

Voices of the Donor Conceived, Donors and Parents Advice, Stories, and Thoughts from Donor Families

We know that genetic relation does not guarantee ideal parenting or family environment. But we also know that genetic connections are important anchoring points for an individual. Have we not learned from the vast research and studies on the ramifications of kinship separation, or "genealogical bewilderment," in the adoptive experience? Why should an adult's want for a child take precedence over a person's need for meaningful connection with their full genetic identity, heritage and kin? If nothing else, our country desperately needs to find a way to regulate the reproductive technologies industry to provide for the needs of the children as well as the parents. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, sanctioned by all 190 members of the United Nations except the United States and Somalia, acknowledges, in articles 7 and 8, the child's right to know and be cared for by his or her parents and the right of the child to preserve his or her identity, including nationality, name and family relations as recognized by law without unlawful interference. Moving forward, donor anonymity needs to be addressed. Even though I recognize the complications it can bring to family life when contact with a donor is made in later years, as an adult I strongly believe it is my right to negotiate those connections.

1. I believe the United States should follow in the footsteps of the Netherlands, Germany, Italy, Sweden, Norway, Switzerland, Austria, England and Finland, which have banned the anonymous buying and selling of human sperm and eggs.

2. Limits need to be set on the number of offspring sired per donor. Every child born from these services need to be accounted for and clearly identified.

3. Payment for sperm, eggs and surrogates should be limited to actual expenses incurred.

4. The practice needs to work towards openness and honesty, identifying both the social parents as well as genetic parents on birth certificates.

Reproductive technologies are here to stay, for better or for worse, but it desperately needs regulation to protect the interests of the people born from it who have no voice and no choice.

Page 65/66 "Voices of Donor Conception: Moving Beyond Secrecy and Shame" Karen – donor conceived

At 27 years old, finding a brother has been both exciting and a little scary at first... I'm already a "grown up," with opinions and likes/dislikes fully formed, who now has someone else out there with similar traits, that has my same DNA coursing through his body! After four months of talking and emailing from Seattle to Togo, West Africa where he is a Peace-Corps Volunteer, we finally met in person a week ago. It was AMAZING. Like looking in a mirror but better, because there was a three-dimensional, living, breathing person standing in front of me, with my eyes and nose and smile and posture and hands, and big toe... the list goes on and on. (More than one stranger has asked if we are twins!) We've spent a week together now, meeting each other's friends and family, and have to remind ourselves every once in a while that we're not just good friends, but SIBLINGS. We'll all of a sudden catch ourselves staring at each other in disbelief, then laugh, then go bowling or on a walk and become just good friends again. It's quite the roller coaster of emotions, sudden tweaks of realization that this person is my sibling (always has been and always will be), and a sudden feeling of comfort having him there...

I can't fully put into words what having a brother out there means to me. I'm just so thrilled and anxious for the wonderful times we'll have together now, the wonderful family gatherings that have now grown with the inclusion of each other's families and friends, who somehow all seem to already get along so well! Thank you Wendy, for making this possible. I'm not an only child anymore. I'm a big sister!-DSR Posting 11/07

I am sitting at home this evening watching an episode of Oprah that my wife recorded, and am feeling emotions that I hadn't considered for years. I feel compelled to write, and am not sure totally why. For the time being, I would like you to keep my identity a bit anonymous, in terms of the general public, but would be willing to explore this a bit with you or someone from your organization. While I have been quite at peace with the decisions I made years ago, the stories of these children pull strongly at my heart. I find myself feeling strongly that if there is something I owe a child of mine, it would be selfish of me to withhold his information. I had my eyes opened with the Oprah show, and feel bad now that I really never considered what the opinion of the children involved, and possibly selfishly, though unintentionally, deprived them of something that they may need at a level I never understood or considered.-MH, Former Sperm donor 2/12/08 Email

"I only hope more people who chose to build a family this way fully understand the difficult nature of this choice, speak with a counselor/psychologist whose salary does not come from a clinic or sperm bank, chose a willing to be known 'donor' or better still someone who they can meet first to make sure that they are someone who they'd feel comfortable having their child possibly meet someday and make sure that this person does not 'donate' to more than just a few families." Bev- Donor Conceived 1/31/08 DSR Yahoo Group:

...it's not about feeling unwanted or unloved. For me, it's 2 issues: first, why was I lied to (was told at age 13), and second, why can't I find out who I am. And for me, being loved and wanted is not enough. Because being loved and wanted doesn't answer those burning questions. So help your children find the answers to the questions, and help them to ask the questions, because they may not yet know how to ask. Mal-Donor Conceived 1/08 Yahoo Group

Experience from countries that have moved to identifiable-only donors shows that yes, there is an initial drop-off in numbers, but the numbers climb back up again with a different kind of donor. Rather than having college students donating sperm for money with no real concept of the implications, you instead see that donors are older, typically married men, who already have healthy children of their own. They understand the gift of children, and that a sense of genetic continuity is important to most human beings. However, even if there was a drop-off in the number of donors, I do not see this as a reason to continue a system of anonymity. If one believes, as I do, that the use of anonymous donors is wrong, then the practice does not become 'right' merely because it is more readily available. People say that a reduction in the donor pool will harm infertile people who want the chance to raise a child. This argument takes us to the heart of the matter. If raising a child is the only issue, then adopted children fit the bill equally well. To the extent prospective parents choose donor conception over adoption, it is because they prefer to raise a biologically related child. If the desire for a biological connection is strong enough to make adults choose donor conception over adoption, then it is the ultimate double standard to imagine that the desire for a biological connection will not be felt just as strongly by the donor-conceived person that results. I believe our thinking on this issue has been distorted by a medical model that sees infertility as a problem to which the creation of a baby is the solution. People need to understand that donor conception does not create a 'baby.' It creates a human being who is forced to live with the lifelong consequences of choices made by the adults involved in their creation. Rebecca Hamilton, DSR Voices of Donor Conception Book, p. 50

I believe that we have no way to predict the future. We have no way to know all of the possibilities that may come. But the fact is, by not telling your child, you are lying to her. And as a parent, you can

rationalize that in any way that makes you feel better, but be honest with yourself - you are a liar. You may have the best intentions in doing so, but that fact can't be changed. Do you think that's a healthy way to maintain a relationship?

When your child finds out, be it by accident, or be it through contact from a donor later in life, or be it at the doctor's office, or be it just something that emerges in your child's life journey, your child will resent you. Some more than others, some in different ways than others, but it will happen. EVERY DC person that I know who found out her origins later in life, whether on this list, on other lists, or in real life, displays some level of this resentment. From the anger that I feel and express regularly - to folks who don't understand why they were lied to and accept it, I have yet to meet someone DC in similar circumstances who doesn't feel that way.

