is experienced from the views of the children themselves.

I must express my sincere gratitude and my deepest respect to the five people who came forward and agreed to participate as interlocutors. They have been sharing with me stories of a very personal nature and have trusted me with great secrets. For this I am thankful.

Literature review

The area of assisted reproductive technologies is massive, and the body of literature is massive. When focusing on the group of adults who have grown up as a result of conception with anonymous sperm donation, I have been able to narrow the field a great deal. There are several studies of how parents and extended family to donor-conceived offspring relates to the question of assisted reproduction (e.g. Cook et al. 1995, Golombok et al. 1996, Tjørnhøj-Thomsen 1999, Hargreaves 2006, Lalos et al. 2007, Nordqvist 2014, Zadeh et al. 2015). However, there are hardly any studies that are focused on the ones that are in the centre of all of these events: the donor-conceived children themselves. Two studies that have indeed focused on the donor offspring are Vanfraussen et al. 2003 and Jadva et al. 2010.

Vanfraussen et al. (2003) examine why donor offspring in lesbian families look for donor and/or donor-siblings and Jadva et al. (2010) have studied how individuals conceived by donor insemination experience the searching for, and potential contact to, donor as well as donor siblings. Jadva et al. (2010) have asked the users of ‘the donor sibling registry’[2], a forum similar to, although much bigger, the sites from which I have found interlocutors. In that manner we have worked with the same group of interlocutors, although their group of respondents heavily outnumbers mine. Both studies have been of great interest to me in my own work.

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[2] www.donorsiblingregistry.com

The use of donor insemination in a Danish context

As a start, I will give a brief outline of how the technology of donor insemination has been used in the Danish context and how it is performed and regulated to day. The use of donor sperm and insemination processes differ between countries and I will not go into comparisons of national legislation.

The technology of insemination is very simple. While IVF and other artificial reproduction technologies demand technical expertise and high tech equipments, insemination can be done at home by the woman herself (Adrian 2016:196).

In fact, insemination with semen from the spouse took place as early as the 1790's while insemination with donor semen was carried out already in 1884 (Tjørnhøj-Thomsen 1999:28). Insemination with donor semen is part of the reproduction technologies which, in addition to artificial reproduction, also include eg. birth control and prenatal diagnosis (Tjørnhøj-Thomsen 1999:28).

In 1967 the practice of sperm banking with cryopreserved sperm emerged in Denmark (Adrian 2016:185). The insemination itself is done by injecting the semen into the womb with a small straw and the technological involvement is therefore more about being able to preserve and purify the semen. The first danish sperm bank, The Central Semen Bank Foundation (Fonden for den centrale sædbank), opened in 1967 and provided cryopreserved semen to clinics in Denmark, Norway and Iceland (Adrian 2016:187). When the central semen bank failed to meet the demands of the private clinics entering the market in the 1990's, they prepared the ground for private sperm banks to emerge.

In Denmark today there are two sperm banks who distribute the semen that are used in infertility treatment at public hospital clinics as well as several private clinics: Cryos International and Nordic Cryobank. Cryos was the first private sperm bank in Denmark, founded in 1990, and is today the sperm bank with the largest donor catalogue in the world (www.cryos.dk[3]).

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[3] https://dk-da.cryosinternational.com/

In the beginning of practicing insemination, parents were advised not to tell their child about the involvement of a donor (eg. Cook et al. 1995). At that time all donors were anonymous and so the child would never be able to find the donor anyway. Another aspect was that if the child did not know of any donor involvement, then the social father's position in relation to the child would never be questioned (Rosenqvist 1979 in Adrian 2016:189). This way of thinking began to be revised around 2000, as more and more clinics and hospitals advocated for greater openness and advised parents to tell their child about his or her donor origin (eg. Cook et al. 1995, Hargreaves 2006).

At that time it was not possible for parents-to-be in Denmark to chose the donor for themselves. The matching was done by the staff at the clinic who tried to ensure physical similarities between the donor and the social father so that there would be a resemblance between the child and her father (Tjørnhøj-Thomsen 199:141, Adrian 2016:189). At this time it was not possible for private persons to buy semen, as both Cryos and The Central Semen Bank Foundation solely provided semen to authorised fertility clinics (Adrian 2016:189).

As early as 1948 governments debated whether a common Nordic legislation regarding donor insemination was needed and a committee was appointed (Adrian 2016:190). Their work resulted in a report in 1953, and even though it influenced the practices of sperm donation for many years to come, no legislation was enacted (Adrian 2016:190). In 1987 the health authorities tried to regulate the growing field of artificial reproduction technologies through some non legislated guidelines. In addition, the Ethical Council (Etisk Råd) was established with the purpose of informing politicians about biotechnological issues and sparking a public debate on the topic[4]. It was not until 1997 that Denmark got its first law on the area of assisted reproductive technologies (Adrian 2016:190). Until then, both lesbian couples and single women were inseminated but with the new law it was suddenly prohibited for medical doctors to inseminate these two groups as they were deemed to be inappropriate as parents (Adrian 2016:191). The law however, did not mention any other groups of health care professionals, and since the process of insemination is no difficult medical process, a midwife opened a clinic in 1999 inseminating lesbians and single women without violating any laws (Adrian 2016:191). The law was changed in 2007 ensuring that it

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[4] http://www.etiskraad.dk/om-det-etiske-raad

once again became legal for doctors to perform insemination to these women as to all others (Adrian 2016:193).

Another consequence of the midwife clinics not being regulated by legislation was that they were not subjected to the rules about only using anonymous donor sperm (Willum Adrian 2016:191). They began to import semen from the North American market which allowed for donors to be non-anonymous. This, the treating of lesbians and single women, and the use of non-anonymous donor sperm, triggered the “fertility tourism” to Denmark that is still widespread today (Adrian 2016:191).

When the North American market slowly started to demand semen from Scandinavian donors, Cryos in 2001 opened a sperm bank in the US, importing semen from their danish department (Adrian 2016:192). To meet the legal requirements of the American market Cryos had to provide their donors with extended profile information and let the women themselves choose their donor on an informed foundation, but this practice was not transmitted to the danish consumers (Adrian 2016:192). In 2004 Nordic Cryobank entered the danish market, offering donors with extended profile information on terms inspired by the American model. Their marketing was targeting the parents-to-be rather than the clinics and in 2006 they were the first in Denmark to offer non-anonymous donor sperm and it did not take long before Cryos began selling the same product (Adrian 2016:193). Throughout the 2000’s more countries changed their legislation regarding donor anonymity and with the prevalence of the internet it became possible for donor children, parents with donor offspring and donors to search for each other (Adrian 2016:194). In 2012 the legislation was changed again, now encompassing many of the practices that had taken place for years and providing the possibility of the donor to be non-anonymous (Willum Adrian 2016:196).

There are no statistics keeping track of how many inseminations take place with semen from known and anonymous donors since the clinics do not distinguish between the two when reporting their results. The clinics are to report to the health authorities (Sundhedsstyrelsen) how many of the conducted inseminations result in pregnancies, but there are likely many unreported because these figures rely heavily on self-reporting by the mother/couple. Furthermore, it is today possible to buy semen on the internet and carry out the insemination yourself (Adrian 2016:196), something that it is impossible for the authorities to keep track of. Therefore, there are no known numbers on how many children who are actually being born as the result of insemination with donor sperm in Denmark today. A concern donor children I have interviewed is related to the potential risk of incestuous relationships with half-siblings. Whether this fear is logically founded or not, is not their primary concern.

Their point is that as long as there are no central record and regulation of donor semen it *could* happen.

As the legislation is today, sperm banks can use the same donor in no more than 12 families (Adrian:197), but there are no limitations when it comes to selling semen from the same donor abroad. The legislation bans men from being donors in more than one sperm bank but as long as there are no central registry on sperm donors there is nothing preventing this from happening. Thus there are no actual limitations to the use of sperm from a single donor.

The Danish Fertility Association (Dansk Fertilitetsselskab) writes on their website that 8% of the danish birth cohort in 2015 was conceived with some form of technological help, a number that has been stable in the past years[5]. This number is covering children born with all assisted reproductive technologies and it only covers children conceived at clinics. For reasons stated above there must as a consequence be expected a certain amount of dark figures adding to the numbers.

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[5] http://www.fertilitetsselskab.dk/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=58&Itemid=67

II METHOD

The anthropological methodology

Anthropology is widely acknowledged for its use of fieldwork and the method of participating observations. Participating observation is a way of interacting with the given field and thereby being able to study how people are actually performing practices instead of just asking how they do so. In this way the researcher is able to get as close to the subjects everyday life as possible (Hylland Eriksen 2006:56).
When interacting closely with the field and spending time with interlocutors, the researcher herself becomes an instrument through which indigenous knowledge and information is obtained. There is a fine line between what to exclude and what to include from the field experience, a distinction that might be very difficult to make when in the field since "*Most often you do not know what data is useful before sitting down, trying to make sense of your findings.*" (Hylland Eriksen 2006:56 my translation). Sarah Franklin and Celia Roberts write in their book Born and Made (2006) how "*Key ethnographic insights often come either from things that 'make no sense' or, paradoxically, repeated statements that are 'completely obvious'.*" (Franklin & Roberts 2006:82). In an attempt to keep track on what information might seem useful or useless, taking field notes often prove very useful. This is a methodological grip that allows one to get hold of thoughts and impressions in real time and "*...preserves the actuality of fieldwork and objectifies it by externalizing it, and literally turning one's experiences into an object (a text).*" (Franklin & Roberts 2006:87).

Qualitative and quantitative data collection

In relation to data collection there is in outline two different methods, qualitative and quantitative data collection. As I have conducted my data through research interviews my data is of the qualitative kind.

Traditionally this has been viewed as methodological subordinated since the personal involvement of the researcher can be seen as to contaminate the data. There has also been a tendency to only think about quantifiable data as 'real' science (Kvale 1997:75). When conducting fieldwork and being close to one's interlocutors, personal experience will always have a central role in the ethnography and because of this, the scientific status of the method has long been debated (Franklin & Roberts 2006:80). Bent Flyvbjerg (2006) writes about what he sees as the five greatest misunderstandings of case-study research, stating that "*it is not true that a case study 'cannot provide reliable information about the broader class'. (...) it is misleading to see the case study as a pilot method to be used only in preparing the real study's larger surveys, systematic hypotheses testing, and theory building.*" (Flyvbjerg 2006:220). A reason that quantitative data have been understood as more reliable is that they are gathered with the researcher at a distance and through instruments regarded as neutral (Franklin & Roberts 2006:81). Questionnaires have been thought of as producing objective data in the way that they act as a boundary between researcher and the subject of inquiry. They are depersonalising the data, as opposed to the qualitative method, and therefore seen as to minimise bias (Franklin & Roberts 2008:80). Although it might seem more reliable at first glance there are a lot of pitfalls to be aware of when gathering quantitative data as well. It might be the way a questionnaire is designed, how recipients are selected and how data is analysed – things that are equally present in qualitative data collection. Exactly because the two methods are based on opposite principles - quantitative data trying to strictly delimit possible responses and ethnography trying to break these limits - they complement each other well. The overall thing to be aware of is that the researcher is always present in her material, and Franklin and Roberts write how "*Ethnography is still primarily a labor of translation, primarily achieved through reflection and writing.*" (Franklin & Roberts 2006:81).

Since there is no central registry on donor-conceived offspring in Denmark, it has been difficult to reach out to interlocutors in a number that would make up for sufficient quantitative data collection. I have instead chosen the ethnographic approach, thereby seeking to produce a valid hypothesis rather than to test one (Franklin & Roberts 2006:81). According to Flyvbjerg "*... it is often more important to clarify the deeper causes behind a given problem and its consequences than to describe the symptoms of the problem and how frequently they occur.*" (Flyvbjerg 2006:229). When focusing on offspring of anonymous donors there have been some quantitative studies for example Vanfraussen et al. 2003 and Jadva et al. 2010. Both studies have tried to shed light on how many donor children actually want to make contact with the donor as well as why, and both have relied methodologically on questionnaires with the additional use of interviews. These are data that are quantifiable and well suited for testing hypothesis about whether donor children seek donor contact or not. Kvale writes, "*The qualitative research interview have an unique possibility to get access to and describe the everyday life-world.*" (Kvale 1997:63, my translation). When trying to understand the impact of having an anonymous donor in relation to self perception and kinship understanding, I find the empirical approach founded on qualitative research interview to be most useful.

Ethical considerations regarding fieldwork

In this study, my fieldwork has consisted of five semi-structured interviews with subjects from Denmark and Norway lasting from about 45-90 minutes each. Two of them I was able to carry out in person, while the last three were conducted by telephone. I learned early in the process that the milieu around donor-conceived children and adults in Scandinavia is somewhat small, and that people are often linked through different groups and networks. As there have been some requests from members of these networks to read my report, I have gone quite far to secure my interlocutor's anonymity. Along the way I received information that, although it would have been very useful to my work, I had to let go in the final report due to its recognisable manner. I have given all interlocutors aliases and removed identifying characteristics to ensure that they will not be recognisable in the final report. It has been a difficult task to remove all identifying information without making any significant modifications in their characters causing incoherence in relation to their positions and opinions (Kvale 1994:250). I have kept known their actual age. I find this to be important information in relation to the way technology and society might be understood and to give a hint at how normalised donor conception might have been at the time the donor origin was revealed.

