



The meaning of genes for and experiences of (intended) parents and sperm donor-conceived offspring

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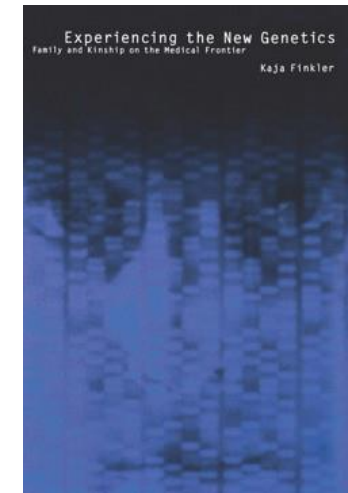
Structure

- Introduction
- Parents' experiences
- Donor-conceived (DC) people's experiences
- Donors' experiences
- Concluding thoughts

Introduction

In general

- Materials and symbols
- Associated with assumptions and ideas about predisposition/talent, resemblance, kinship,...



Introduction

In context of donor conception

- Significance is emphasized as well as downplayed
- Carries fluid, multiple and sometimes conflicting meanings [Freeman, 2014]

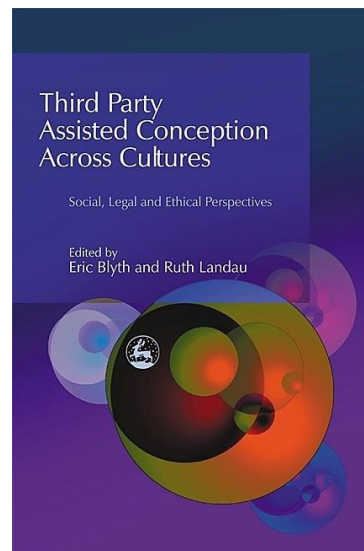
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Professor Mats Brännström with the team during a surgery on a donor.

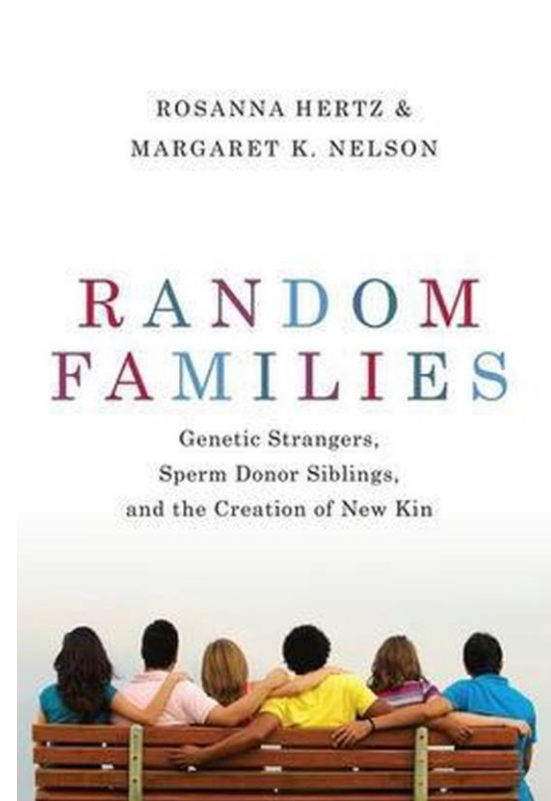
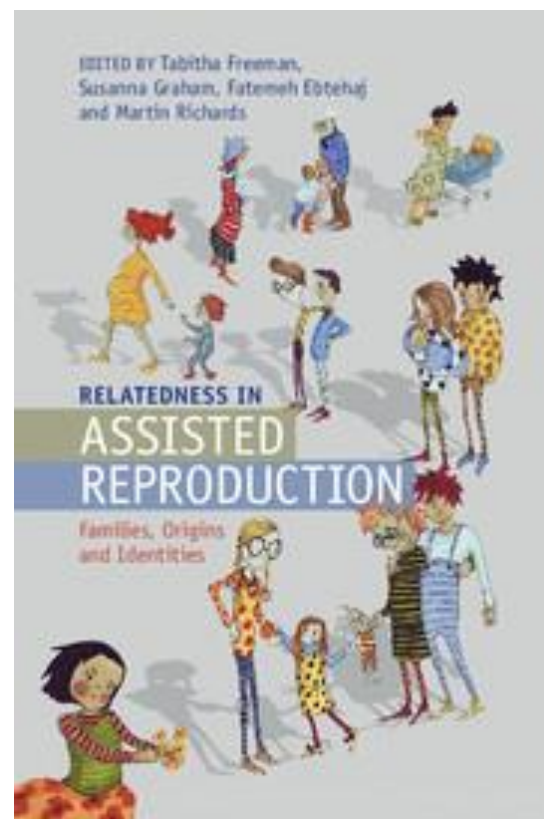
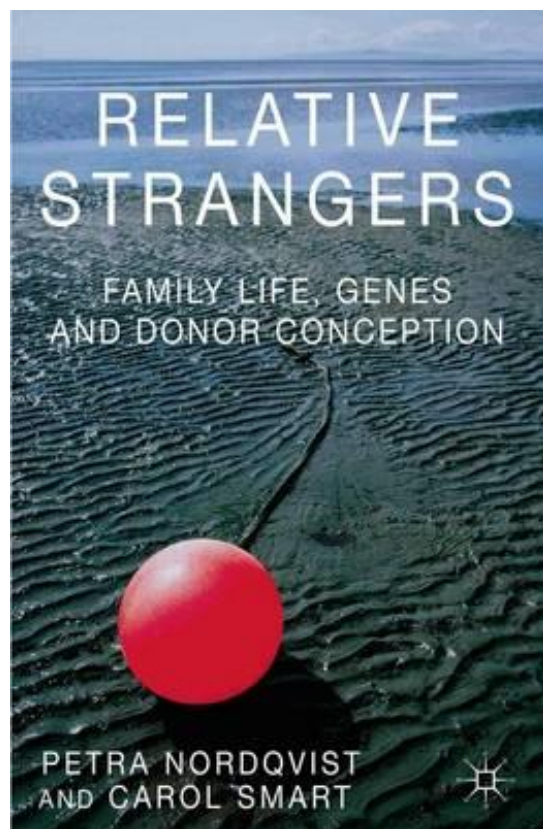
Photo: Johan Wingborg