Mal-Donor Conceived 1/08 Yahoo Group

I had my daughter 13 years ago, and she is the biggest blessing of my life! It's just the 2 of us, and our life together is filled with love, laughter, and a richness that I am grateful for every day. She has know about her origins from the beginning, and is fine with it; however, she always had hope that one day she could meet her donor father (I just had no idea how we could accomplish that, given the anonymity of the situation), and always, always wished for siblings. Just 4 days ago, we watched Oprah's show on Donor Insemination children and learned about the DSR; we went online immediately and posted our information. Within a day (!), we learned that she has a sister; you can imagine the tears of joy and excitement that pervade our house these days! We are in contact with her sib's Mother, sharing stories and learning about our girls (they are so much alike in so many ways!). We are thrilled and grateful for DSR and Oprah...thank you from the bottom of our hearts! DSR Posting, 2/08

I don't understand how you couldn't feel resentment about being lied to about something like this. That certainly doesn't mean you can't feel grateful for how much they did to get you. I personally feel both. Its tough being lied to by your parents about something so integral to your understand of yourself. At the same time, I love my parents and am grateful for how much they wanted me. My point is, it's mainly the lie that causes resentment. Not the fact that I am a donor child. Dan-Donor Conceived 1/08 Yahoo Group

Donor conception enables women to have a child with a biological connection (versus adoption) yet severs that same connection between the offspring and the paternal family. In other words, treating one person's loss (infertility) potentially creates loss in someone else (the donor offspring). Kathleen, Donor conceived 2/08 Yahoo Group

In my view, all of the information about my mother's donor ought to belong to me, not the clinic. Neither should my access to this information be determined by the directives of the "member organizations", that is the sperm banks. The "ownership" should be held in trust by some organization that has no self-interest in continual control of the information for the protection of their own liability. Adoption records are not the property of agencies, although they do keep copies, but are held in trust for adopted people by various courts that control access for just cause. In some jurisdictions, just cause may actually be interpreted (and have been) to mean that if an adoptee feels it is essential to his mental health to know the identity of his birth parents, that is sufficient reason. For me, medical reasons would also include the mental health that I feel I lack because of an incomplete identity. I doubt that any clinic would respect that as "just cause." - Bill C. 2/23/08 Email

Regarding my DI children out there; yes, I would like to know everything. Of course I care. I think about my missing children frequently. Scarbo-Former Sperm Donor, 1/08 Yahoo Group

I want all my genetic offspring to be happy and healthy like my own children. I will always love them and wonder where they are, what they are doing, are they living, learning and experiencing life like me and my own children? I hope that they are bringing the same joy to the lives of all the mothers and dads the same way my life has been enriched by my own children. We are, and will always be, connected. Some of them will become equally as curious as I was some day, and want to know more. I think we owe it to them to let them learn. James-Former Sperm Donor, 12/07 Yahoo Group

We just returned from a weekend gathering of donor siblings where nine of the twenty three kids we now know about (while we were meeting, two new families posted on the DSR!) attended along with 2 SMC's 5 lesbian couples four grandmothers and a grandad. The kids range in ages from 8 months to 4 years. Like others, we formed a private site to share photos etc. and have been communicating for about two years. Over the course of the past year or so, several small groups of us have met but I must say that having such a large group was overwhelming in the best way possible. I never could have imagined how amazing this would be. I was very hesitant to join the DSR at first for all the reasons I am sure everyone else has. However, meeting the others was not only comfortable but incredibly natural...like we had known each other for years. The kids warmed up to one another and to the other adults immediately and the other parents seemed like old friends. Not to read too much into the genetics of it all, but there was something truly special about the way everyone interacted. I can't imagine what the future might hold but I am confident that meeting the other donor siblings and their families was the best thing we could have done for our kids. I am grateful we had the opportunity to begin building these relationships while all of them are still so young. Great memories are being created as is a healthy and dynamic sense of place for our kids.

-DSR Posting, 10/07

You asked: Do I think about you? This might hurt at first. For quite a while, no, not much. Maybe a bad analogy, but it was somewhat like donating a unit of blood. You don't think about who is going to get it and you sure don't expect the recipient to contact you and say thanks. Plus, I was busy – two kids, work, wife working. Except it wasn't a unit of blood. Yes, there were times. A few months ago I became aware of the DSR - I read an essay written by a vocal DC and suddenly realized that someone like you might be looking for me. Now I think about you all the time. Every day. Wray- Former Sperm Donor, 1/08 Yahoo Group

My biggest point of contention is that I never was able to talk about it with anyone and my conception arrangement has prevented me from ever being able to have a relationship with my biological father, half siblings, grand parents or know the other half of my family history. Bev- Donor Conceived, 1/08 Yahoo Group

Another complication arises if and when offspring decide to search for biological relatives. Like adopted children, offspring vary in the intensity of their needs and desires to contact biological relatives. While some express little or no desire, others feel incomplete and suffer from a loss of identity without this information. Many recipient families seem to believe that showering offspring with love will replace any desire or need to find biological relatives, yet even offspring raised in caring and supportive homes may require more information about where they came from for their own happiness and well-being. For

recipient families who find themselves in a position in which donor-conceived people want to search for biological relatives, I believe it is important to realize that offspring have no desire to hurt their parents or replace their families. Our search, which evolves from a longing to find out more about who we are, where we come from, and what our biological relatives are like, should not be seen as a reflection of poor parenting or a lack of love toward our families. I fall into the group of offspring who feel empty and extremely cheated out of important aspects of life without information about my donor or the opportunity to find out who he is. Because my interests, appearance, life views, and personality are quite different from my parents, I frequently become curious about which traits I inherited from my biological father. Beyond my curiosities, though, I also just want reassurance that he and his family are happy. Kathleen, Donor conceived 11/07 DSR Website

I joined DSR 4 years ago. Apparently at about the same time, our donor contacted the clinic he had donated to, was told how many registered offspring were the result of his donations- that's all they could tell him. He asked that a note be added to his chart indicating that he was open to any contact. Fast forward 4 years, and no sibling matches yet for my daughter. Oprah airs Friday, Wendy posts updated DSR membership and match numbers on Sunday so I check the DSR- still no matches for us. Sunday, donor's wife tells him about DSR (I'm assuming she saw Oprah or someone she knows saw Oprah). Monday I receive an email from Wendy congratulating me on my match that just came in. I rush to DSR - never dreaming that the match was a DONOR match AND a half sibling match (donor's daughter with his wife)!!! Within 2 hours of our donor joining DSR we connected via 'dsr-mail' and began exchanging questions and answers. Today (Tuesday) included another flurry of emails and the sharing of family photos and first names. . . our journey is just beginning and there's no telling what the future holds. For now, The donor and I both seem to be on the same page- wanting as much or as little involvement as is comfortable for the other family (and most especially for the children). I can't thank Wendy and Ryan enough (and the tireless individuals keeping the website up-to-date). They continually put themselves out there and bring DSR and DI issues into the light. My heart is overflowing with joy. Life is good. DSR Posting, 2/08