Since the interlocutors are organised in similar networks I have been aware of, and reflected upon, how this might be a somewhat homogeneous group. There is always a present risk when collecting data and interviewing people – that the ones who respond to an interview request might be assumed to have something they want to get off their chest as opposed to the ones not responding. This is a practical problem that is difficult to overcome. As my aim is to offer an ethnographically founded insight to some approaches rarely heard I find that my data material is sufficient despite its limitations.

Finding interlocutors

Conducting interviews is a delicate balance. You have to pay respect to the person showing you the trust to tell a personal story and investing time in your work; and at the same time you might want to dig into some things that are not said and in that manner raise questions the interlocutors might not want to talk about. In all of my interviews I had to restrain myself at one point or another from asking into things may have been inappropriate but that would have been somewhat enlightening information to me.

I have been told some very private stories and some have showed me the trust to tell me things they have not shared with others. I have felt unsure sometimes, if this or that question would move the interview to much out of the comfort zone, if I would break the confidential atmosphere by asking more critical questions. In doing so I have limited myself from asking some questions. This is probably due to my own assumptions of which questions is appropriate. I definitely considered quite carefully that it might be a touchy subject due to its very personal character and the fact that not all were used to talk about it. I presumed that some things might be best to leave unnoticed - although I have no evidence that my interlocutors thought the same way. In that way I have confined myself from certain things, such as asking more direct into the inconsistency of their stories. When analysing the empirical material I have therefore tried not to attach too much significance to these inconsistencies. It is not the case that interviewees who do not contradict themselves are more reliable or produce data that are more valuable. In fact, they are rarely seen as most people contradict themselves at one point or another (Kvale 1997:150). These self-imposed restrictions are not something that have been a great concern to me, but I feel it appropriate to mention nonetheless.

As mentioned I turned to three groups when searching for interlocutors. The “Donorbarn – sæddonor – ægdonor” Facebook group ,has 3474 (14/08 2016) members but is closed to anyone not being either donor child/adult, gamete donor or parent to a donor-conceived child. I wrote a message to the moderator of the group who agreed to put my interview request on the wall. I did not ask if I could be allowed a member of the group as I felt it unnecessary due to the very explicit guidelines of the group stating that journalists and all other unauthorised persons were not welcome. I was told that only one person not personally related to donation had been allowed membership, this being a member of The Ethical Council. The moderator found it of great importance that The Ethical Council knows how the affected persons of anonymous sperm donation feel about their situation. After all, the Ethical Council was established for this purpose; to figure out how to handle the new bio and gene technologies in the wake of the first Danish test tube baby born in 1984[6].

The other Facebook group, 'Barn af donor', has 78 members (14/0 201616). The great differentiation in size might give a hint at how many parents to donor-conceived offspring that are present in the first group. Since the members in this group is whom I am actually looking for I was glad the administrator agreed to publish my request there as well. As I learned during the interviews, most of my interlocutors were members of both groups but were not necessarily further active in any of them. I was told that especially single mothers had co-opted the large group and that most posts were now concerning issues about pregnancy and which donor to choose. In that respect the smaller group was an outburst from the large in an attempt to prevent parents to 'pollute' the group.

The third site from where I recruited interlocutors, www.seedsibling.org, is a Scandinavian forum and registry where people are able to seek donor siblings, either to themselves or their donor-conceived offspring. The organisation was founded in 2009 by a couple of Swedish mothers to donor-conceived children. In the beginning it was first and foremost a registry to hopefully match donor siblings as well as donor and offspring. Over the years it evolved to also becoming a social meeting place with a more Scandinavian user group[7].

Transcription method

When conducting my interviews, I started by asking the interlocutors whether they would mind if I recorded our conversation, and thankfully all of them agreed. I wanted to have the interviews on tape for two reasons. First of all I wanted to be as focused as possible in the interview situation. To be able to focus on the interlocutor, navigate in the interview more freely and only have to write down my own reflections instead of constantly writing down every word said. Second, I then had the possibility of transcribing the interviews, and thereby being able to analyse them further later on. There is however, a couple of methodological and theoretical pitfalls to be aware of when transforming talk to text. This is something Steinar Kvale (1994) address as he writes how the problem of transcribing

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[6] http://www.etiskraad.dk/om-det-etiske-raad

[7] http://www.seedsibling.org/om/

interviews are, that the transcription itself often turns out to be regarded as *the* actual empirical material (Kvale 1994:163). This is however not the case, he stresses, as it will never be possible to transform the pauses, the body language, intonations and the mimic from the spoken interview into written text (Kvale 1994:161).

This is a great challenge, and I have been very aware of the delicate balance I face when transforming the wording into writing. I have kept in mind that I am constantly making (sometimes perhaps even subconsciously) analytical choices when deciding what to transcribe from the interview and what to leave out. It has been difficult since the topic of donor conception has caused many emotional reactions. The interviews that I did face to face were characterised exactly by the pauses, the body language, the shifty eyes and the nervous laughter. In that respect it was more difficult to grasp the emotional atmosphere in the interviews done over telephone. Somehow these interviews were in a way characterised by everything that the interlocutors did not say; something that has been extremely difficult to mirror in the transcribed material. For this reason I have kept all of the recorded interviews so that I have been able to listen to the words actually said, and thereby trying to reconstruct the situation as correctly as possible. When making the analysis I have therefore been listening to my recordings more than looking at the writings. However, it has been very useful to look at the transcriptions when having to compare the interlocutor’s stories and get an overview of the complete interview material.

Before starting the process of transcription I had to make the choice of how to actually do it. Kvale points out that there is no definite and objective truth when transcribing, it will always be a representation of the researchers intended use of the material (Kvale 1994:166). I wrote the interviews down in fully and completed sentences though I have always kept in mind that I am representing the thoughts of my interlocutors wherefore I have done my utmost to grasp the meaning of what they tried to express. Furthermore I have tried to stay as loyal as possible to my interlocutors, knowing that word for word transcription rarely does any good for the general impression of the speaker. On the contrary, quite the opposite is often the outcome since we are not talking in the same polished language as we are writing. The result is that people might simply come off as being less intelligent (Kvale 1994: 167), which I have tried to avoid through my choice of transcription method. One interlocutor was talking about how she saw a lot of positive things related to the way donor conception have been normalised the recent years, but that the way people talk about it often can be offending to the donor-conceived children. She was looking for the right words as she spoke.

"*Uhm, it is like, as if it has become ... Like it is, uhm ... well, I think that there are a lot of cool things about it being more normalised and everything ... and stuff like that. But, uhm, it is the most grim way people talk about it. Really, it is not because that, uhm ... that I have ... but ... but it is really really humiliating to say to people 'well, your father is just some medical student who has…' I mean, what the fuck!*".

Instead of transcribing it word for word I found more suitable to transcribe the meaning, and therefore it reads as follows:

"*Well, I think that there are a lot of cool things about it being more normalised, but it is the most grim way people talk about it. Really, it is not because I have… But it is really humiliating to say to people 'well, your father is just some medical student', I mean, what the fuck!*"

I have also considered it most useful to make the transcriptions in a way where I can use it as direct quotations in the text without creating any unnecessary confusions to the readers regarding context or meaning. In that manner I have - once again - had Kvale in mind as he writes "*When transforming the conversation to literary style, it gets easier to convey the meaning with the interlocutor's story to the reader*" (Kvale 1994:166, my translation).

I have chosen not to append my transcriptions. They are so full of personal and identifying information that the process of anonymising them would practically rob them of their ethnographic value and their informative purpose.

Presentation of interlocutors

The five interviews I did revealed five very different stories of what it is to be a donor child. All interlocutors termed themselves a 'donor child' and therefore I will do the same .

I will give a very brief outline of the stories in the following:

Ingun, 22 years old. The child of a single mother who has always known that she is donor-conceived. During her upbringing she has always felt that something was missing and she hope one day to be able to find her donor who she has been looking for for many years. She has made contact to donor-siblings and are looking for more. She refers to her donor as ‘father’ and children from the same donor as ‘half-siblings’.

Julia, 38 years. An only child who has always longed for siblings. When finding out, quite late, about her donor origin she hoped to be able to find a sibling at last. Her whole family knew of her donor origin. She refers to her donor as ‘donor’ and children from the same donor as ‘sister’ and ‘brother’.

Turid, 28 years. She found out in her early 20’s that she and her sister were donor children and that they did not have the same donor. This was perhaps the biggest issue for her. All of her family knew of her donor origin. She refers to her donor as ‘donor’ and children born to the same donor as ‘half-siblings’.

Gustav, 34 years. He was told by his parents when he turned 18. After his father passed away his mother has encouraged him to search for his donor and potential donor siblings. He too is an only child. In his family only the parents and a maternal aunt know of his donor origin, he does not want to change this. He refers to the donor as ‘biological father’ and children from the same donor as ‘half-siblings’.

Lisa, 29 years. She found out about her origin by accident when she was 8. Growing up in a broken family, the explanation that she is the first in her family to get an education she somewhat ascribes to abilities inherited from the donor. Everyone but Lisa knew of the donor involvement. She refers to the donor as ‘donor’ and children from the same donor as ‘half-siblings’ or ‘siblings’ but is not very consistent in her use of terms.

This might give an insight into how diverse my group of interlocutors are. Not only do their background stories differ quite a bit, but it is also very different how used they are to talk about their situation, as well as how they frame the concept of being conceived with anonymous sperm donation. The interviews were characterised by different themes due to the interlocutor’s different backgrounds. But all interviews touched upon the same subjects and although they were very different I thought that they went quite well. All of them certainly made me wiser, both in relation to the field in general and definitely in my understanding of the things being at stake to the donor children.

III THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The field of anthropology

Anthropology is, put briefly, the science of understanding how societies are organised and how people interact within it.

The discipline of anthropology was established in the late nineteenth century and was interested in understanding and mapping out the ‘primitive’ societies and the ‘savage man’.

Nowadays Anthropology is framed as an academic discipline that seeks to understand the behaviour of others through an increased understanding of oneself. The Norwegian anthropologist Thomas Hylland Eriksen explains the discipline as being “*The comparative study of culture and society with a point of departure in local life.”* (Hylland Eriksen 2006:17 my translation). I like this definition and its insisting on anthropology as being a discipline with the human being in the centre. The way anthropology has contributed to our understanding of the world is enormous and impressive. Though the early anthropologists were evolutionistic in their worldview they demonstrated an honest interest in trying to understand and explain the practice of indigenous people. Furthermore, it did not take long before anthropology fostered the thought that every man is to be understood in terms of his own conditions and thereby questioned assumptions about phrenology and inherent racial superiority.

It is in this light I like to view anthropology: as a way of understanding the world of others by showing that they are not so different from yourself.

Kinship within anthropology

The study of kinship has always held a prominent position within the field of anthropology. Although it has been debated and discussed for more than 150 years, there is still no agreed upon solution to the persistent question of what kinship actually is.

Earlier on, it was taken for granted that biological ties were the most fundamental and universal connection, and it was assumed that there was a logical connection between the biological and the social bonds (Smedal 2000:122). Today it is not as straightforward, but

Olaf H. Smedal suggests that we are to think of it as if "*Biology is the raw material. But it is what people do with biology that is 'kinship' in the anthropological understanding.*" (Smedal 2000:121).

It is important to keep in mind that kinship is not a static term; there is no universal definition of how to perform and understand the relations of kin. To Morgan the central institution of kinship was marriage and the way this connection formed the process of biological reproduction of blood-ties (Schneider 1972:258). If we are to follow this line of thought, gamete donation poses a threat towards the very core of kinship understanding since the line of blood is broken. There has been a common understanding of kinship as being a 'natural' relation and therefore also depending on being upheld by the natural practices of procreation (Strathern 1992:17). However, with the use of assisted reproduction technologies the question of 'natural' kinship is maybe more relevant than ever before. Both regarding what 'natural' actually means; is procreation a natural process when the conception is carried out in a petri dish, and is kinship to be understood as a relation build on shared biology or a relationship based on reciprocal intimacy and caregiving. Kinship have been thought to consist of two very different, but equally important, relations; the inherited consanguinity and the marital affiliation (Strathern 1992:17). From this follows that kinship is both an act of nature and culture respectively. The question of today is what role, if at all, shared biology is to hold in the understanding of kinship and what is it that makes a relation 'natural'?

When taking a stance in the debate about the nature of kinship I find it important to know from where the ideas of kinship as an important tool in the understanding of society regulation and identity building stem. In the following I will give a very overall outline of some important positions held in the debate.