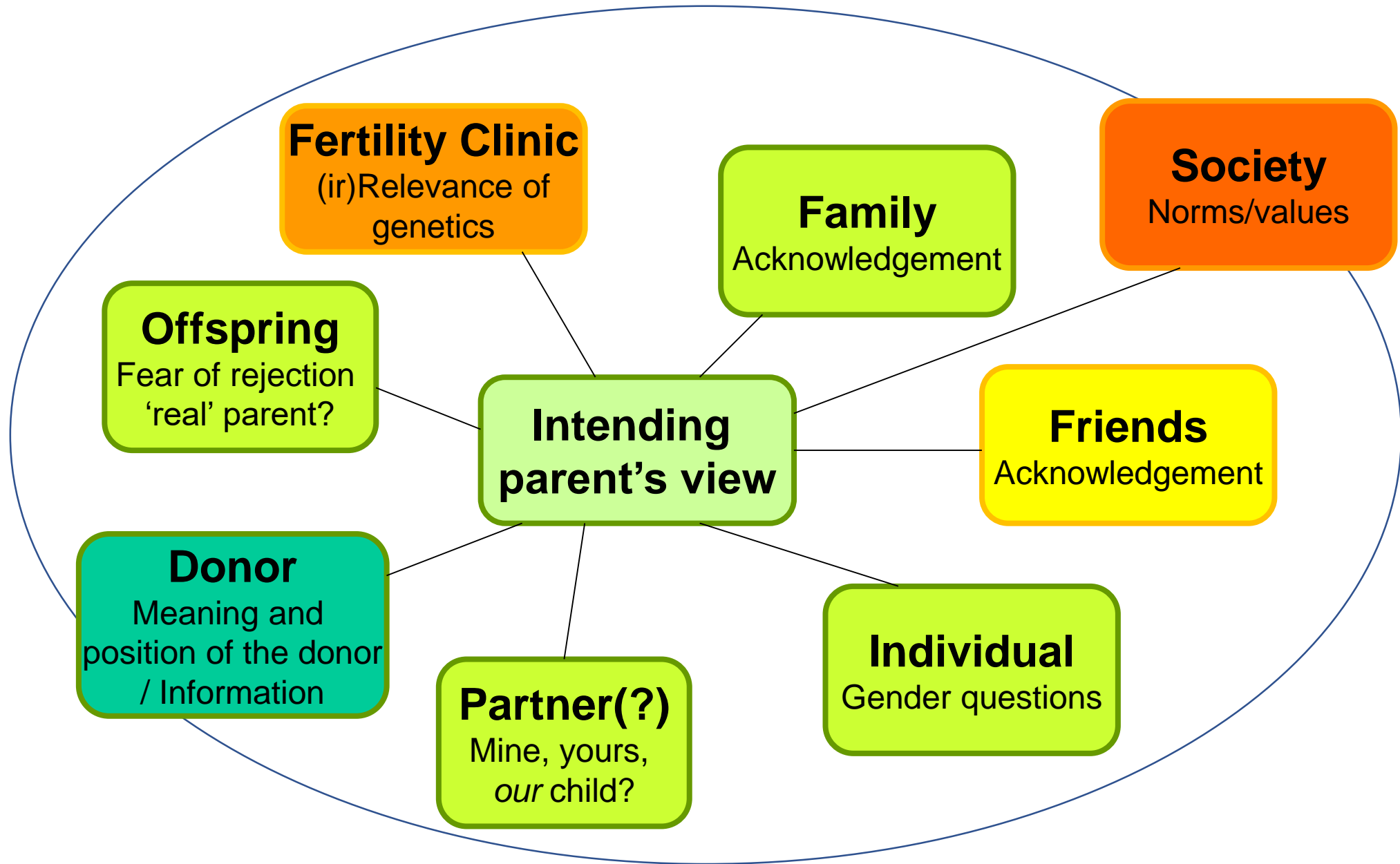
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doi: 10.1111/j.1467-9566.2007.01010.x