Thanks to Wendy being on Oprah this past Friday, a woman from Chicago, who had not heard of DSR, logged on and to much to our surprise, she found my posting, which just happened to be the same donor she used. I had a son, and she had a daughter almost 6 months to the day later with the same donor. I spoke with her earlier today and I cant begin to express the gratitude and joy I feel for my son, and for her daughter. We hope to meet sometime in the near future to bring our children's lives together . I never thought that I would be emailing and speaking with Wendy on a successful match for my son. It is a feeling I am unable to express with words. I wish this for all of us. DSR Posting, 2/08

To kick off Labor Day weekend, my husband and I took our children to a gathering of several of our children's half-siblings and their parents. Our twins, at seven, were the youngest of the group. The others who were present are 11 ½, 14 ½, 15, and 16. Several known half-sibs were missing (aged 6, 12 ½, and 13). This is the second summer we have done this. A few of us have known each other for about a year and a half, but a couple of the mothers have known each other since their children were infants. Two families became known to us this summer, one of which was present at the party. We are the only "traditional" sperm donor family (married couple, infertile dad) in the bunch. One of the other mothers is married now, but was single when she had her child. There are three lesbian couples, and three moms are single. Most of us moved tentatively toward connecting with each other. Some of those with older children were pulled ahead by the children's desires; I was held back at first by my

children's youth and my husband's reluctance. We all wondered, not only whether it would be a good experience for our children to meet their half-siblings, but what kind of relationship we would forge with the other parents.

All of us now see how the children delight in their brothers and sisters, and take our own delight in this unusual extended family. Maybe we have just been lucky, but we all really like each other, and probably get along better than many traditional in-laws! Also, each of us enjoys seeing and getting to know the other children. They resemble our own, not just physically, not just in some of their interests and abilities, but in their sweetness and their loving hearts. None of these children has more than one sibling in his home, but, thanks to the DSR, they will always have a larger circle of love and support from their half-siblings. We are all very lucky parents and very grateful to the unknown man who made it possible for us to have these children, whoever he is, whatever his motivation. And of course, we are grateful to Wendy and Ryan Kramer, who made it possible for us to find each other.-DSR Posting 9/07

Like many on the DSR, my husband and I suffered through many years of infertility treatments before realizing our dream of having a child through the use of IVF using a sperm donor. Back in 1994, we like many parents, were told to go home and keep his conception a secret. We did as we were told. But through the years, I kept coming back to the same thought. Did our child deserve the right to know his history? Did we have the right to deny him half of his genetic identity just because we wanted to keep "the secret"? One fateful night last year I was awoken from a nightmare in which my son was in urgent medical need of only something the donor could provide him. I panicked. As mothers of donor conceived children, I believe we always have this scenario lurking somewhere nearby. I had watched the 60 Minutes special on the DSR just a short time before and had kept that information in the back of my mind never realizing that I would ever have a need for it. But that nightmare changed everything. I immediately got up and frantically searched through our papers looking for the donor profile. We had actually torn this information up years ago (attempting to hide the evidence?) and had kept it in a bag in the closet. Like a puzzle, I put the pieces back together as best I could and at 2:00 a.m. jumped on the computer. I searched through the registry and there, in the wee hours of the morning, I found my son's biological father. In a twist of fate, he had just posted his information on the registry just a couple of weeks before.

I immediately wrote him an email and we continued a short email correspondence for another couple of weeks before signing off. A year went by and my son was in need of surgery which would require general anesthesia. I contacted the donor with a minor medical question and he answered it promptly, and thus began a very prolific two month email correspondence which ended in not only our 12 year old son being told how he was conceived, but in a meeting with his biological father as well. It was an amazing day for all involved and our son was even given the opportunity to speak on the phone with his biological father's parents as well. He was absolutely in heaven and the look on his face will forever be etched into my heart. For me, it was as if the final piece of the puzzle had been put in place and everything was whole again. I could now breathe a little easier knowing that this child would be sent off into the world to build his life based on a foundation of truth.

I would imagine the question that some of you will ask is "Was his world "rocked?" when he learned the details of his conception. I can honestly answer that at this moment in time, he has embraced this unique side of himself with amazing poise, grace and at many times, with humor. He has accepted his fate, and seems to have found a new sense of who he is. It's not that he was unhappy with himself before, but this new sense of identity finally meshed with the one he was living with inside. It was always difficult for him to understand why he was so different from his Dad both in personality and physicality, and this new information just brought more balance into his life and an understanding of why he felt so different. I

have read so many stories from donor conceived children who felt that they had sensed something was different all of their lives, and I believe in his own way, our son also sensed that things weren't as they were being portrayed.

My husband and I had always intended for him to know eventually. We just never knew when that time would come. For me, every child deserves to know who they are and where they came from. Do we as parents have the right to keep that from them? To quote a donor conceived child, "It was like looking into a mirror and seeing only half of my reflection" after he found out how he was conceived. Our child deserved to see his entire being every time he looked into a mirror which made the search for his donor that much more urgent. I also am of the opinion that the more people in the bleachers cheering for your child to succeed in life, the better. As parents, we are not perfect, and if we had the means to put just one more individual in his life, such as his biological father, to help guide him through the murky waters that lie ahead, then we owed him that. In our case, he didn't just gain one individual, but an entirely new set of family whom I believe will be cheering for his well being from here on in. What a gift to give to a child and certainly one we could never deny him. I believe I can speak for everyone involved when I say thank you to Wendy, Ryan and the Donor Sibling Registry for making all of this possible. –DSR Posting, 6/07

My son and I always watch 60 Minutes and in February 2006 we were glued to the TV set when the story about the DSR aired. I immediately asked Gavin (age 10 at that time) if he wanted to try to find half siblings through the registry. Gavin is an only child and I a single mom. We have a very small family and he has always yearned for a big family. I registered the next day. A week later I received an email that brought tears to my eyes. The subject line said "Gavin has a sister." The email was from the mother of a 13 year-old girl from California. (We live in PA.) Sharing photos and stories and anecdotes about the kids was fun. I didn't think they looked too much alike but I could see some physical features that they shared. And there were certainly some personality traits that were remarkably similar.

A few months later I heard from the mother of another child conceived from the same donor. This time it was a boy who is 2 years younger than Gavin. Gavin was thrilled to have a little brother. Since they live in a neighboring state we did meet shortly thereafter and the boys acted like brothers from the start. Again, not too many physical similarities but they definitely felt the connection.

Months went by. It seemed like there wasn't as much to say after we shared initial information about the kids. Christmas photos were emailed, a few short notes were sent and life pretty much got back to normal.

Early in January 2007 I received an email from the donor himself. I felt like I had won the lottery!! He was willing to send photos of himself, his family of origin and his 2 children from his marriage. He encouraged questions and responded with answers. I never dreamed I would even have a name for him much less all this additional information. My son's family tree had just blossomed big time!