From evolutionism to relatedness

Kinship as an interest of anthropology was founded already in the early years when Lewis Henry Morgan (1818-1881) performed his fieldwork among the Iroquois Indians of North America and sought to understand and explain their societal structure through their classification of kinsmen (Schneider 1972:257). It is said that Morgan invented the kinship study within the field of anthropology. Indeed he did "invent" the systems of how to explain and live out kinship that are still used today (Hylland Eriksen 1996:118). Morgan defined the civilised western world as having a ‘natural’ kinship system which he called ‘the descriptive system’ as he wrote “*Around every person there is a circle or group of kindred of which such person is the centre, and the Ego, from whom the degree of relationship is reckoned and to whom the relationship itself returns. (...) To him they are nearer in degree than other individuals of the nation at large. A formal arrangement of the more immediate blood kindred into the lines of descent, with the adoption of some method to distinguish one relative from another and to express the value of the relationship, would be one of the earliest acts of human intelligence.”* (Morgan 1871:10 in Schneider 1972:257-258).

What he found among american Indians was a quite different practice of how to perform kinship. Here, the relationship was not centred around the marriage, which to Morgan was the natural centre of kinship. Their classification of kin was based on a prolonging of the observable biological relations and hence ‘mother’ did not necessarily mean the genetrix but also the mothers sisters, as well as ‘sister’ would refer to, not only daughters from the same birth mother, but also mothers sisters daughter and other collateral kinsmen (Smedal 2000:117). Morgan named this ‘the classificatory system’ and saw this way of ordering kin as inferior to the westernised, natural, descriptive system, which fitted in quite well with his evolutionistic line of thought (Smedal 2000:120).

If we are to follow Morgan’s definition of ‘natural’ kinship, that the Ego is really tied closer together with blood related kinsmen than others, then there would be a nature-given incoherence in the practice of anonymous sperm donation. His classification of lineal descent and close consanguinities as being closer to the Ego than others does not leave room for social relations replacing the actual bloodline. To this day the descriptive kinship system is widely taken for granted in Euro-American societies (Smedal 2000:117). When kinship is thought of as being the analytical frame with which to understand the formation of relations in a given society, the biological affinity becomes prior to the mere social bond (Schneider 1972:260, Strathern 1992:24). Following Morgan, the society should never be able to overrule and blur the bloodline between parent and offspring. This exact relation is what makes the white man superior to the savage, and should thus not be suppressed. However, it is some 150 years ago Morgan was in front of the field and almost as long ago that the thoughts of evolutionism were dismissed. It is noteworthy though that Morgan’s thoughts on blood being the only natural way to consider kinship is still the rules in force. With the prevalence of artificial reproductive technologies this paradigm is however put under serious pressure.

This leads us on to another important figure within the history of kinship in anthropology, and a break with the then existing mindset.

David Schneider (1918-1995) was also an American anthropologist inspired by the North American Indians who came to have a major impact on how kinship have been studied and understood from the 1950's and onward. Schneider criticised Morgan for being ethnocentric when taking for granted that every society was attributing blood the same values as himself. Just as he criticised most of his previous and contemporary colleagues for blindly ascribing to Morgan's system of descriptive and classificatory kinship (Hylland Eriksen 2006:133). Instead he was focusing on how kinship could just as well be based on cultural or social ties. Throughout an extensive fieldwork on Yap Island in Micronesia he showed that the native population did not ascribe to a kinship model related to blood lines. Instead of the nuclear family the population would gather in households tied together of mutual bonds of giving and receiving (Smedal 2000:148-149). You are giving your labour to the household and thereby receiving social rights. Furthermore the categories of parents and offspring were not static terms but concepts of fluidity (Smedal 2000:148-149). Basically, you are kin because you are mutually taking care of each other. If you stop contributing to the group, the group will stop to provide you with social rights (Smedal 2000:149). In light of these findings, Schneider claimed that kinship was to be understood as a symbolic system more than an actual structural system. He argued that blood is nothing but a symbol of kinship in the western line of thought as he wrote "*The symbols are 'biological' in the sense that the culturally given definition of the symbol is that it is derived from the facts of biology as a process of nature itself. But it is fundamental to our understanding that we appreciate that these biological elements are symbols and that their symbolic referents are not biology as a natural process at all.*" (Schneider 1972:266). Schneider was thereby the one who put the field of 'kinshipology' to rest (Hylland Eriksen 2006:118).

Although he acknowledged the biological connection to kinship he understood biology as symbolic and the symbols as being able to form ties of kinship themselves. Classifying something as kinship would in itself empower the relation (Franklin 2001:306). Schneider argued that "*In American cultural conception, kinship is defined as biogenetic. This definition says that kinship is whatever the biogenetic relationship is. If science discovers* *new facts about biogenetic relationship, then that is what kinship is and was all along.*" (Schneider 1980:23 in Franklin 2001:306). The biology that symbolically constituted kinship was thus not fixed.

The british social anthropologist Marilyn Strathern was one of the first anthropologists to enter the field of new reproduction methods in the 1980's and 1990's, a field that has later been known as 'new kinship studies'. In her work she has looked at how the issues of biology and kinship is challenged and changed with the emergence of assisted reproduction, "*I suggest that the way in which changes in this field [reproductive medicine] are conceptualised, and the way the choices that assisted reproduction affords are formulated, will affect thinking about kinship. And the way people think about kinship will effec other ideas about relatedness between human beings.*" (Strathern 1992:15). Strathern writes that kinship is the connection between biology and society represented by procreation and marital affiliation respectively, since members of both spheres are termed as kin (Strathern 1992:17). She argues then, that "*In the case of kinship, what is at issue is the social construction of natural facts.*" (Strathern 1992:17). The social constructions of natural facts are creating a hybrid that bring together practices from the two domains (ibid.). It is thus not enough to be related by blood, the relation at the same time have to be acknowledged by social intimacy (Strathern 1992:19). A new situation regarding the natural kinship domain emerged throughout the 20th century when 'natural' came to be equal to 'biological'. This posed some new dilemmas in relation to the meaning of 'parenthood', especially to parents whose offspring were the result of assisted reproduction. Suddenly there was not only a distinction between social and biological father, the very meaning of 'natural' were at the same time challenged (Strathern 1992:19). In earlier times the natural father was equal to the social father, whereas with new technology, and the consequent understanding of natural as biological, a child's natural father is no longer the social father per se (Strathern 1992:19). Assisted reproduction, she says, is at the same time assisting the natural part of kinship through procreation and the social processes through the creation of family life and "*The more facilitation is given to the biological reproduction of human persons, the harder it is to think of a domain of natural facts independent of social intervention.*" (Strathern 1992:30). Strathern argues that there indeed exist a tendency towards acknowledging the biological parents as more 'real' than the social parent and thus recognising biology as being superior in relation to kin-creation (Strathern 1992:20). She argues that especially in relation to legislation, which could be viewed as a way of culturalising the natural (kinship) relation, it is evident that biology is prioritised over the social relation (Strathern 1992:24). Regarding this argumentation I find it relevant to enhance that these views were put forward in the beginning of the 1990's and that legislation have changed since then. It is however a fine example of how the idea of kinship with its emphasis on biology have been practised without question.

The American anthropologist Sarah Franklin was also among the first to explore the field of assisted reproduction. Like Strathern she is focused on how we define what is to be counted as 'biological ties'. She argues that the uncertainty about what 'real' biology is when it might as well be created through technology is a welcome opportunity to reconsider what role biology is to play in relation to the theory of kinship (Franklin 2001:304). Her aim is not to leave out biology from the study of kinship but to revise our understanding of what the natural kinship tie is in the era of biotechnology (Franklin 2001:304). In her article 'Conception through a looking glass: the paradox of IVF' from 2013, Franklin describes how the use of new technology have pushed our understanding of kinship and parenthood. She notes that it is not only the desire to have children but also a way to obtain an adult status in social life that are the driving force when couples/women look to assisted reproduction (Franklin 2013:749). Something also described by Tjørnhøj-Thomsen (1999). Having children is a way to position oneself in society according to the kin affiliations you are able to (re)produce, and "*Consequently, fertility is always a social product as well as a biological one.*" (Franklin 2013:748). Franklin argues that where kinship was once thought to be purely natural or biologically founded it is today just as well based on technological achievements and these new forms of kinship patterns are reshaping the family as an institution (Franklin 2013:751).

Another anthropologist that has contributed with some interesting new perspectives on kinship in recent years is Janet Carsten and her focus on relations rather than filiations. In her view, kinship is constructed both through biology and sociology. She has brought forward the thought that instead of talking about kinship, we might instead be talking of 'relatedness' in an attempt to overcome the unwanted and distracting connotation of biology (Hylland Eriksen 2006:134). A critique of her work has been that even though she might overcome the problem of kinship as being social or biological, the term of relatedness is exactly as difficult to specify as kinship has been. Holy writes "*The main problem is that the concept of relatedness does not specify what precisely 'relatedness' is meant to involve, how it is to be defined and how it should be distinguished from any other kind of social* *relationship.*" (Holy 1996:168). However, the term might be useful when navigating an area of artificial reproduction and along with it, a new way of understanding family and kin relations. When talking about artificial reproduction technologies we see how natural ties are created through culture, and so Carsten is talking about kinship as an emotional experience rather than a given system.

Why is kinship still important?

As we have seen, kinship have been important within the field of anthropology since the very beginning of the discipline and although the interest have decreased it will probably always be there. Instead of using kinship as a framework of how to understand society as a mechanism and individuals functioning within it, we will in this report look at how kinship is understood in relation to the understanding of family and identity. How are the donor children thinking about kinship in the mix between biology and social relations and what is the role of kinship when it comes to connecting the past and the future.

Throughout the interviews, I have learned how the information of being the child of a stranger have led to, if not direct existential crises, at least a lot of questions. The questions are many and they are pointing in many different directions, both towards parents, donor and the system of government, hospitals and medical clinics who arrange for and carry out donor insemination. Though many questions arise in the wake of the revelation one is flashing in neon lights, shining above all others: Who am I and where do I come from? The importance of this question is deeply rooted in our understanding of kinship as a defining element of how to fit in with the civilised society - much thanks to Morgan.

The question of belonging is central to the interlocutors, as they are trying in different ways to find out where to belong all over again when having learned about the donor origin. They find themselves in sudden lack of identity, the person they thought they were is in a way destabilised. When constructing an identity in accordance to their new role in the family, kinship is suddenly put in play in a new and more direct matter than ever before. Something that has until now been latent is suddenly very central in relation to the new self understanding. Especially when trying to bridge the past and the future, kinship play a central role. Many themes under the enormous umbrella of kinship was mentioned in the interviews: incest taboos, affiliation and attachment, secureness in relation to the kin-group when being somewhat an illegitimate child, what you are passing on to your own children and other existential questions. Although they have had different reactions to the revelation I would argue that they have been going through some kind of identity crisis. Some have been long and severe, while others have been experienced as more innocent – but still bringing to life a deeply rooted curiosity. Whether they are searching for medical information, a father figure or a familiar face, it is important to all of them in one way or another to know 'how did I become who I am'.

Old technology posing new dilemmas

Even though the technology of insemination with donor semen is old, and new methods to prevent infertility and involuntary childlessness has arrived, one of the questions that is explosive in the debate even today is the question of anonymity. Who is to be accounted as central in the matter of sperm donation, the parent, the donor or the unborn child.
In the earlier days of sperm donation parents to donor offspring was advised not to tell their child about the conception method – maybe to protect the child or maybe to protect the parents.

As mentioned above, the Danish Ethical Council was established by parliament in 1987 with the purpose of counseling the parliament and public institutions as well as to support the public debate on the area of bio- and genetechnology within the healthcare system. In 2004 the field was extended to include development within bio and genetechnology on the areas of nature, environment and food as well[8]. The Children's Council in Denmark (Børnerådet) has been very active in the debate on anonymous or open sperm donation. They are against the use of anonymous gamete donation, although they when debating the issue for the first time in 1995 came to the opposite decision (Høringssvar 2004 - 05). In a statement from 2004 they mention the increased possibility of parents keeping secret to the child its donor conception and the potential severe negative impact to the child it might have, as one of the reasons anonymity should be abolished (ibid.). Furthermore, they argue that a child defines its identity in relation to what is known about the familial background, and that it thus should know of the hereditary origin. Their argumentation is rooted in their interpretation of

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[8] http://www.etiskraad.dk/om-det-etiske-raad

the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child. The convention was formulated in 1989, in a time before the question of assisted reproduction and donor gametes was prevalent. Advocates against anonymous donation has since used the conventions article 7 and 8 in their argumentation against anonymity. Article 7 reads "*The child shall be registered immediately after birth and shall have the right from birth to a name, the right to acquire a nationality and, as far as possible, the right to know and be cared for by his or her parents.*"[9]. When using this article as argument, the term of 'parents' is thought to be negotiable who are the real parents of a child. Is the donor to be termed 'parent' due to shared biology or is a parent the one who is taking care of and is responsible for the child's well being. Børnerådet supports the interpretation of 'parent' as being the genetically related male (Høringssvar 2004-05). The convention's article 8 reads "*States Parties undertake to respect the right of the child to preserve his or her identity, including nationality, name and family relations as recognized by law without unlawful interference.*"[10]

In using this article as a defence against donor anonymity it is argued that the genetic origin is a part of the child's identity and thus should not be concealed. Børnerådet further refers to the Committee on the Rights of the Child which has earlier stated that Denmark is possibly violating the 7th article of the convention when legalising the use of anonymous sperm donation (Høringssvar 2004-05). Børnerådet recommends that the practice around anonymous donation should be changed so that parents have a legal obligation to tell the child before turning 12, and that identifying information about the donor should be released when the child reaches legal age (ibid.). With this proposal they are inspired by the legislation in Sweden. In 1985 Sweden was the first to pass a bill concerning sperm donation and forbid the use of anonymous donors. It was at the same time decided that the child should have knowledge of its donor origin and have access to identifying information (Lalos et al. 2007:1759).