The (ir)relevance of genetics: engendering parallel worlds of procreation and reproduction

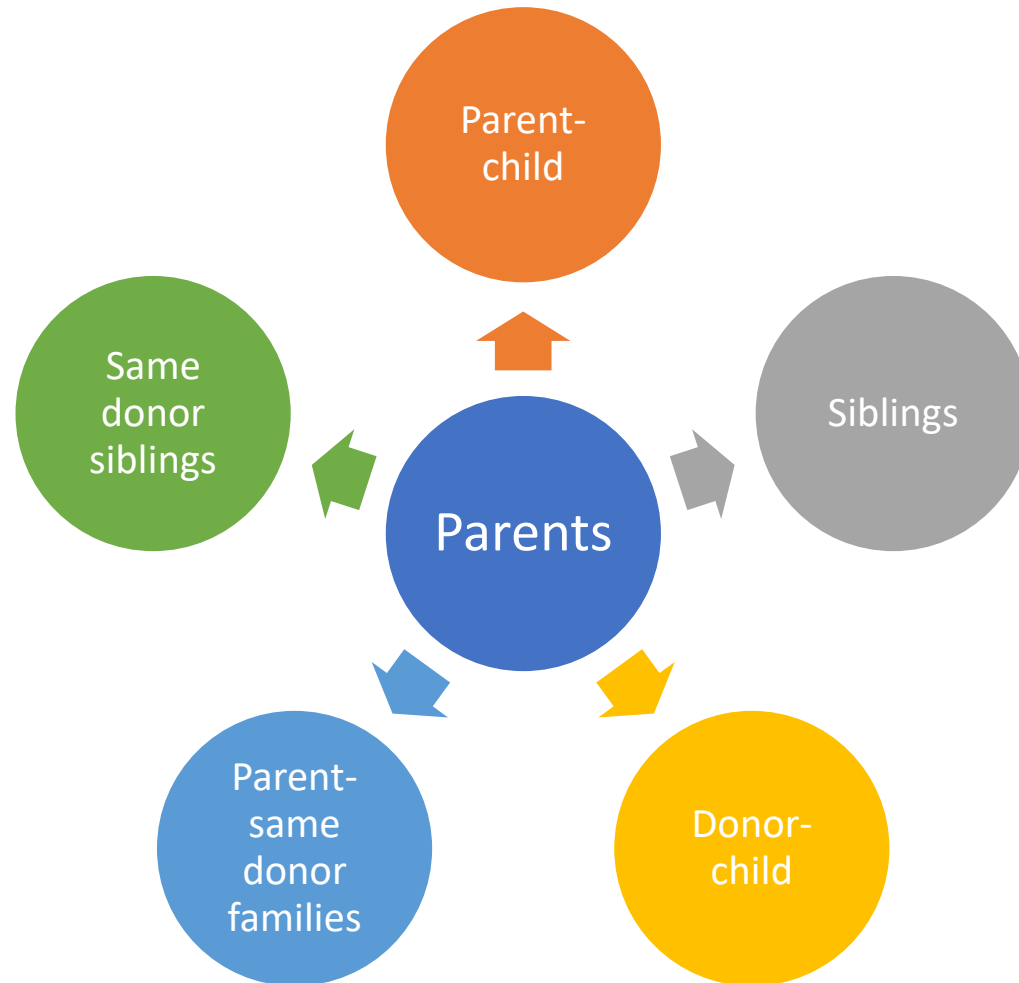
Victoria M. Grace¹ and Ken R. Daniels²



Parents' experiences



Parents' relatedness in genetic connections



Parents' experiences

In **all** kinds of DC families, see titles:

- *Origins and originators: **lesbian** couples negotiating parental identities and sperm donor conception* (Nordqvist, 2012)
- ***Female-partnered women** conceiving kinship: does sharing a sperm donor mean we are family?* (Goldberg & Scheib, 2016)
- *Making the child “mine”: mothers' thoughts and feelings about the mother-infant relationship in **egg donation families**.* (Imrie et al., 2020)
- *Grammars of kinship: **biological motherhood** and assisted reproduction in the age of epigenetics* (Gunnarsson-Payne, 2016)
- ***Single mothers** as bricoleurs: crafting embryo's and kind* (Hertz, 2021)

DC people's experiences

- Genes are part of daily life
 - Medical
 - School

- Genes as part of who you are
 - A biological starting package
 - Your own unique combination
 - A reference point



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article

Perceptions of donor-conceived families: a survey study on the perspectives of teachers

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DC people's experiences

- Genes are relational
 - 'person'-al
- Genes connect
 - Donor (network)
 - Multi-sibling network
- Genes locate



A Family Portrait: Brothers, Sisters, Strangers

Photos essay by Elisabeth Lerner
Text by Elisabeth Lerner as told to Susan Dominick
June 26, 2011

**Donor-Shared Siblings
or Genetic Strangers:
New Families, Clans,
and the Internet**

Journal of Family Issues
32(9) 1129-1155
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DOI: 10.1177/0192513X11404345
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Rosanna Hertz¹ and Jane Mattes²

DC people's experiences

1. To avoid medical risks and consanguineous relationships
2. To connect with one's roots
3. To complete one's life (hi)story
4. To understand where one's traits come from
5. To discover or assess one's defining characteristics and capabilities
6. To rectify a wrong doing
7. To map out one's ancestral history
8. Wanted to be known by the donor

DC people's experiences

Same donor-offspring

- National limits, international spermbanks, online DNA testing
- Reasons
 - Curiosity
 - Single household: wishing to find new family members
 - Late disclosure: for medical reasons, and to understand who I am
- Challenges
 - Constantly expanding
 - Managing of relatedness



Donors' experiences

- “A means to an end”
- Some have an **own** interest
- Relatedness
 - Contractual issues versus kinship and family [*responsabilities*]
 - Resemblance
 - To whom?



Concluding thoughts & challenges

Challenge for **all** involved: How to manage and name relatedness



Expanding



Network



Fluid

Concluding thoughts & challenges

- Stakeholders live in a societal context not a vacuum
- Gendered bias: sperm versus egg donation
- Differences between sperm, egg, embryo, double donation, surrogacy

- INFORMATION & SUPPORT



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