In March another email took me by surprise. Wendy emailed to ask if we wanted to be interviewed on Primetime. It would involve meeting the donor and the 2 half siblings in Los Angeles. We agreed immediately. It seemed like forever until we got confirmation from the producer at ABC and our travel arrangements were done. The trip to LA, meeting everyone and being filmed for a national TV show was incredible. Gavin said it was the best 2 days of his life. Everything went perfectly. The most amazing thing to me was the feeling that I had known these people forever. The first day was taping but we went to Disneyland the second day and really had a chance to bond. The kids acted like kids- chasing each other and tickling and teasing, but looking out for one another too. We have decided to take vacations together and stay in touch with phone calls and emails. My son feels so much more complete now. And guess what- they all look more similar in person than in the pictures! And I know that none of this would

have happened without the DSR. Thank you Wendy. You have helped to make a new family very happy.-DSR Posting, 5/07

I donated in the late 70s and early 80s, and was always curious about whether any of my children would find me. In 2006 two of my daughters, full sisters, found me through the DSR. I had no children of my own, and I am absolutely thrilled to now have two grown daughters. I have a good relationship with my daughters and communicate with and see them often, and I am very very happy about this. And I owe it all to Wendy and her work putting together the DSR.-DSR Posting, 4/07

Twenty years ago when I became pregnant with my daughter as a single mom, I had no idea where that journey would take me. I had always assumed there would never be a chance of knowing who her father was.

My daughter has been the highlight of my life. Oftentimes I had been asked what I would say to her "donor" if the opportunity ever arose. I always knew what that would be. It was quite simple -- "Thank You". This past summer I got that chance. After seeing a segment on The Today Show last spring I discussed posting a notice on the website with my daughter. Two weeks later we were contacted by a half-sister also conceived through artificial insemination. This caused much excitement in our house and led to constant visits back to the DSR site. On one of those visits, I made the link to the cryobank which I dealt with. In about fifteen minutes time I had a full report on the donor, excluding his name. However, information contained in the report led us to do an internet search and before we knew it, we had his name.

He is a wonderful person and has openly accepted my daughter into his family. Our first group had a chance to meet in August, 2006.

We all had a recent holiday surprise in December, 2006, when we found the kids had a brother, also conceived through artificial insemination. His mother had posted on the DSR as well.

This has been an exciting time for all. I believe all the Moms in our group will be eternally grateful for the wonderful kids their Dad helped produce.

We now have a further surprise which came in July of 2007. Another girl! We have now located four children conceived through the same donor. We recently had a get-together with two of the girls and the one brother. Unfortunately our newest find was not able to attend the gathering. We look forward to that perhaps next year.-DSR Posting, 1/07

I was a donor for 16 years in northern CA, stopped in 1992. But in those days we didn't have donor numbers; in fact the doctor clinics who did AI seemed to have a hard time recruiting donors; there weren't a lot of us around. Anyway, no records were kept, and the drs REALLY didn't want donors showing any interest in their offspring: might lead to lawsuits. So I despaired of ever locating any of my spawn. Then I heard about DSR. Looked it up, and signed up. I've been a member for maybe 3 years. But again, with no donor number, all I could do was post physical features and hope some reader might recognize some and write. I did eventually hear from some DSR members. A gal, 22, student in NH, wrote b/c she felt she had a pronounced nose and raggedy teeth. I was so excited - she was the first response! We traded emails several times a day: "You go to Wheaton college? My God, I LIVE in Wheaton MD!" Anyway - finally came to check our DNA. Sure enough, no match. Then a young man wrote. His mother had been inseminated on my birthday in 1980. I was SURE there was a karmic connection. We traded a lot of emails and similarities. finally did the DNA - nope. Odds were less than 0.00%. Then 2 months ago I got an email from a woman saying she'd just joined the registry and saw I'd been a donor where she'd been inseminated. We traded photos of me and her son, 21. Our noses looked similar; build was pretty close

too. Got the word in the mail today: he's my boy! I haven't heard from his mother yet; we'll get an orange Match stripe up there one of these days. But there is celebrating tonite - we finally have a match! Thanx a heap and a bunch, Wendy - you are doing us all a terrific service. Bruce, DSR Posting, 10/06

In early Nov 06 my donor contacted me. I had been on the registry for just under 2 years. I have a wonderful 16 year old and the donor has 8 children of his own. After the first couple emails to see if there was a probable link (without DNA testing) he sent me pics of some of his children. When I opened the first one of his 15 yr old son I almost fell off my chair. His son looks IDENTICAL to my son. Down to the long curly hair!! When my son came home that evening I showed him the picture and asked him who the people were in the picture with him. His reply was he couldn't remember them but he thought he looked a "little chunky". My son even thought the pic was him. I sent it to my mother and sister and they could not believe how much they looked alike. My sister showed it to her kids and asked who it was and of course they said my son. Another amazing fact is they both have trouble pronouncing the R sound. And all these years I thought he was all me.

I sent the donor pictures of my son and when he saw them his reply was "holy s---, I don't think we need any DNA testing. Since that time we have communicated via email -- all the family is involved even the donor's sister. The kids email each other and just yesterday I called them and we spoke for over an hour. In April we plan a meeting and we're all looking very forward to it. Of course none of this would have been possible without the great efforts of Wendy and Ryan and I want to thank them for allowing this improbability to occur. Much luck to all that are searching and wish you success in your journeys.-DSR Posting, 12/06

I am a SMC of a 14 year old donor sperm conceived daughter. My daughter has always known and to date could care less about the donor or that she is donor conceived. She is open to meeting half sibs. She is one of those "happy" kids that gentleman mentioned that they don't hear from and supposedly are not represented on DSR. HOWEVER, that does not mean that she will never be curious, never need the info for medical reasons, or from any other reason that it becomes important to her. A registry of sorts, more information, information that is updated over the life (and death) of the donor is essential when, and if, her feelings ever change. Waiting until she wants it, would probably be to late to get it.

Another factor, that is usually ignored, is what if it is the donor or the donor's family that this has now become important to. There needs to be a way that connections can be facilitated. Parents, "children", donors all need to have enough information that connections can be made and at MINIMAL/NO COST. Thanks for all you do Wendy.-Email, Donor Mom 2/13/08

As a parent of two wonderful DC children I would just like to address Sean Tipton's point by saying that registries such as yours have less to do with "unhappy DC children" and everything to do with creating options. Clearly not everyone has the same level of needs or wants when it come to contact, but the beauty of this registry is for those who do want contact, or may want it in the future, it's there as an option. It is a meeting point that provides a central place for those who feel anything from a mild curiosity to a deep cellular level need the opportunity to find something that's missing. It may not be an issue for everyone, but that is so not the point. The point is that it IS an issue for many, so why not address it? I for one am ever so grateful for your efforts here. Kudos on a job well done, and finally getting the industry's attention! 2/13/08 Email

As the parent of a DC 19 year old I speak for my son with the following thoughts: Looking back, there is nothing more I would like to have had is an arrangement/contract with my son's donor parent that when

and if my son wanted to meet him, he must oblige. Watching the pain/struggle that I know my son feels as a young adult in wanting to know the donor breaks my heart. Having legislation that would require donors to identify themselves would most likely dissuade donors who may otherwise be willing to help other parents have children, which is the last thing I would want to happen. However, I say in hindsight that I think the child has rights; the right to know the other parent. Rights that I as the mom ignored or underestimated at the time I made the decision to have him. And, if those rights must include legislation that donors must be identified to the child and parent, then so be it. It will limit the number of donors, but the child's rights should come first. –Email 2/13/08