Some have criticised the prohibition of anonymous donors with the argument that forcing donors to be known will lead to a radical decrease in the donor pool.

In the Swedish legislation it was never specified who was accountable for telling the child of its donor origin or handing out the identifying information about donor. It was taken for granted that parents would not want to hide the use of donor to the child and it was therefore entirely unexpected that parents did exactly that (Lalos et al. 2007:1759). A study from 1998

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[9] http://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CRC.aspx

[10] http://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CRC.aspx

show that as little as 11% of parents to donor offspring have told their children about the use of donor, while 41% stated that they intended to tell the child (Gottlieb et al 2000; Lindblad et al. 2000 in Lalos et al. 2007:1759).

The interlocutors I have spoken to hope for a Danish legislation following the Swedish model. They do however want the government to go even further in relation to securing the donor offspring possibilities to know of donor and potential donor-siblings. Several have suggested that a national registry including all donors and providing an overview of how many children each donor originate, should be a legal registration administered by Sundhedsstyrelsen. In that way, they argue, there would be full transparency in relation to the field of sperm donation.

Another ethical aspect is that the fertility clinics have obvious economic interests. Regarding the insufficient registration of children conceived per donor, Freeman et al. (2009) state that it is “ *(...) leaving the number of offspring per donor open to the discretion of individual fertility clinics in a commercial market that may be driven more by consumer demand than limited by ethical considerations.*” (Freeman et al. 2009:506). It is worth noting that both sperm banks and clinics are competing on market terms and that the parents-to-be are mere consumers. It is a standard practice that sperm from an open donor is about twice as expensive as that from an anonymous donor[11]. As only 8,4%[12] of all treatments with donor semen is expected to result in childbirth, it is potentially a very costly affair to the parent(s). With this practice, in addition to the attitude towards anonymous sperm donation[13], the sperm banks might uphold a practice where anonymous donation is favoured.

To sum up, there are some different ethical questions related to the field. One is that of secrecy towards the child about its donor origin as well as the use of anonymous donor sperm in itself. It is possible to read the UN’s Convention on the Rights of the Child as prohibiting the continued use of anonymous donor insemination, but it does not state

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[11] https://dk.cryosinternational.com/donor-sperm/prices-and-payment and https://www.europeanspermbank.com/how-it-works/prices.html

[12] http://www.fertilitetsselskab.dk/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=159&Itemid=137

[13] https://dk.cryosinternational.com/resources/ethical-questions/should-the-child-have-the-right-to-know-the-identity-of-the-donor

anything specific in relation to sperm donation or assisted reproduction. As the sperm is sold on market terms it is likely that the consumer behaviour is influenced by price as the relation between supply and demand is negotiated. It is possible then, that costs rather than ethics might have a tendency to influence the choice of semen from an open or an anonymous donor.

IV ANALYSIS

The burden of a secret

The devastating impact of secrets and lies has been a recurring theme in my interviews. In this first chapter of the analysis we will look closer at how the interlocutors found out that they were donor-conceived and how their first reaction was. We will see how many of the reactions they have had are also identified in the existing literature and I will discuss my findings in light of these.

The consequences of keeping a family secret

There have been studies of parents to donor-conceived children, asking whether they intend to tell their children about the donor origin or not (eg. Cook et al. 19-95, Tjørnhøj-Thomsen 1999, Hargreaves 2006, Lalos et al. 2007). Far from all said that they would tell their offspring about the donor background while others said that they had not decided yet.

There has, however, been a tendency towards increased openness in recent years and in a New Zealand study from 2006 done by Katarina Hargreaves on 26 couples and single mothers with donor children, the majority of parents had told both friends and family about the insemination, as well as they planned to tell their children (Hargreaves 2006). Whether or not they actually do so is impossible to know. The study by Cook et al. (1995) where as little as 10% had told their child about the donor origin, is a bit older than Hargreaves' and this is probably an important factor to take in consideration. In the first decades of donor insemination, parents were adviced not to tell their child about the conception method (Cook et al. 1995:549, Adrian 2016:189) and it seems that most parents have followed that advice. An interlocutor of mine said about the Danish Facebook page connecting offspring from the same donor, that there were very few members from the 1980's compared to the 1990's and onwards. This might indicate that parents from that time have followed the advice from the health care professionals and never told their children about the conception method. Regarding the increased openness, Lalos et al. (2007) point to the same result, that there is indeed an increased openness among parents to donor children today. Their study was done in Sweden where it has been a legal right to all donor-conceived children to know of their way of conception as well as identifying information about the donor, since 1985. The study show that almost all of the parents have shared the information with friends and families, but only 61% had told their child. Of the remaining 39% some said that they would tell their child when she got older, while others did not intend to tell them at all (Lalos et al. 2007:1759). The problem of parents telling friends and family but not telling the child is that they are creating a "web of lies" and a secret so enormous that it is difficult to ever break free from in a non-traumatising way. Many couples in Lalos et al.'s study said that the burden of the secret has had a devastating impact on their relationships and that the longer they postpone the talk with their child, the harder it became (Lalos et al. 2007:1763). Both Turid and Julia recognised this from their own families. Turid had a hard time understanding why her parents never told and she is certain that her parents would not have told, had it not come about one day by accident. "*Simply because it has become such a knot. I mean, how do you say a thing like that after so many years? Then you would have told it already.*", she said

Out of the five donor children to which I have spoken, four of them have grown up in heterosexual families who had deliberately not told them about the donor. The last one grew up with a single mother and was told about the donor from her very early childhood. All five were conceived in times where their parents were not able to choose anything but sperm from an anonymous donor and was probably advised to secrecy from healthcare professionals. Some of the interlocutors are understanding about their parents following the advice of the doctors, while others are not. Some parents have kept the donor identification number and passed it on to the children when they have requested it, others have not. Though the circumstances are varying they all agree on two things; they all want to know that they are in fact donor children and they would all like to know who their donor is.

Julia, who was told when she turned 30, told me about when she first learned of her donor origin, "*I was shocked. I was angry. Yes… Not so much because I was a donor child, but because they hadn't told me.*" (Julia). When I asked how her parents thought about her feeling like that she said "*They thought that I was overreacting. That there is really nothing to talk about.*" (Julia). Julia however, definitely thought that there was something to talk about and got very upset with her parents that they did not want to help her process the new information. The only family member with whom she has spoken about it is her grandfather. He told her how he wanted to tell her earlier, but felt bound by her parents and that it was their responsibility to reveal the secret. Gustav, who was perhaps the one with the most pragmatic attitude towards his donor origin, told me how his parents had told him when he turned 18, "*To me it was actually quite okay. It wasn't really a big… It wasn't something I had expected… But I have never really been anything like my father!*" (Gustav). As he described it, it was not a defining thing to him. I asked him how his parents told him and he was quite vague when trying to remember, "*She opened a bit gentle. And then she told it in a way… To be honest, I don't really remember it that well.*" (Gustav). To others it was a great shock to learn about their origin. Lisa told me how her whole world fell apart when a friend of the family told her about the donor when she was about 8. She was in shock just after having learned that her father was not really her father, and she remembers "*What happens then is that my friend's mom doesn't understand at all why I'm breaking - I am breaking completely down - my world is really falling apart, and she really doesn't understand it. Cause as she says, and that is what you always get and what is the most annoying thing, the thing about 'your parents love you the same way as every other parent'. That it doesn't make any difference, you know.*" (Lisa). But to Lisa it made a great difference, and this is one of the most frustrating things to her, that when she tries to express the injustice she feels – people are neglecting her feelings, telling her that it is nothing to be bothered about. Lisa never talked to her parents about the fact that she was donor-conceived, but it was a defining factor in her upbringing and it was always both present and important to her.

Lisa is not only angry at her parents, she is furious at the society that allows for insemination to take place without any legislation ensuring that children are being informed about their alternative conception. She does not necessarily look at it as if parents are 'just' keeping a secret, she sees it as a full-blown lie, "*The problem is that you are not just lying once, you are lying SO many times as a parent. Over and over again! You are lying when the child is asking for your blood type in 7th grade at school and you 'can't remember'. You are lying so many times. And when your child says that it looks like you and you don't say no. You are lying so many times!*" (Lisa). She think that parents are to tell their donor children when they are rather young; when they start questioning where babies come from. To her there is no excuse postponing the revelation to the child turns 18. In this matter she is aligned with Lalos et al. who is pointing towards children paying less attention to their donor background the younger they are. In their study, parents had told their child at a median age of about 5 years and had not experienced any negative reactions regarding the matter. One of the couples in the study said about the impact of telling their young child that "*Now we don't have to guard our secret… the issue has become simple.*" (Lalos et al. 2007:1763). Parents in the study did not only express relief when having told their child, they also reported a stronger discomfort by postponing the revelation (ibid.).

Gustav however, has a quite different view upon parents keeping the donor origin a secret to the child. He told me how he had always felt it a bit odd that people got so upset at their parents for not telling them about the donor, as he said "*Well, I was really satisfied with my upbringing and had good parents, but it's clear that when doctors advice my parents not to say anything, and advised them very strongly not to say anything. And my mother lived with this and was tormented by this for many years - who am I to suddenly blame her for a lie that she didn't even want to keep but only kept because of advice from the health authorities.*" (Gustav). He does however recognise that maybe you could feel let down as a child if the parents motives are more selfish, and he continued, "*If the parents wished to keep it a secret and it was still revealed, then you would feel betrayed.*" (Gustav:00.40). Gustav was told when he turned 18 and is very satisfied with getting to know about the donor at that time, something he can only recommend, "*I wouldn't actually recommend it, for my own part, to tell it when the child is too young.*" (Gustav). Although Gustav have talked to his mother about the donor, and that she is in fact the one encouraging him to search for donor and donor siblings, he has never talked to his father about the donor, "*No, I haven't talked to my dad about it, not at all! Ever!*" (Gustav). His father passed away when Gustav was 19 and had only known about the donor for a rather short time. A common characteristic of the four interlocutors who grew up in families with both a mother and a father is that they express difficulties talking to their parents about the donor origin.

Among my interlocutors it has been varying whether their extended family have been aware of the involvement of a donor or not. In Gustav's case only his parents and paternal aunt knew, and in Ingun, Julia, Lisa and Turid's case the whole family knew. Although the insemination is a major and happy event to the parents, and although they might feel like shouting the news from the rooftop when finally being pregnant, this kind of information can never be taken back once it has come out. To impose a secret like that is something that should be considered very carefully. It is a heavy burden to bear for anyone, knowing that it might ruin the relationship between a child and her parents if you are to say something wrong. Turid recalls how she had a chat with an aunt some years ago after having found out of her donor origin, "*She did actually tell me how she thought it was a horrible* *thing for my parents to do, to charge her with a secret like that. Because she spent so much time with us and took care of us, and there was always something that she couldn't tell us.*" (Turid). Turid's aunt felt it as awful being forced to keep a secret from the children she saw on a regularly basis, and she told Turid in posterity how it had always been in her thoughts when she was with Turid and her sister.

In the study by Lalos et al. (2007) a majority of the parents who did tell their children emphasised the burden of the secret as a reason to tell. They explained how they were anxious about others to reveal the secret as well as they believed that the child had a fundamental right to know of its alternative conception (Lalos et al. 2007:1762). A tendency also described by Tjørnhøj-Thomsen (1999:144). Among the parents who had not yet told their child, the anxiety of others to tell, or the child to figure out for it self, was a present moment of fear (Lalos et al. 2007:1763).

If parents are telling family and friends without telling their child, they should therefore be aware of the shadows it might cast on the social relations that these family members are having with the child. Just as the secret might have a major negative impact on the relations between the parents, as well as with their child.

Passing the secret on

I asked my interlocutors whether they imagined themselves telling their future children about their donor origin. In doing so I hoped to better understand if they thought about the donor as a part of themselves that would be reproduced in the future. If the donor were to play a part in their future representation of kinship – either consciously or unconsciously. The opinions differed in that matter, but it became clear that it was not an easy question to answer. Turid, who thought it was important to be open about the her donor origin and had no difficulties to talk about the subject – except from with her parents – were uncertain about the question. After having thought hard about it she told me that she probably would not. If she does tell them, then she is afraid that her father would be robbed of the joy of being a 'real' grandfather. She is certain that it would be a great sorrow to him and she says "*I think that he would be sorry. I think he would find it very strange that they should know. He might be a bit like 'couldn't you tell them when I'm dead' or something like that.*" (Turid). She says it while laughing, but she soon turns serious again and ponders how she would then be reproducing her parent’s lie all over again. The family secret would then be passed on for the next generation to come. A secret she does not want to keep, a secret she feels in a way has nothing to do with her.

Another aspect in that matter is, that since all of the family, including her boyfriend’s family, and all of her friends know, she would have to ask all of them to lie to her children. To Turid it has been particularly difficult to come to terms with her whole family knowing without telling. She is the one who emphasise the most how the lie have caused an underlying awkward, and at times unpleasant, atmosphere within the family.

That she concludes the way she does, and indicates that she might continue the lie of her parents, was a surprise to me. It shows how many different interests she must take into consideration and how deeply rooted the secret is in her parents. She continually has to prove her loyalty towards her parents by actively abandoning her wishes for openness – not only in relation to how she might think of the donor, but also regarding the relationship she are to have with her own future children that would potentially encompass the same secrecy.

Gustav has the same duality towards continuously keeping the secret of his parents. In his family no one know of him being conceived with the help from a donor and he thinks that it is best to keep it that way. “*This isn’t really a major thing. I am who I am. And I don’t see anything positive coming out of me telling it. And if I were to tell it, then I had to tell it to everyone. But as I said, when there are more negative things coming out of it than positive, then I’d rather keep it to myself!*”, he said. He emphasises that he only has relatives on his deceased father's side and that he is the only blood relative to his paternal cousins. He will keep his donor origin a secret and thereby not disturb the current understanding of affiliation within the family. He goes on to state that “*Besides, this hasn’t really got anything to do with me, I think. You know, the person I am, that is just who I am.*” (Gustav). When saying so he indicates how the involvement of the donor is something having to do with his parents only. He *is who he is* despite the fact of a donor and not because of it. Though he says that it has nothing to do with him he too is a bit vague when it comes to whether or not he would want to tell his future children about the donor. He said “*You know what, I honestly don’t think my children care about it at all. Haha, it’s probably only a minimum.*” (Gustav). It sounds like he wants to tell his future children about his donor origin, but he did at the same time emphasise that he would not tell his paternal family. Whether he would then ask his children to keep the secret, I do not know. I had a difficult time asking into it as I felt that he was not too comfortable to talk about the issue. However it could just as well be my own assumptions on what was a suitable subject to critically question. Maybe he think of it as so unimportant to his children that he will not bother telling them but like Turid, he had not thought too hard about the potential dilemma.

Lisa is very clear on her not wanting children of her own. This is partly because of a difficult childhood, but also due to her ill health and bad physical condition and her missing knowledge about whether these conditions are hereditary or not. Julia already had a child when she found out and have told her child as well as everyone else. Ingun does not hide the fact either, so her considerations have more been in the way of how she could avoid having a donor child herself. She is aware not to let career come in the way, as well as not to push the decision of having children before her. She has, though, thought a lot about what would happen if she might end up as the single mother to a donor child herself, "*I think that I would be very guilty of double standards. But on the other hand I think that what I have been tired of that's the anonymity. So if I just chose an open donor it probably wouldn't be that bad…*" (Ingun). She goes on to think about how that child would, not only have half a family tree on its own, but also a mother with only one known parent, and concludes "*That would truly be a dismembered family tree that child would get and I really think that would be a pity.*" (Ingun).

The conclusion is that there is a very clear distinction between not knowing that you are donor-conceived and not knowing who your donor is. It becomes even more clear in the cases where the whole family in association with the parents have been aware of, and hiding the truth. This is something that is experienced as a definite breach of trust. We have also seen how the donor origin does not only play a role in their own lives but also in relation to the way they think about having children themselves. They are struggling with how to free themselves from the secret of their parents so that they are not continuing the lies and dilemmas of their parents in ways they are not comfortable with. It is as if their parents' decision is not possible for them to break free from. Whether it is the inherent family secret, the missing medical records or the missing branch of the family tree it poses some difficult questions to all of them.

In the next chapter we will see what impact these secrets and the revelation of them have on the donor children's understanding of their identity.

Losing identity and taking back control

Losing your'self'

Julia, who had a strong urge to talk about her new role as a donor child, and could not share her thoughts with her parents, looked for people like herself at other places. It turned out to be a difficult task since no forum existed at the time, not in the public nor on social media. According to social psychology, sharing information about the donor through a social relation is crucial when processing the new found information into the formation of a new self. George Herbert Mead (1863-1931) was a sociologist and psychologist who is acknowledged for his thoughts on the construction of the self and the importance of others in relation to the self perception. He argues that "*it is impossible to conceive of a self arising outside of social experience.*" (Mead 1934:1). Everything we do, we do with the awareness of what others would think about us doing so, he argued. The self is understood in relation to others, and we are carrying out different relations to different people, "*We divide ourselves up in all sorts of different selves with reference to our acquaintances. (...)* "*There are all sorts of different selves answering to all sort of different social reactions.*" (Mead 1934:1). Mead argues that all of these different elementary selves together constitute a complete self answering to all aspects of the social structures and processes (Mead 1934:2). A problem arises to the donor offspring as they find out that the self on which ground they have been entering in different social relations, turns out to be established under false pretences. As Mead saw the complete self as a reflection of the complete social process, so must the destabilisation of the complete self consequently destabilise all these processes. Mead draws an example of a child, not yet able to organise the different selves into a complete whole "*The child is one thing at one time and another at another, and what he is at one moment does not determine what he is at another.*" (Mead 1934:7). This is perhaps true to the donor offspring as well. When their self is destabilised and their relations are fractioned they are no longer able to navigate between the different selves as they were before the revelation. Several talk about how it felt like their world fell apart, and following Mead that might actually be true. When finding out that you were not the child you thought, then you are perhaps not able to be the adult you thought either.

Julia, Turid and Lisa told about the difficulties they had when trying to create an identity on the new terms. Julia said that "*It's like I have been living on a lie, you know.*" (Julia). Julia's statement is useful when trying to understand why the anonymous origin is rendered so important.

Their disorganised relations are having a direct impact on the way they think about family and kinship as well. They are suddenly forced to reconsider what actually constitute a family bond and they are trying to fixate the thought of the donor and potential donor-siblings in a new self. A self that on the one hand has to do with kinship, but on the other hand has nothing to do with family. As Mead argued that the different selves only arise in the social experience, it is very difficult for the donor children to create this donor-self. They have no social room through which they can fixate their new donor-self since the donor is absent and the parents are not willing to talk about the matter. In a way they are not able to re-emerge as a whole self before they have regained control over all of their socially divided selves.

Turid did not only experience confusion related to her identity and her belonging in the family. She suffered from actual delusions and was for a long period of time not able to conceive her own picture. She recalls how "*I couldn't remember my facial expression and my gesticulation and stuff like that. I couldn't remember what it looked like. So if I was talking to you, for example, then I would take on your face, so that in my head I would just have your face on…*" (Turid). Sometimes she would actually have to leave a conversation and go and have a look in the mirror to regain control over herself and remember what she looked like. She ascribes her delusions to the fact that she does not look like her mother, why she has always mirrored herself in her father. When she realised then, that she did actually not look like her father either, her self image was cracked "*Because, all of a sudden I found out that the man you thought you looked like all of your life, you don't do that! And you sure don't look like your mother – at all! So who the hell do I look like then? I look like some man somewhere out there, and I look like him a lot!*" (Turid). When Turid learned that she was not the person she thought, her self perception was shattered. The identity marker - that she physically resembled her father - was taken away and the relation to her sister was dismembered as well as they do not share donor. This destabilised the understanding of her identity to a degree where she was physically not able to recognise herself anymore. Mead writes how "*The phenomenon of dissociation of personality is caused by a breaking up of the complete, unitary self into the component selves of which it is composed…*" (Mead 1934:2). The visual disturbances vanished into the air as soon as she saw a picture of her donor. She was suddenly able to identify what characteristics she had inherited from the donor, and thereby she was finally able to see in which ways she actually did resemble her mother. This gave her a sense of closure and she was able to put the visual disorder behind her from one day to the other. Turid was able to reconcile with the missing biological link with her father when she was finally able to mirror herself in another relation. Even though she has not had any contact with her donor, knowing who he is is enough for her to establish a framework for this new part of her identity.

An important point to Mead is that the self need a social framework or relation within which it is established (Mead 1934:1). This might be the reason why some of the interlocutors have been so fond of the communities that have emerged on social media, such as Facebook groups, Seed Siblings and the Donor Sibling Registry. These communities offer a social space that their parents are not willing to create for them through their lack of acknowledging their difficult situation. One interlocutor said that "*They haven't been super enthusiastic about me coming forward, and stuff like that. It's not something they approve of. But that is kind of my choice, and it's not like it has anything to do with them.*" This expresses very clear what most interlocutors seem to think – that their search for the donor is an event cut off from their parents. It is a separate thing that has nothing to do with their family or parents, but only themselves. In these forums they are able to discuss all of the things and emotions that their parents are minimising and it thus becomes a space where the donor children can contextualise their donor-self and regain control of their complete self. In this light it is understandable why the donor children see it as a pollution of their group when parents are turning their focus towards pregnancy and parent-related issues.

While the donor children are in the process of adjusting to their new terms of identity and reconstructing the new whole self, all their social relations are affected. Lisa, who found out when she was 8, remembers how she subsequently would react towards strangers, "*It went so far that I would, when we were at the supermarket, I would go and ask strangers if they were my father.*" (Lisa) The self is not fixed in relation to others and the borders between known and unknown is blurred to a degree where all men is a potential father. Ingun described something similar when talking about donor-siblings. Though she does not know who her donor is she knows that there are more children out there originating from the same donor. "*It means that when I see someone who looks like me, you know… Then I might ask them 'what does your mother and father do?'. Ask them something about their family structure to get a hint about whether they might be donor children as well.*" (Ingun). She is aware that there might be some potential sibling-relations awaiting her and until she find them it could be anyone. In this quote she is expressing an attitude towards family as something biologically founded. When asking someone what her father does, she anticipates that the answer will reveal some kind of incoherence in the family structure that she might recognise as being donor related. The understanding of what is defining for a kinship relation is something that we will explore more in depth in chapter three.

Both Ingun and Lisa furthermore express how they have restricted themselves from having certain sexual partners out of fear of incestuouse relations. Ingun and Lisa are both primarily attracted to men who look foreign and they are both considering this to be an unconscious reaction to their unknown genetic origin. Julia, who already had a son when finding out about the donor origin, told how "*The first thing I did (haha), that was to ask his [her son] father if he was absolutely certain about who his father was. And then I felt really dirty, you know... When I found out. Just the thought about maybe having dated your own brother, bwadr!*" (Julia). All three are having problems about how to engage in relations with strangers, as they are lacking a point of reference when their donor-self is not yet constructed. Before coming to terms and rebuilding a self-understanding encompassing the new self, all social relations are unfixed. Lisa no longer thinks about strangers in the street potentially being her donor, and along with Ingun and Julia, she is quite reflective about their choice of future intimate partners. Turid has not had the same thoughts as she have been in a committed relationship in her adult years.

Turid is the only one describing actual physical symptoms related to the revelation of the donor origin. Although Ingun have not suffered physically she have suffered on the personal level. Growing up with a single mother she have always longed for, not only knowing who her donor was, but also a father figure, "*When I was small it was basically just like 'I want a dad like the other kids have!' But then I got a stepfather and discovered how that wasn't necessarily the thing. And then it became more a question of 'where do I come from, why do I look like I do, why am I the way I am – what is nature and what is nurture?'*" (Ingun).

By not having a father Ingun differs from the others in my group of interlocutors. One thing she has gotten used to throughout her whole life – feeling left out. Now being in her early 20's, she grew up in a time with significant fewer single mothers to donor children than is the case today. She had a tough time growing up, she missed a father and was bullied by the other kids because she did not have one. She recalls how they called her a liar and did not believe that a child could be born without a father, "*There wasn't really anyone believing* *me, it was always something like my parents were probably divorced or my dad just died or left or something. There wasn't anyone who understood it when I told that I had no dad. And in 1st grade my mom had to come with me to school one day and arrange with the teacher that she could tell my classmates how I was born, so that they could stop bullying me and calling me a liar.*" (Ingun). Though Ingun has always been aware of her donor origin, and never been afraid to talk about it, it has still caused her a great deal of problems. It is thus not only the secrecy concerning the donor conception that are causing problems for the donor children. The anonymous donor is posing a problem in itself both in relation to how Ingun look at herself and how others perceive her. We are constantly engaging in social relations and adjusting our behaviour in accordance to how we think others might perceive our actions. This is a way to signal filiation with a certain group (Goffman 1992). When we are entering a new relation we are gathering all the information possible about that person so we know how to adapt our expectations to the general impression of him and the following situations (Goffman 1902:11). When the other children learned that Ingun does not have a father she might be said to violate the boundaries for the group affiliation by standing outside the defined category of childhood as consisting of a mother and a father respectively. Inguns classmates does not know how to respond to her family situation, and by saying that her father have either left or died they are in a way trying to pull her into a narrative they can relate to. Through our actions and our anticipations of how others are picking up our signals we are constantly trying to control the image we are leaving on people (Goffman 1992:13). But Ingun's membership in the group are put under press and she is not able to control the impressions she leaves on others, as she is not recognised as an equal part of the group. Ingun said, that when she is presenting herself today, one of the characterising facts about herself that she highlights is her being donor-conceived. In this way she is trying to define the situation she is entering and the counterpart will have to enter into her definition of the situation to avoid an open conflict regarding situational definition (Goffman 1992:18).