I was checking my email one night last week, after being away for a few days, and my daughter was almost asleep. I opened this one email, (I don't know why because I did not recall the sender) I read it, and had to get up and make sure I was awake (it was only 7:30pm) I walked around my house, touching my face, I went into see my daughter and laid next to her for a minute and was rubbing her little head, thinking to my self, I'm awake, she is here....so I went back and re-read the email, and sure enough, it was real! That email has made me so excited and just thrilled. The email was from her father. Yes the man that has made my dream of having a child come true. He is a wonderful man and has asked that if I would like any information, regarding medical history, up bringing, or just about anything, (respecting each other privacy of course) he would be happy to communicate. I've learned even more about him than what was stated in his profile, and he has updated me on family history. I think that it is wonderful that he has done this. My goal is to find as many siblings as possible for my daughter, to make it easier for her to understand how she came into this world of mine. He has contacted two other families, so I'm hoping that someday we can be in touch, and eventually meet. Every email I get, I thank him, so I'm hoping it's not too much, but I just can't express the happiness that email has brought to my life. –DSR Posting , 6/07

I feel that my perspective of feeling blessed to be a donor-conceived person, thus to be who I am, isn't typically portrayed as strongly or as often as the perspective that there is a void or sadness attached to being conceived from donor insemination. I wrote the following letter to my donor a while ago when I was grappling with how to express my feelings about having an anonymous donor, and what I'd want that donor to know...even though I don't know who he is and may never find out. I think the main reason that I am so comfortable with who I am and how I was conceived comes from the honest and loving way in which my mother approached the topic with me, at a very young age (the very first time I asked why our family was different than my friends' families). She explained my conception as a blessing that was only possible because she wanted to have me so badly and because a wonderful stranger donated half of the ingredients she needed to make me who I am. That I may never know my anonymous donor, but would know certain things about him just by the person I was and being able to see the things he gave to me... I've always been grateful to him and for him, and for my mother who raised me in such a wonderful home. Of course there is curiosity about what I don't know, but it doesn't ever negatively affect me. If I someday learn more, it would just be a blessing on top of all of the blessings I've already had in my life. Thus, know more is only adding more positives. Knowing only what I know now is already a positive because I love my life, I love who I am, and I love everyone who has contributed to that.-Email 2/13/08

If I had the opportunity to ask my donor anything, it would honestly be to tell me more about his history and family. Where does he come from? Where do his parents and grandparents come from? Of course, what's the medical history - but also, I'd really like to know what he's like. Are we similar? Is he musical like I am? Does he share my passions? Mal- Donor Conceived 1/08 Yahoo Group

I was married and my husband at the time had two teenage children and could not have any more. We thought about adoption, but it was out of our budget. I worked for the state in Child Protective and knew that it would not work for us to be Foster Parents. One of my peers told me about having a child through a donor and my ex and I thought it was a great idea. The insurance I had at the time covered us as it was considered fertility treatment. I was the perfect way for us to create our family. We tried for about year and half and then I got pregnant. At that time, my ex and I had the discussion of how to tell my son about the way in which he was conceived. While I was pregnant, I admit, I still thought of my son as an abstract and agreed that we would wait until my son was 12 or so and then we would tell him how he was conceived. While I didn't think this was the best way to do it, out of respect for my husband, who felt insecure at his inability to have more children, I agreed. When my son was nine months old my husband left. As we were going through the divorce process, I began to distance myself from my husband's insecurities and realized that many of the children that I worked with in Foster Care PINED, absolutely PINED for some connection with the biological family, especially siblings. I really became concerned about our decision and started to argue with my ex regarding telling my son the truth from the very beginning. We never did come to an agreement.

After my son's second birthday, my ex took off, never to be heard from again. Soon after, I called the Dr's office to see if they had any records of any other births from the same donor. They stated that they could not release that information, but that they had heard of a website called DonorSiblingregistry.com and they recommended that I try that. I got on and there was one other match. For whatever reason, that person did not continue communication, but before it ended, she did send me a photo of her three children. It was amazing to see three other children who looked like my son. Some months after that, we connected with another sibling and his mom. This child and mine were born 90 minutes apart and share the same middle name! Soon after, another family joined and we all e-mailed about once a month, updating each other on how our children were doing. My son and I met one of the families who live about 2 hours away and nothing can explain the absolute joy at meeting this other little boy! They connected right away. They look alike, have the same mannerisms and the moms and I had a great time meeting each other. About 9 months later, another family joined our group and we all met for the first time. Seeing the boys together--how similar they are in temperaments, interests, voices, everything my son is so HAPPY that he has a connection that is all his own. He talks about his brothers and how important they are to him. (He even has used the excuse that I should buy him something, because after all-his brother has one!) All of these boys are pre school age, but they are very proud to talk about each other. As my son grows up, I hope that this connection to family will serve him well. He often talks about other kids he knows and how they have dads and how he doesn't have one. Then he gets excited because he has more brothers than other kids he knows!

I guess I can't fully explain what it is like to see the smile on my son's face, the excitement he feels or the deep connection he has with these other boys. There was never any shyness, or hesitation with any of them, they just like being around each other and I imagine see a bit of themselves in each other when they visit. I do not regret my decision; I think it was the exactly right thing to do. My son belongs to me and my family and my son belongs to his brothers. That is the way it should be.-Email 2/13/08

I am a donor child. My mom didn't tell me till I was 21 that I was the produce of such. I always knew something was different; I used to ask if I was adopted constantly. Much like Kathleen on the Oprah show, I never felt a sense of belonging. However, I wish my mom would have told me sooner. The way she went about telling me wasn't the best situation either and everyone always knew, it was a secret that was kept from only me. I am now almost 26 and a recent parent myself. I find myself wanting to know more and more about who my "dad" is, even if it is just medical history, etc. as when I became pregnant

with my son, there were so many questions asked about medical history on each side of the family and I couldn't answer them. I think if my mom would have told me sooner I might be more comfortable with the situation. I also think that if I had a known donor, I would be more comfortable with my life in general. That is just my personal opinion on the situation of known vs. unknown donor. It is rough not knowing who your "dad" is..... 2/13/08 Email

I am a 35 year old wife and mother of three. My husband and I met as undergraduates at a state university in the southwest in 1993. Shortly before we met, my husband was a sperm donor at the university hospital's infertility clinic. He was paid a small sum for his donations and at the time regarded the act as something altruistic that he did to help infertile couples conceive with the knowledge that they would give his genetic children love, support, and all the advantages in life. He was guaranteed anonymity. The doctors told him that his sperm would be used in at least one conception and up to ten or more. We were married in 1996 and our first child arrived later that year. She is now 11, and we have another 9 year old daughter and a 20 month old son. I have never stopped wondering about their potential half siblings out there, somewhere. Would they meet in college and unwittingly date one another? Aside from the practical concerns, there is a bigger fundamental truth; those half siblings may or may not be out there, and it is not my place or anyone else's to deny that knowledge to my children. The notion of totally anonymous donation overlooks the rights of unborn generations to know who they are at a very deep level. Obviously, this message is coming through loud and clear from all the donor-conceived children who have posted messages on the DSR group. My husband made a decision that affects not just the couples and children who were created through his donation, but also one that affects me and the children of our marriage. I had no say in the matter, and neither did my children. There is a big difference in a tissue or blood donation that helps a person live and a donation of gametes that creates a new life entirely. With that said, I am not advocating or suggesting that donors who do not want to be found should be exposed or subject to financial or legal claims by donor conceived children. It's not about that- it's about knowing who you are and where you come from. The assumption on the part of the doctors and fertility clinic staff that they have the right to deny that knowledge to children yet unborn, as if they have no right to ask the questions in the first place, is arrogant and wrong. Neither I nor my children have any legal ground to find out any information about the donor conceived children of my husband, their siblings. There has to be a better way to do this. The current policies are seriously flawed. Thanks Wendy.-Email 2/13/08

"I chose my donor for a number of reasons. One of them was that he had achieved a pregnancy. After I conceived I found out through your website that he had ALOT of children. I later joined a web group specifically for this donor and found out he has over 100 children. He is still listed on Fairfax as available, although they have told some of the parents that they are not selling to anyone who doesn't already have children by him. It does come up as no geographical restriction though."-Parent, Email 3/08

"I am quite secure about who I am and I do not feel I need to meet my donor but I do wonder about siblings. I think no matter how secure ones home life is there is still a need to better understand who you are and who you might be related to. Lee, DC 10/06 Yahoo Group

It is NOT about how much we were wanted, it is about needing to know where the other half of our identity comes from. I don't know why that is so hard for so many of you to understand!

Even the unplanned child usually has the opportunity to know who his father is - and I'm not talking about "Daddy" - I'm talking about where those genes came from. We (DI adults) aren't looking for the perfect father figure. I don't care what kind of life my bio-father has led or whether he'd have been a deadbeat dad. I had a Dad who wanted me as much as my mother did, but I still don't know who I look like and where many of my other traits come from. That is the issue, NOT whether I was wanted and loved. Dela, Yahoo Group 7/06

For anyone who still doesn't understand why we DI adults feel such a strong need to find our donors, I heard a quote the other day which was in reference to adoptees but is just applicable to us. "We know our families love us and wanted us enough to go to "extraordinary measures" to have us, "but who wants to start a book on chapter 2?" I want Chapter 1, the Introduction and the Prologue as well! Dela Yahoo Group 3/06

It's not just donor conceived people who are genetically linked to each other by their donors. It's also the extended families of the donors- their wives, parents, children who are part of that family tree. My children have half siblings out there somewhere because my husband donated sperm as a college student with an iron-clad anonymity contract. My children had no say, any more than the children who were born via that donation had any say in it, but that doesn't make them any less genetically related. I can speak for myself when I say I don't feel threatened by the fact that there are potential children out there my husband fathered through this decision he made years ago. It is what it is. I believe my children have the right to know if there are half siblings out there that resulted from their dad's donation. If all parties are willing to know one another, why not let them. It doesn't take anything away from me as a mother or, I don't think, from the parents of donor conceived children. Families will remain intact, the circle of knowledge will only grow and more of the puzzle pieces fit together for all of these children (and adults). My husband doesn't dwell on it much, but he's not opposed to the idea of meeting the children conceived with his sperm if they wanted to know him. He asked me why I wanted to look and I told him it was because it's not just about the 23 year old man he was who donated and signed a confidentiality contract 16 years ago, it's about his own three children and their potential half siblings who may be out there. They didn't exist when those forms were signed. It affects them most of all. VAMom, Wife of Donor, 2/08 Yahoo Group

Knowing that my medical/genetic information is held in someone's records – and not allowed access to it, is UNCONSCIONABLE, UNETHICAL, and SHOULD BE ILLEGAL !!! Donor Conceived Adult, 2/08 Email

However, anonymity does NOT benefit the offspring. This type of conversation is one that concerns me because the ones in these situations who have no voice are still not being considered. There's more to the choice than donors and mothers. Where's the offspring's choice? Mal 2/08 Yahoo Group.

“My CCB donor was also a yes donor and now is a no. I am happy to say that we have four beautiful matches on the DSR. 2 girls and 2 boys. I don't know what the future has in store for us but I am happy to have the siblings we have now. “

“I have the same situation - a donor who was a yes and then turned into a no. I was told that a donor has the right to change their mind about being contacted and that this is what happened in our situation”

“I had something like that happen to my donor. Also, at CCB. It occurred after he was asked to reactive for a couple. He obliged but then he changed to no. Ironically, that's when I discovered this registry and

recently discovered that there are 3 half siblings. I've made limited contact with one parent of a sibling at Christmas time."

"I have recently found out that the sperm bank I used may have misrepresented themselves to me, and told me the donor agreed to be identified . They are now telling me (8 yrs later) that the donor is a NO donor not an identity release donor. Has anyone ever run into this before?? Any ideas on how to handle this??"

"I have the same issue with CCB. When we were first looking at donors, we decided that we would like to use someone who was, at least, open to the idea of possibly being identified when ***turns 18. All of the information that I originally downloaded/printed said the donor was willing to be id'd when the children are 18...NOW, when I look at the information - even though the donor is retired - it shows him as a NO!"- Parents, DSR Yahoo Group 2/06

I was a sperm donor over a decade ago while I was a university student. I only became aware of the Donor Sibling Registry after reading the recent New York Times article highlighting it. I had long thought that technology might someday facilitate contact between donors and their offspring. The article made me realize that the time had come and that there was a fork in the road, and that I had a very important decision to make. Shedding one's anonymity one day, followed by the possibility of being contacted the next day by perhaps a dozen or more of one's offspring, AND their parents... well, you must admit this is a scary prospect. The easiest thing for a donor to do is simply put on blinders and stay far, far away from the spotlight. I discussed my options with family and friends, some of whom were supportive and some against the idea of me registering at the DSR. I ultimately decided that I have a moral responsibility to make myself available to be contacted by my genetic offspring. If they are content in their lives without contacting me, fine! But I couldn't live with the thought of hiding my identity from those who might (possibly) be desperately searching for me. One thing I learned from messages posted at the DSR is that people are looking for donors for all sorts of reasons, not just curiosity. There can be serious health complications where it makes a big difference knowing the other fifty percent of a child's genetic history. And besides health issues, there's the emotional well-being of the children as they mature. Long before donor children were in the news, I remember hearing about adopted children and how some of them struggled to cope with their unknown origins. It seems that (some) people have a need to know where they come from, if they are going to have full confidence going forward in their lives. One friend who tried to talk me out of registering at the DSR warned that I was looking for trouble. Instead I think it's more accurate to say that, by registering, I'm making myself available for trouble to find me. I don't mean for this to sound flippant or insulting. I have a nice calm life, and I'm not thrilled with the idea of a dozen or so moral dilemmas entering into it. Other DSR donors have also written about the possible downsides of making contact with one's offspring. One often written about is the potential financial obligations < whether legal or moral. I've noticed that some parents of donor children become indignant at this suggestion, declaring that they are financially independent. Well, I'm happy for them, but they can't speak for the dozen or so other families, can they? And what if something unfortunate happens to their family i.e. natural disaster, incarceration, sickness, or death? Perhaps this is unlikely in just one family, but what about multiplied a dozen or two times? I did register at the DSR this past November, and was relieved not to be deluged by a flood by contacts right away. I know that sooner or later I will get that first definitive email. As for what I'll do once I'm contacted, I don't know yet and will cross that bridge when I come to it. I think empathy and caution will be good rules to go by. In a situation as emotionally charged as this, I'm sure expectations on either side may not be fulfilled for whatever reason. Potentially, there could be disappointment or regret for one or more parties involved. For the donor, this experience could repeat itself over and over and over again. Of course there is also the hope, from this donor at least, that