The power of a number

The interlocutors I have spoken to have been very clear about how they think of their donor number as important information. The donor number is originally a piece of information that has been given to their parents/mother after having been through the process of insemination. Among my interlocutors, the opinion is that this information belongs to the child alone, a thing that was widely agreed upon. Most referred to them as '*my information'* and stressed that it should not be up to the parents whether they want to pass on this information to the child or not, as one of them said "*It is all about this information belonging to me and not my parents.*" (Lisa). When they talk about it as *my information*, it seems like it is a way of taking control over the course of events, both at present and in the future, if they would ever want to search for donor or donor siblings.

In an article from 2000 Janet Carsten describes a group of adult adoptees who have contacted, and made reunions with, their birth kin. Their main arguments to search for birth kin was to '*know where I come from*' and '*find out who I am'*. (Carsten 2000:689).
These are arguments I have been presented with as well. The thought that 'to be complete' it is crucial to know one's genetic origin is apparently prevalent amongst both donor-conceived and adoptees. To this extent, Morgan did certainly not live in vain.
In her article on adoptees, Carsten notes that when searching for, or making contact to, the birth kin, it is a way to take back control over their own past and to achieve a kind of agency in their own life. They are trying to establish a clear continuity between their past, present and future (Carsten 2000:689). I have witnessed the same longing for control among my interlocutors, as one of them said "*It is my mother's piece of paper [the donor number], but really, the information is about me, and she does not have any choice. What I am doing with this information, that she has nothing to do with. She certainly had to get used to the fact that it was no longer her and my dad's course of events*" (Turid).
This quote sums up quite well how most interlocutors expressed their view on the donor number. It is a way for the donor children to gain control over the situation as the number acts as a mediator between child and donor. When parents hand over the information there is a shift in the power balance as the parents are no longer able to control the situation.
While Ingun and Turid have their donor number, neither Lisa, Julia or Gustav have theirs. Not having a donor number hampers the possibilities of finding information about the donor himself, but there are still many ways to work around the process of identifying donors or donor-siblings. There are specialised Facebook groups for donor children without their donor number where people upload childhood photos of themselves and look for others who might resemble them. Another possibility is to upload a DNA test to a central registry and hope for a match.

It is however not just about identifying the donor. Lisa said "*I think it is mostly about having a choice! I don't even know, if I did have these results, then it might be more a question about whether I would upload them and ask if anyone knew of a donor number or something like that.*" (Lisa). In this way she is framing the donor number as a representation of self determination rather than a source of information.

None of the three interlocutors without a donor number seem to blame their parents, they are aware that they are conceived in a time in which secrecy was the prevailing virtue. Instead they blame the authorities that the use of donor sperm are not subject to more strict control.

A well-known secret

Lisa, Julia and Turid have in common that their parents have been hiding from them that they were in fact donor children. It has only come out by chance because of external circumstances and their parents had not planned for them to know. Even though they do know of it today, their parents are still reluctant, or not willing at all, to talk about it. This is probably one of the reasons why they are keeping their thoughts and search to themselves. In the case of Julia, she has felt alone with the information and unable to share it with her parent who had the approach that "*Now they had told me, and then we didn't need to talk any more about it!*" (Julia). The same thing happened to Turid when she first learned about her donor background. Her parents did start off by stating that if she had any questions she should just bring them forward. She has tried to talk to her parents about it, mostly on a pragmatic level about what characteristics her parents had chosen for the donor and things like that. But she does not like to bring it up anymore, even though she would actually like to talk to her parents about the subject: "*They are really bad at talking about it. It's a very, very sore spot to them. And it's a deep sorrow in my father's eyes every time we talk about it. It really is!*", she said. This shows how it is a theme she has accepted to avoid because it is causing her father pain. She told me how, earlier on before she knew of it, there had always been a somewhat tense atmosphere in the extended family caused by the fact that everyone was afraid to say something wrong and thereby maybe reveal the secret. Although she know of it now, things are somewhat still the same. "*I think my parents have told them that we know now [the family]. So, I think it is to avoid it being the other way around now. That it should be a thing to discuss at the diner table, that we are to talk about how they weren't able to have kids.*", she said. Even though the secret is out, it is still not something

that can be discussed openly. The lie is so ingrained in her parents that they are not able to break free from it, even though she really wants them to. It might appear that, just as well as Turid thinks her search for the donor has nothing to do with her parents, her parents do not think their choice of donor insemination has anything to do with Turid. In the quotation above she mentions how she thinks that, to her parents, it is still about the fact that they were not able to have children on their own. To Turid on the other hand, it is about her being born with a different DNA than her father. If this is so, it is very interesting that their perspectives are so different. Even though they are thinking about the same situation they are placing themselves respectively in the centre of the event, why it is turning out to be some quite different things at stake. To Turid's parents, it might seem that their daughter has not got anything to do with the donor insemination since it happened due to events that relate to her parents – something that parents in other studies express as well (Lalos et al. 2007:1764). To Turid in return, the donor has not got anything to do with her parents since it in a way is an external factor; it is not a part of her family narrative but something concerning her as an individual. This is quite interesting, how the donor is central to both parts, yet still the thing that is tearing them apart. Turid says about her father's reluctance toward discussing the subject "*I'm actually having a hard time acquainting myself with it. As a man, you… Well okay it didn't work, but get on with it. You have got two lovely kids and that's just the way it is.*" (Turid). She does not think that the donor is important in relation to the bond between her and her parents and thus she does not understand why it still holds importance to her parents. The connection to the donor is just an extra adding to her own personal identity. To her, it is cut off from the familiar circle.
Even though Turid's parent finally told about the donor involvement it keeps on causing secrets and and non-disclosure in the family.

One thing that might complicate the communication about the donor origin within the families is that the language in which we talk about sperm donation is insufficient. It is difficult to talk about without the implication of the donor as somewhat having a fatherly undertone. This can be visualised with Vivien Burr's (1995) use of discourses in relation to how we establish our identity. Like our self is divided into many smaller parts, so too is our identity built up of many different discourses. Some we are able to form ourselves, but some are imposed by society (Burr 1995:51-52). She writes that "*For each 'thread' of our identity, there is a limited (sometimes very limited) number of discourses on offer out of which we might fashion ourselves.*" (Burr 1995:51-52). While she is giving the example of sexuality as being limited to two main discourses, so too is family a concept with a limited amount of available discourses. The discourse of parenthood is locked to a narrative of biological affiliation and is thus difficult to navigate when this is not the case. When having to use terms like 'social father', 'donor-father', or 'adoptive parents' for that sake, it is a sign of a commonly accepted underlying premise recognising the 'real' parents being someone else. Burr writes that we "*... have no form of representation to ourselves or to the people around us other than in the form of these discourses, and so we must inevitably adopt the identity…*" (Burr 1995:52). Like the self of the interlocutors are destabilised, so are the parents challenged by the discourse of parenthood that only leaves very few possible interpretations. In fact the discourse of adulthood is itself narrow in the way that it is closely tied to the discourse of parenthood (Tjørnhøj-Thomsen 1999).

The public debate and the role of the authorities

In the public debate concerning donor insemination the most frequent perspectives are those of the parents-to-be. My interlocutors feel that their perspective are widely ignored. When it does come up, their concerns and arguments are often neglected or quickly dismissed. Especially to Lisa this is a great frustration. To her, the worst thing of finding out about being a donor child was that her parents had lied to her and that she is not able to retrieve information about her donor, and thereby herself, when it comes to health records.

She is framing anonymous sperm donation as a well organised theft of identity. She tries to explain how she is disappointed in her parents but angry at the authorities when saying "*It's not something that, I'm not angry at my parents or angry at… But I'm angry that it's legal to just delete half of a child's DNA from birth, just for the sake of the parents. I'm so sick and tired of the donor and the parents always being of the primary concern.*" (Lisa).

Lisa has had poor health since childhood and is today diagnosed with several chronic diseases. In her encounter with the health care system it has been a great disadvantage not to know of her full biological background, and on a personal level it is a great frustration to her, not knowing what else she might expect of bad health in the future. Although she has on a personal level come to terms with her donor origin she is faced with the fact every time she is involved with the health care system. This is experienced as a form of stigmatisation from the authorities (Sundhedsstyrelsen) that in her view have stolen the information from her themselves.

Turid is concerned about her missing health care information as well. She has not suffered from poor health herself and her concern is more levelled at future pregnancy and children. Though she does not find it easy to talk about the donor origin with her parents she imagines pregnancy to be a reason to bring the issue to the table. "*I imagine that I, if I get pregnant once, would articulate the issue on my own. You know, say something like how we would get some extra scannings out of security, or some extra tests - tell them that it is something we have discussed with the doctors.*", she said. It is interesting that Turid is so aware of her donor origin as something that will keep on playing a central role, not only to herself but also her future children. She is afraid that she might be the bearer of a hidden disease or something of the like. A risk that her parents might be aware of as well, since Turid goes on to tell that "*Maybe they are a bit afraid that they unknowingly, but still directly, have given me a disease because of their choice.*" (Turid). This is an example of how the choice of the parents might have immeasurable consequences in the future. Turid reflects on how she is probably perfectly fine and how everyone might have all sort of hidden things in their DNA. Still, the uncertainty will never go away and the fear she have might never be eased. In this way the choice of her parents will keep on being defining for generations to come. In Carsten's article on adoptees she too writes about the implications an unknown genealogic background might have in relation to health care and pregnancy (Carsten 2000:697). This is an example of how the unknown is continuously ascribed an importance and that it is reproduced in the next generation.

Turid understands her father as her 'real' father, but she is at the same time well aware that the donor does have a major impact not only on her, but also on her future children. Though she is trying to keep the donor out of sight, and often refers to him as 'a blob of sperm', he is still playing a central role when Turid is imagining her life in the future and her own continuation of the lineage.

These consequences are probably something that parents are not aware of when getting inseminated and finally expecting the child they have longed for. This is one of the reasons that Lisa is emphasising a greater amount of control with the field of insemination with donor sperm; parents are not in a situation where they are able to foresee all the potential pitfalls and consequences that their choice might cause in the future. She says that "*I can't understand that there isn't just a minimum – for example an offer to talk to someone like me* *while you are in the process of considering it. Or talking to a psychologist about how you deal with this, like when the child is able to comprehend it, when can you begin to explain it and what are the consequences of not telling it. All that stuff. Right now there is NOTHING, it's just one big happy-go-lucky.*" (Lisa). She is critical of the authorities having no problem with engaging in the organising of sperm donation and insemination, and she believe that they are falling way behind when it comes to securing the rights of the children that are actually the outcome of all of this.

Lisa believes that there are several things still need to be straightened up and think that it is only a fair demand that the health care authorities should clean up its own mess, as she says. In this matter Ingun fully agrees. She puts it pretty clear as she says "*Since it is a regulated system within the health care system, I think it is only fair to demand that the authorities do it in a way that is fair to the children. And that, I think, is only done if the children are to chose for themselves when turning 18 [if they want information about the donor].*" (Ingun). They are both quite active on social media in relation to the field as they try to give the donor children a voice in the debate. Lisa tries to increase awareness on the field in general and are using her own story to bring alive another face than that of the happy parents-to-be in the public debate. Both Ingun and Lisa argues that information about being a donor child should be a legal right to the child. They are angry about the government allowing, and upholding, a practice that have caused them so much pain and frustration. They are sorry that the legal system protects the rights of the donor instead of the best interest of the child. As one said, "*It is always from the perspective of the grown ups! Even when we are discussing abortion we are better at seeing it from the child's perspective than we are when talking about donor children.*" (Lisa). Lisa outlined to me a system where the child could contact a third party to request certain information about the donor, these being health care informations and the like. The donor would then report back to the third party who would assure that the child got its answers.

Ingun want full openness in terms of the donor identity and argues that it should be a legal right to know of one's donor. "*Well, I just think that every child should have the right to find out who their biological father is. Not to have a social relation to him... But everyone should have the right to know where they come from since it has been done in such a regulated way, right?*", she said. This is a wish that all five share, that it should be a right to know if you are a donor child, as well as to find out information about your donor.

When talking about insemination and sperm donation there might be a tendency toward talking about it as a single event, it happens and then it is over. Lisa says with a sigh that "*It is not just about the moment where the donor delivers his sperm or the moment where it is inseminated in the womb, it is about all of our lives - us that are the outcome. Because we are the products of other people's choice, right.*"

I believe that this quote sums up quite well what all the interlocutors have been circling around; they are not able to change the decision their parents made, and although the parents and the donor might think of it as a just a way to help people become pregnant, this is something that will define the self-understanding of the child throughout its lifetime – and potentially beyond.

Ingun told how her mother had once said, that if she knew how intense and extensive Ingun's sorrow would be about her missing donor, then she would probably not have had her. I think that this example illustrate quite well what might be at stake.