the day a child and family make contact with me will ultimately develop into friendships enriching all our lives.-Anon Donor, Yahoo Group 12/05

Having been an egg donor, I think everyday about any and all of the children I have helped create for other families. I think about what stage of childhood they are at, and just curiosity about who they are, and will someday become. I also think about all the parents I have been blessed to help with my gift. Having contact with one of the families (with triplets), I get pictures and updates on them. It is amazing to me to see how much of my personality and physical attributes they have. I carry pictures of them, and the set of twins I carried as a surrogate, in my wallet, same as my own kids, and my nieces and nephews. I would hope that any other donors out there feel much like I do, that they do a donation so they can help someone, not so they can get money for it, then move on and forget it ever happened. As for so many other donors discovering this site and participating, I did not know this site even existed until AOL ran it on the Welcome screen a few weeks ago. I wish I had known about Wendy a couple of years ago, when I was going through my trials to have contact with a family that wanted it just as much or even more than I did.- Marilyn, Former Egg Donor Yahoo Group 12/05

Speaking for myself, I probably have several reasons for wanting to make contact. I think first and foremost was just plain and simple curiosity. I think it's kind of a guy thing. We tend to want to see how we measure up. When a little boy puts wood and cinder block together for the first time to make a ramp, and then finally musters up the courage to hurtle himself over it on his bike in front of his friends, the first thing he wants to know when he lands is how far he jumped...

I guess there was a degree of altruism from the start though. I mean, yes, I was in college, and I liked the extra cash, but after a while, when I really thought about what I was doing, I kind of felt good. And that was the start of my initial curiosity. The real altruism came later when I got married and became a father myself. Children change our lives. It was at that point that I could really understand how important it was for people who were having problems, to be able to become parents for the first time.

After that, I would call the donor clinic where I had been a donor years ago to let them know about my own children, and how they were doing, on the outside chance that one of my donor children's parents might want to be able to gauge how their child was doing. It was at the point of parenthood for myself, long after the money was gone, that the whole meaning of what it was to be a parent made sense.

I want all my genetic offspring to be happy and healthy like my own children. I will always love them and wonder where they are, what they are doing, are they living, learning and experiencing life like me and my own children? I hope that they are bringing the same joy to the lives of all the mothers and dads the same way my life has been enriched by my own children. We are, and will always be, connected. Some of them will become equally as curious as I was some

day, and want to know more. I think we owe it to them to let them learn.

I admire your husband. He is obviously a secure man who has no worries. That comes from providing a child with a "home" full of love, care and respect. He has no problem because he knows that he is, and will always be, Daddy...this other guy might be the father, but it's Daddy who makes the difference in a child's life. In the same fashion, the child will always, only ever be, a genetic offspring, and that's the way it should stay.

I don't have a problem making a connection (I just made my first a couple weeks ago), but it needs to be done correctly, and for God's sake, all you other mom's thinking about this need to know that it needs to be done in an open and positive manner. Children look to us

to know how to react to any situation that they are unfamiliar with. Be safe, but if you decide to make a connection, be positive, open and honest at all times.

So, in answer to your question, I think there are many reasons a donor father might want to get involved with a genetic offspring. I think though that those reasons change over time as we grow older and wiser.- James, Former Sperm Donor, Email 12/07

Isn't the real question "WHY don't we know these statistics?" Every stakeholder involved in educating a generally uninformed public about ART and its effects on our lives has to consider that we cannot do so within the l'aissez-faire attitude society has about infertility medicine and the sperm banking business. Until we are able as a society to hold the unregulated infertility industry accountable, we can only guess at the answers they refuse to give. I often hear the number of 30,000 DI births a year from the media, who sometime claim to be quoting ASRM figures and unnamed "experts." How can we possibly know unless we begin to demand that such information is part of our right as citizens for transparency in government and in medicine? The only reputable study was done in 1987 by Al Gore for the Congressional Office of Technology Assessment. More than half of the clinics at that time told him it was privileged information and refused to cooperate in this inquiry by the US Congress. From those who did participate, Mr. Gore was able to extrapolate an estimate of 30,000 a year. This was 20 years ago, when there were virtually no single or lesbian women receiving sperm through clinics, before the recovery from the initial drop in donors after the 1984 discovery that sperm could transfer HIV, before the rapid growth in numbers of clinics, and before the many technological advancements in "live birth" success rates from thawed sperm. Your guess is as good as mine, and probably as good as the ASRM's guess. Personally, I'd guess it would be around 60,000 to 80,000 a year. As far as how many are in non-traditional families, I don't know. To me, my hetero-parents were non-traditional. I don't consider this necessarily a sexless act either, at least from the donor's position. Like you, I am worried about your children being marginalized. It's not the fault of the public or government, however. They are largely ignorant or uninformed about this experience. It's the profession's general policies of secrecy and anonymity that have made not only your child, but all DI children, all DI parents, and all donors marginalized.-Donor Conceive Bill C, 3/08

Hi, I'm Jordan. My mom told me about two years ago when I was eleven, that i had a donor father. She told me because my birth-certificate father was threatening to use it against her to hurt me, because he owed us alot of money. So, she told me. Now knowing that i have a donor father, i wonder if i have brothers or sisters. Now, as it is, even though she has remarried, she hasn't had any children. I have always been an only child. I really really would like to know. Thank you so much for your site. I now realize there are so many other people out in the world like me, and that is comforting, to know thy have been through what i have been through. Even if i don't find out anything, i won't let that stop me, or my life. I will just carry on my life, but i would still...LOVE..to know...so thank you for your website. And i am going to look for the rest of myself." Jordan, Donor Conceived, Email 3/08

For me, the emotional and ethical issues that have been raised by trying to track down my genetic family, now thought to be, with half siblings, in the hundreds, carried enormous, and arguable equally consuming effects as having to face infertility itself. But I notice that the pain and emotional anguish of infertility takes front stage. The complex and difficult realities created to alleviate this pain recede into the background. Page 5 "Who Am I? Experiences of Donor Conception" Joanna Rose – donor conceived