Lisa stresses that this is the exact reason why it is necessary to bring into focus the process of deciding whether the donor should be anonymous or not. She believes that there should be an obligatory counselling with a psychologist or a therapist as well as some information material about the potential consequences. Because in the process of becoming pregnant, when the happiness overshadows the potential future downsides, you still have to take into consideration that your child might not approve your decision when growing up and you have to be prepared to answer the questions that will inevitably come.

As to the argument of a decrease in the donor pool if anonymity were not legal, I have met only shrugs from my interlocutors. "*Then there might be longer waiting lists to get a donor child, because there isn't enough semen right now. Fair enough. Then you just await getting a donor child like you're awaiting an adopted child. Everything else is spoiled! That you want a child right now, but in an indefensible way*", Ingun said.

Lisa said essentially the same thing when she told me "*You know what, it's not a human right to have children, it's a privilege!*"

A sperm-bank-thing to say

While Lisa, Julia and Ingun are trying to raise awareness of the potential problems the unknown donor origin might cause the child, people often dismiss them, referring to all of the happy donor families out there.

Though the stories in this report might not be representative for the group of donor children as a whole, they should not be ignored either.

Some find that they are not being taken seriously when entering the debates and that it might be difficult since the public debate is often led by parents-to-be and the sperm banks.

Some have spent a great deal of time and energy trying to raise the debate from the perspective of donor children, but still feel like they are not taken seriously. When an interlocutor had participated in a Facebook discussion regarding whether or not to chose anonymous donation she expressed frustration as she said "*If I have been in dialogue with a mother to-be on a social media and I have told my personal story, how bad I thought it was, and they still chose an anonymous donor - then I think they are shitting on me! And I am practicing not to take it personally…*" (Ingun) She is saying it with a smile, but she soon gets serious again and continues, "*That's also the reason that I could not be bothered with these debates anymore, because people are doing it anyway! They use anonymous donors even though they know that there are children, like me, who feel really bad by not knowing where we come from.*" (Ingun).

Lisa express how she feels patronised in the debate when the industry and others use arguments like 'you should be happy just to be alive'. She has met a great deal of negative attitudes when expressing her discontent regarding the legislation on sperm donation. She recalls one time an uncle of hers asked why she could not just be happy about it. If her parents had not done what they did, then she would not have been alive, he argued – would she not want to be alive? "*And back then I was actually at a point in my life where I really did not want to be alive. Because I felt so wrong and so strange from everyone else*", she said. This insinuation of her being ungrateful have often been voiced when she tries to raise critical awareness of the subject.

Ingun has faced the same question many times, but she thinks that most people are more curious than negative towards her, "*... and then there is someone like Ole Schou*[14]*, from the sperm bank, you know, who says that I should just be happy because otherwise I wouldn't have been alive. So I think of it as more of a sperm-bank-thing to say.*" (Ingun).

It is quite understandable that this is her position toward the sperm banks, at least one of them. On its website, Cryos writes about donor offspring having negative experiences about their anonymous donor origin that "*Other people can also have a traumatic life with*

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[14] Founder and CEO in Cryos International

communication difficulties and problems with interpersonal relations with their father. The only difference is that other people do not have this "explanation" (scapegoat) to their problems. Moreover, these DI-children, who plead injustice to their person, would not have existed at all had it not been for the anonymous donor. Their demand is thus self-contradictory. The alternative is not to exist." (cryosinternational.com).
It is experienced as difficult to argue against a rhetoric with such a paternalistic and patronising tone. If this view towards anonymous donation, that it does not result in problems not also occurring in 'normal' families, then it is more understandable that there are not any more attention towards the practice.

Some interlocutors express how they are fully in their right to have a say in the debate on anonymous donation but that they are often cut of with arguments like the above mentioned. They feel they are shut down when raising critiques of the current system as well as risk being subjected to insinuations of them being ungrateful. As one of my interlocutors said "*You would never say that to a person with a clinical depression- that he ought to be happy just to be alive.*" (Lisa). Lisa has not only faced the patronisation regarding her critique of the system but also felt the anger of parents-to-be, "*You know, they get angry because everything is just SO good, and because of that whole [insemination] process being so tough, and it's difficult to talk about and 'we will figure it out along the way'. But you don't figure it out along the way – you are to fucking figure it out before you enter the door at the clinic!*" (Lisa). She laughs a bit when she says it, but it is clear that she does not think that it is particularly funny. She finds it absurd that there is no one in the process questioning whether or not parents-to-be are choosing an anonymous or open donor and on what background.
As we finished our interview and she lit another cigarette she looked at me and said "*You just always assume that we are to be happy children, right? Because we are made in such a happy way.*" (Lisa).

‘Natural’ kinship?

Being alike or looking alike

Hargreaves (2006) describes a situation where the parents of a donor child were asked by a friend if the baby resembled its real father, referring to the donor. The parents were quite upset as they felt that the father *was* the real father, and they clearly meant that there was an actual physical resemblance between father and child (Hargreaves 2006:269). This use of physical resemblance is a way to establish relatedness even though there are no genetic bond. This is also noticed within the field of adoption studies where parents are often using this practice to establish the parent-child relation – a practice that the Norwegian anthropologist Signe Howell designates as ‘kinning’. Kinning, she says is *“… the process by which a foetus or new-born child (or a previously un-connected person) is brought into a significant and permanent relationship with a group of people that is expressed in a kin idiom.*” (Howell 2003:465). In her paper on this phenomenon (Howell 2003) she shows how parents to transnationally adopted children in this process of kinning their child, are highlighting their likeness with the child as she writes “*Commenting on the sturdy physique of his newly allocated Ethiopian son, the burly, muscular father told me, of course, this 6-month-old baby was his son. Not only were they built alike but, just like his father, the little boy was clearly made for the outdoor life of farming, fishing and hunting.*” (Howell 2003:473). I find it interesting that Hargreaves identifies the same practices within the field of donor children. Although the act of kinning is identified among parents to donor offspring (Hargreaves 2006, Nordqvist 2014), it is not something that my interlocutors have felt especially present in their own upbringing. Most of my interlocutors however emphasised that they had always been very aware of how they did not look the least like their father. Especially one recalls with sadness how she was never told that she looked like either of her parents. “*Never ever have there been something like ‘don’t think about that, you’ve got it from me’ or ‘that is some temper you’ve got, that must be from your father’. Things like that have been totally shut down.*”, Turid said. She tries to rationalise her parents’ reluctance to articulate resemblances in event when saying “*Basically, I think that they simply didn’t know what was from my mother and what was from a strange blob of sperm.*” (Turid).

Another one told how it had always been a standing joke within the extended family that the differences between father and son were so obvious, “*There are several of our*

acquaintances who have made jokes about how I was never anything like my father. Not in behaviour nor in appearance." (Gustav). He too rationalises as he thinks of how unpleasant it must have been to his father listening to all of these jokes over the years. In his family no one without the maternal aunt knew of his donor conception. He told me how he, of course, noticed, but never really thought about these differences "*I never really thought about that it might actually be a possibility - that he wasn't my biological father. Well, yes we were a bit different, okay then. But I never cared about it, it wasn't really a problem to me.*" (Gustav). It does appear however, that it is a two-folded question when talking about whether or not they are like their fathers. Most of them distinguish rather clearly between physical and psychological likeness. Gustav told me how he never really thought about the reason that he and his father was physically so unlike each other. Yet he told me how he was always puzzled that he and his father were so different in terms of interests. "*There is a great difference to those [father and son's] fields of interest! (...) We did not have the same interests. But on the other hand, I don't know if these interests are from my mother's side or from the donor.*", he said.
He is not the only one bringing forward how he feels different from his father in terms of interests and educational choice. Lisa said: "*Well, I am the first in my family to get an education and I have always been really clever at school. So it might have been an explanation to these kind of things [the donor origin]. Why I liked things and had interests that my family doesn't give a shit about and that they just don't understand.*" Although it is important for her to distinguish herself from the family on an intellectual level, she does not mind saying that she actually looks like, not only her father, but also her paternal cousins – well knowing that from a biological perspective this is not possible.

Julia emphasised the same issue. She told me how she, of course, looked like her father, "*Well, you take after your parents. What they do, how they move, what they say. Every child does that, so in that way yes [I do look like my father].*" (Julia). Even though there might not be any genetic likenesses there will always be some kind of physical resemblance anyway. Tjørnhøj-Thomsen (1999) have earlier showed how this argument is also used and elaborated by some fathers to donor children. That the relatedness to the child is embedded in the social bond rather than the genetic tie. She argues that to the fathers the kin relation consists in the way they are marking their child through the caring and nursing in the upbringing (Tjørnhøj-Thomsen 1999:152) – an argument that Julia's quote above is substantiating. Where the experiences I have referred to is from the perspective of donor offspring, all of the literature to which I have referred is based on the perspective of the parents. It is indeed possible that the parents to my interlocutor do think themselves that they have done their best to 'kin' their child. The salient point is that it is not experienced that way by the donor children.

Kinning in reverse?

Turid, who was never told that she looked like her parents, or that they saw themselves in her, was always aware that there were some physical irregularities within the nuclear family. She and her sister were never anything like each other and while the sister looked like their mother Turid did not. She identified with her father instead, one of the main reasons that the revelation hit her as hard as it did.

Since she identified with her father, but never was told that she resembled him, she did her best to be like him on a social level. For many years her wish was to enter into the same line of business as her father. Perhaps it could be argued that she was unconsciously trying to tighten the familiar bond to her father through a social resemblance he could not dismiss. In this way, Turid might be said to practice a kind of reversed kinning.

Parents being afraid of donor contact

In the study by Lalos et al. the parents claim as a reason for not telling their children that they do not see the donor conception as having anything to do with the child (Lalos et al. 2007:1764). There was also a fear among fathers that if the child knew that they were not related by blood, then the child would reject him as the 'real' father (Lalos et al. 2007:1766). My interlocutors have however been quite clear about their donor not being a sudden substitution for their father, except perhaps of Ingun. Gustav is probably the one coming closest to doing that exact thing when he said "*I think that it was a very good thing to be a part of the whole 'my dad is stronger than your dad' discussion. When you are young, right.*" (Gustav). When saying this, it seems like Gustav regards the donor as the 'real father'. The other interlocutors have been very clear about them not thinking any different about their father just because of a donor. In fact, they seem to think of the donor as something cut off from their parents and their family in general. It is more of an outside party only having to do with themselves. When he says that he would not be able to enter a discussion of 'whose father is the strongest' if knowing he was a donor child he is making a rather distinct difference between his father and his donor, suddenly referring to the donor as his 'real' father. This points toward an incongruence within Gustav's understanding of kinship and fatherhood. Although he talks about his father as 'father', his 'real' father is nonetheless his donor. Another one who touched a bit upon the same issue is Lisa.

In the study by Carsten (2000) a grown adoptee was faced with demands and advice from the birth mother whom she met for the first time as a grown up – something that felt extremely inappropriate due to their lack of connectedness (Carsten 2000:691). Lisa is telling me the exact opposite of what Carsten has explored. When she found out that her father was not her biological father she was at the beginning in fact pushing him away, "*If you are not my father, then you don't tell me what to do!*" (Lisa). While the above mentioned adoptee is highlighting the lack of social relations to the mother as a reason why she should not be giving motherly advice, Lisa is highlighting the lack of biological relation to her father as a reason why he is not to tell her what to do. This is a way of juggling what kinship and family mean, blurring the borders between social and biological belonging in a way that fits your current situation.

Turid is keeping the contact to her donor to herself because she think of it as personal information, but to a great extent also because she does not wish to upset her father. She told me how she believed that her father had always had an underlying fear that she would find the donor and feel a stronger familial connection with him, "*He is terrified that we would use the donor numbers. Like, TOTALLY – it would break his heart! We have however, actually used them to something, because that is not his choice (laughing). So I have not told him about it. They do not know that we have used them.*" (Turid). This is by no means a fear that Turid's father is alone with. In her study Hargreaves shows that some parents to donor children are afraid that their child would want to search for the donor later on and feel an immediate and strong connection (Hargreaves 2006:277). Just as some members of the extended family were afraid that the donor might be meddling in the future (Hargreaves 2006:270). Although one might assume that it is a fear related to the fact that the father is not able to reproduce himself and therefore feel intimidated by another man being the 'natural' father of his child, this is a present problem in families without a male father as well. In a study from 2003 done on 41 donor children in 24 lesbian families, Vanfraussen, Ponjaert-Kristoffersen & Brewaeys show that half of the children wanted to find out more about the donor, while the other half did not express such a need (Vanfraussen et al. 2003). The majority of the children who did not want information about the donor said that it was due to loyalty towards their social mother (Vanfraussen et al. 2003:34). Although there is no social father present, the children are still very aware that their parent(s) might feel let down if the they indicate a need to look for the donor.

In a study on single mother families with donor children, Zadeh, Freeman and Golombok (2015) describe how mothers thought of the donor as being either absent or present in their family narrative. The mothers who thought of the donor as absent were likely to think of him as unimportant to their child as well (Zadeh et al. 2015:122). To keep out the donor of their family narrative and demonstrate the unimportance of him as a person some talked about it as donor sperm rather than a sperm donor (Zadeh et al. 2015:121). They quote a mother who says "*I don't really talk about him as a person, cos he's not really a person, is he, in our lives? He's not, we don't see him on a personal basis.*" (Zadeh et al. 2015:121). In relation to what we have seen in this report, although the results build upon a very small group of donor children, this might seem naive. I cannot put it better than Julia as she said "*You just have to keep in mind that these children do not stay children forever! One day they grow up, you know, and it is their life, and they have the right to know where they come from.*" (Julia). The children from the study of Vanfraussen et al. who would like to know more about the donor were curious about what their donor looked like and "*These children obviously wanted to discover more about themselves by means of information about the donor.*" (Vanfraussen et al. 2003:34). This is the very same curiosity that I have met. Like Turid who express how she is torn between her father not wanting her to learn about the donor and her own need to find out more about him.

In some families there is a desire to search for donor-siblings to one's children so that they can form family affiliations with donor-siblings (Freeman et al. 2009:506). A paradox concerning this practice is that parents who chose anonymous donor are also engaged in the search for such sibling-relations to their child. It seems, then, as if the biological bond between siblings are accounted more valuable than that of the genitor. It is interesting that while most parents does not acknowledge the shared biology between donor and child as being important, they do regard the donors biology as important in the way it help create siblings to the child. It is thus not because parents does not recognise the importance of biology in relation to kinship, but they are able to negotiate the terms so that it is only rendered a significant feature in some relations.

A sister or a stranger?

One thing is parents being afraid that the child should establish parental relations with a ‘stranger’. Another thing is how donor children might suddenly have ‘siblings’ wandering around. The attitude toward the search for such siblings have been very diverse in my research, both how the interlocutors think about and talk about it. Some say ‘sister’, some say ‘half-sister/brother’ and one do not think about it as a sibling relation at all.

Julia who grew up an only child has focused her search more at finding siblings than on finding the donor. She use the term ‘sister’ and has actually been able to find a sister. Unfortunately they did not ascribe the same values to their relation and this have been a disappointment to Julia. She considered their relation as being family and highlighted how they not only had the same physical appearance but also had made a lot of the same choices in their lives. This was to her a sign that they had a strong connection although they had lived their separate lives, not knowing about each other until being in their thirties. This connection she attributed to their shared biology and found that is was equally valid to the social connection among siblings growing up together. Because of their shared biology they are kin and this ought to lead to a social relation like that of other siblings. In this understanding of kinship she is sharing Morgan’s premise of kinship. While according to Schneider it is not the actual shared biology that establish a kin relation. It is the symbolic value of blood (Schneider 1972) that are the basis for the kinship and following this, Julia is not wrong when she thinks of offspring from the same donor as a sister. The problem occurs when the sister does not agree in this definition of a kin relation - “*I have been looking because I really wanted to find siblings and have those sibling relations. And she has been looking because she thought it could be funny to know if there were any. So I have been more aggressive in my search than she has and I really tried to get the familial bond established, right. So we had quite different expectations.*” (Julia).

The incoherence in the perceptions of a valid kin relation robs the symbol of its meaning thus making it nothing but mere biology. While biology is then to be understood as kinship is less straightforward. As mentioned earlier in the report there have been a tendency to look at biology as equal to natural and therefore in itself constituting a kin relation. Julia does however also enhance how the two had made a lot of the same choices in life, thereby seeking to draw on a social resemblance as well. While Julia thought that a lot of things suddenly made sense, the sister did not feel that way "*She didn't think that she… that she could manage the familial relation. So I just had to face that. That was really tough! But you know, you can't really force people, right?*" (Julia).

To Turid the most shocking thing to her about her donor origin was that she and her sister do not have the same donor and thus are not 'real' siblings: "*That was probably the hardest process, the thing about suddenly looking at your real sister and then have to accept that she was in fact only a half-sister. That was the weirdest part.*" (Turid). Although she still think of her sister as a 'real' sister, she is aware that there are some things that has been turned upside down by the fact that they do not have fully shared biology, "*It's physical that we just have to accept that we are probably not able to help each other, if it comes to donating a kidney or stuff like that.*" (Turid).

Regarding the understanding of kinship and relatedness Mason & Tipper (2008) have studied children's understanding of kin relations. The way the studied children are defining and creating kinship is in some way similar to the interlocutors. Both groups are bending the definitions and drawing on different notions when defining kinship. Mason and Tipper found that one way to circumvent the rules in force when talking about kinship was that the children would use kinship terms that were closer than the actual relation demanded (Mason & Tipper 2008:446). When Julia is using the word 'sister' she is trying to draw the relation closer, while another interlocutor consequently says 'half-sibling' trying to make a clear distinction from the relation to her 'real' sister. This distinction makes sense as we are constructing our identity in relation to the discourses constructed in our communication with others (Burr 1995:51).

When I interviewed Julia she had just submitted a DNA-test to a global DNA-registry in the US. Now she is awaiting an answer, if a family member to the donor, the donor himself or others of his offspring might also be in the registry so that she will get a match, as she once again stated "*the thing I am seeking the most is siblings.*" (Julia). Some studies point to most donor children actually searching for donor-siblings out of curiosity (Jadva et al. 2010), thus not leaving Julia's sister the only one. The study by Jadva et al. also indicates that children who found out about their donor origin before 18 were mostly driven out of curiosity while the ones being above 18 were also preoccupied with more existential questions as well as concerns about medical conditions among their donor relatives (Jadva et al 2010:528). The majority of the donor children from Jadva et al.'s study report the contact with donor siblings to be positive (Jadva et al. 2010:530). However most recipients are rather young and many have been told of the donor origin from a young age. The report does not mention any cases like Julia's where donor siblings turn out to have very different approaches towards how strong the familiar tie is and ought to be.

Turid has a different approach to the sibling search. She is not certain what to expect from such a relation. She is satisfied with the sibling relation she already have and does not know if she would emotionally be able to handle a sudden relation like that. She is unsure what to do with the potential relation she might find: "*It is also kind of a fear that I might actually find someone with whom I have A LOT in common. If we just really hit of, then what?*" (Turid). In this way she is afraid that she might jeopardise the relationship with her sister if she was to establish a new sibling relation. Her family narrative and the understanding of kinship would be challenged if she found someone she would find a deeper connection with. This fear is probably the same that her parents are dealing with – the fear of finding a relation that you might not be able to fully control.

Lisa does not look for donor siblings either. In the beginning she was aligned with the study by Freeman et al. in the way that she was curious and actually did sign up in different forums related to the search for donor siblings. "*In the beginning I was like, that could be interesting to find half-siblings or something like that. But now I am more like… I don't' really fancy that right now. Maybe I will one day, I don't know but right now I can't see where it should be [the relation].*", she said.

Turid and Lisa have both been able to reach a point where they feel somewhat in control of their life situation regarding the donor origin. If they were to engage in new relationships based on their donor they would potentially lose this control once again. They are not interested in finding a 'new family' and do not think of donor-siblings as a kin relation.

V CONCLUSION

In the report we have been far and wide, but I hope to have contributed with a greater understanding of the experienced reality of the donor children rather than adding to the confusion. I have tried to outline how the donor children negotiate the meaning of kinship in relation to their family and their donor as well as donor-siblings. We have seen how they are transforming the term of kinship and fatherhood in accordance to their present circumstances. They are navigating the spheres of biological and social kinship to always find a solution that feels 'natural'.

A recurring concern has been the lack of control with, and registration of, donors and donor offspring. It is thought of as a problem in relation to missing medical records, potentially incestoues relationships and as a violation of the rights of the children when they will never be able to retrieve information about their origin. Several said that today's practice favours the needs of the 'grown ups' and that they hope for a Danish legislation taking after the Swedish model with enforced openness throughout the process. Most are uncomprehendingly towards parents-to-be choosing an anonymous rather than an open donor when having the choice, and they think of it as a selfish action.
Actually, they were quite reluctant towards the use of assisted reproduction technology at all. In general, it was experienced as if the parents' need was held prior to the child's' and it was suggested that parents rather adopt a child rather than creating one for their own sakes. More information was recommended as they expected parents to choose differently if knowing of the potential problems an anonymous donor origin might cause.

A thing I have witnessed as a recurring motif in the interviews is how inconsistent the use of terms have been. There is confusion about what to call the donor, but at least you have that term if you do not want to use the term 'father' in relation to him. There is no word or name for children born from the same donor, other than half-sibling or donor-sibling. But when the relation is experienced to have nothing in common with a sibling relation it is getting difficult to talk about without confusion. The discourse of family is experienced as inadequate. When talking about their donor origin they are entering a discourse that questions their father's role as a parent. As the discourses forms our identity and thus has implications on our actions (Burr 1995:54), not entering this discourse leaves the donor children in a limbo of unfulfilled identity and shattered selves.

Although the donor is not part of their everyday life he is brought into play when it comes to having children themselves. When they are to continue the lineage, the unknown will inevitably be a part of it as it is a part of them. The consequences of having an anonymous donor origin is experienced by most as a heavy burden and they recommend more information to future parents as they feels like their story is not taken seriously – if it were, parents would stop using anonymous donors.

During the interviews the four interlocutors having a father at one point or another had to spell out who they actually meant – donor or father. Things like 'my father, you know, my *real* father' or 'my biological father, the donor' came up, underlining how difficult a subject it is to talk about. When it comes to kinship terms regarding donor offspring, the vocabulary is very insufficient. It is very much needed to have some words to categorise these (kinship) relations so that it is possible to structure them in the right way according to other kin and friends.

When Carsten is talking about 'relatedness' she is trying to make room for a debate about what constitutes kinship without the restricting frame of biology. In some cases, for example related to inheritable diseases, it is useful to distinguish between genitor and social father. By saying 'social father', however, you have already acknowledged that there is another father and that he, by being the counterpart to 'social father', is seen as the 'natural' and thereby 'real' father. Just by putting it into words you are in a way compromising the existence of the nurturing father. As Strathern (1992) emphasised that the legal framework upheld a view on kinship dating back to Morgan's time, so too is our vocabulary putting restrictions on our way of experiencing kinship.

I would argue that it is not necessarily our way of *thinking* about family, as it is our way of *talking* about our family, that need an update. My interlocutors were confused and inconsequent in what they called their donor, father, siblings and donor-siblings. (Not to talk about the mothers of potential donor-siblings, would they be your half-mother then?)

I think, that if we had an adequate vocabulary with some agreed terms to these different kinship-patterns, we would see how donor-children would find a greater peace within their situation. If there was no longer a need to even consider for a second if you were to call the donor for father or your father for 'real'/social father- then you would remove a great burden from the shoulders of these children. Not to mention the potential nervousness among the parents about whether their child would one day call another man father.

Morgan might be right when it comes to the importance of having a sufficient vocabulary and a system to navigate the many potential family constructions. Only then you are able to move freely among them. Carsten is however correct in the way that such a language of talking about kinship should not be founded in the distinguishing and prioritised ordering between blood-kin and not-blood-kin.

Over the past 170 years there has been a lively debate about kinship. Although no agreement has yet been reached on the definition, there has been established an enormous and rich body of terms and expressions of how to talk about it. Matri/patri/duo-locality, avunculates and cross-cousin marriages, segmented lineage, alliance theories, nuclear family and whatever might be mentioned of the like. I believe, that if we could be as inventive as the anthropologists before us to denominate the different kin phenomena we discover, then we might still disagree what is to be accounted ‘real’ kinship, but at least we would have a sufficient terminology within which we could disagree. And what is much more important, society as a whole - including the families with donor children - would no longer suffer from the uncertainty of not knowing how to name each other, and thereby not be able to put a relation at its rightful place in order to family and kin.

Ideas for further studies

In this report I have looked at how the use of technology is affecting our thoughts about social practices. Another take on the data would be to find out how our social practices of living out family and kin relations are affecting our thoughts about the use of technology. In my interviews I have asked how the interlocutors think about the use of assisted reproduction, and several turned out to have a quite conservative attitude towards the use of assisted reproductive technology. Some said that with assisted reproduction you are fiddling with God’s creation and some thought that insemination with donor semen were okay but that more high-tech treatments were not. They all agreed however, that the practice of parents being able to chose a donor for themselves is wrong and unethical. To illustrate their reluctance towards this practice I have selected a quote from each of them showing their position:

"*I think that it is very wrong to design children. I'm very against the idea that my parents should be able to chose semen on the basis of profession and eye color and all that stuff. It is not... It should not be done for their sake!*" (Lisa)

"*My own personal position is that you should let nature take its course. You are not to play God. If you can't have children on your own, then you should not have them at all.*" (Julia)

"*Well, ethically I don't think it is the right thing to do. It's not the optimum solution. And it's a bit wrong…*" (Gustav)

"*The way you are able to choose on the basis of what you are attracted to as a woman, as a mother – that I don't like. Because it's the child's… It is the child you should be thinking about when you are choosing. You shouldn't think about if you would go on a date with him or not. That's just weird!*" (Turid)

"*You know what, I think that it has become too much of an industry. Donor children. That it is something that everyone can just have!*" (Ingun)

It would be very interesting to go deeper into this scepticism towards the technology and how they think about its use. First and foremost it illustrates that there are still many questions to be answered and issues to be clarified when it comes to donor offspring.

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