Thank you so much for starting the DSR. I have found so much useful information and resources that I never knew existed. I always thought that I was on my own in this journey. You see, I found out that I

was donor conceived when I was 15 years old, and was forced to keep it a complete secret being that my entire family was unaware of it. I was forced to completely hide all my feelings. It wasn't until I began reading articles written by other donor offspring through the DSR that I was able to recognize that my feelings were very valid. They were more than valid, they were common! I am now 22 and finally, 7 years after finding out the truth about who I am, I am able to acknowledge the heartbreak I feel in knowing that I may never, every find any biological paternal ties. The truth is, this is crushing. I hate it, it's unfair and it is an injustice. It's like the sperm companies don't even think about the actual child they are creating. They just seem to care about business and money. It is sad and sick to me that this is what we have come to has a human race. I love my parents, and over all I am so happy that I am donor conceived, but that doesn't mean that it is a perfect system, and it doesn't mean that it is morally ok to consciously deny a human being their God given right to know where they come from. I find it completely ridiculous to think that a country such as America would allow this to occur, and abundantly at that. I have found that in the months since joining the DSR, I have experienced incredible freedom. I want other DC to know this freedom. I want to see laws changed. I want to stand up for the unborn, the dc babies, and all other dc children who are either completely oblivious of the fact that they are DC or have nowhere to turn. I think that if someone is willing to donate sperm to create a living breathing thinking human being they should be able to face that human being 18 years down the line. They should be willing to let their offspring know who they are and give answers. No one has the right to hide that kind of information from anyone. Thank you again, Wendy, and let me know how I can help in any way! Sincerely, Raeanne, Email 3/08

Like adoptees before them, donor offspring have to decide if they will open themselves up to an honest exploration that may cause them deep sorrow and hurt their existing family relationships, while possibly bringing no tangible benefits, or if they will remain in the protective cocoon of silence or denial, to save themselves the trauma of dealing with the truth. Regardless of the dearth of studies which could effectively quantify serious residual negative issues in the lives of all parties concerned, the potential for such problems cannot be dismissed. Page 26 "Who am I? Experiences of donor conception" Christine Whipp – donor conceived

"I wonder what it would be like had I been conceived in an open system, growing up with information about my natural father, and in due course knowing his name, perhaps even meeting him. I am sure it would have been infinitely preferable to my actual experience of secrecy, followed by the brick wall of protected anonymity. I imagine living with my social father, knowing something about, and anticipating in due course a meeting with, my biological father.

Perhaps it would have elements in common with the experience of children of divorced parents, who grow up with a stepfather or mother. Just as step-children's experiences can range from the bitterly unhappy to the comparatively happy and secure, it is not doubt difficult to generalize about the experience of open DI. For myself, I can imagine the possible guilt of divided loyalties (two fathers), or role model confusion (who am I/should I be like?). Though openness represents the best option for those conceived, I doubt it will erase all the tensions implicit in DI.

Obviously, I would not be alive were it not for DI. However, this simple statement conceals a more complicated reality. Someone with a painful disease or wound may be grateful to be alive. On the other hand, they may feel overwhelmed and preoccupied with their pain. In moments when the pain of fractured identity, lost kinship of family strain becomes intense, the DI-conceived person may not be glad to be alive, and may even feel angry that they were ever born. It can be hard to come to terms with a deliberate action, endorsed by the State and executed by the medical establishment, which has cut

one off from one's natural family, and resulted in one's natural father and mother never having even met. Feelings of anger and dislocation do not stem from ingratitude, but from pain." Page 42 "Who am I? Experiences of donor conception" Louise Jamieson – donor conceived

"My feelings are difficult to explain to people who take their roots for granted. An adopted person once described the sensation of what is now termed 'genealogical bewilderment' as having to drive through life without a road map. I find it to be an apt description of my situation. People who know both of their biological parents find it hard to grasp the enormity of what I am missing. Simply having information about the sort of people they are, and what things they are capable of doing, creates a baseline that you don't realize is comforting unless you have to live without it." Page 44 "Voices of Donor Conception: Moving Beyond Secrecy and Shame" Rebecca Hamilton – donor conceived

I am the product of sperm donation. I have always known that some of my defining character traits are not present in any known relative. Being a man in this situation, my life has been and still continues to be difficult. I have never been able to relate to my own parents, which has made it very hard to understand myself. I have never really been interested in knowing my biological father on a personal level, only many things about him including personality traits, relevant medical histories, and occupation. To sum it up, I wish I could know what of me is me, my mother, and the father I never knew.-Jb, Donor Conceived DSR 6/07

Fairfaxdonor said: "She says that she is unhappy about how she was conceived. That seems kind of strange to me. If it were not for her being conceived by DI she would not exist."

This is an argument that is used too often to justify DI. What the people using this argument don't seem to understand is that if we did not exist, we would not have to endure the pain and heartache of never knowing where half of our heritage and identity comes from. This is not to say I wish I were never born! I am very grateful for the life I have, but all the gratitude and love in the world will never fill the void left by a doctor trying to "help" a couple have a child, while intentionally forever withholding half of that "child's" (in quotes because those children eventually grow up to become adults like me) genetic identity. "It seems to me that to be unhappy about how you were conceived is to be unhappy about who you are, and that is kind of sad." It is not being unhappy about who you are; it is being unhappy about NOT KNOWING who you are. And yes, it is very sad. And extremely frustrating. It is human nature to want to know where we come from. Granted, we all feel that desire to differing degrees, but to deny the validity of that desire is not fair to the donor-conceived. I am less unhappy about the nature of my conception than I am about not having any information whatsoever about my biological father. In some ways, I feel "special" (for lack of a more appropriate word) for having been conceived this way in the age before sperm banks, but that in no way makes up for having half of my history taken from me without my consent. Even though I had a Dad, his history cannot simply substitute for my own genetic heritage. Rather, I see Dad's background as more of a supplement to my true background, which is still missing. Dela, Donor Conceived Yahoo Group, 7/06

Listening to your story really drives home the point that the really inappropriate term in "Anonymous donor insemination" is not donor - it's the anonymous. I want to emphatically echo what Todd Webb, another donor, said when he and I were on the same TV thing: That men who insist on remaining anonymous should simply not be donors. I know I never insisted on it - I was informed of it, and at the time, it meant to me "We won't tell your medical school classmates what you're doing." Fair enough. The ethical and social implications of it didn't dawn on me at the time, were not explained or introduced to me

at the time, and only became real when I began to be contacted by donor children. I think it's hard for all of us - and I'm not a cold shoulder kind of guy - I flooded my biological daughter with photos of me and her cousins and grandparents. But just as an example - last night, as I was sending off a quick e-mail to her, my wife reminded me that my own son was upstairs vegging out on the Discovery channel instead of brushing his teeth and reading. The clear implication: Time taken to interact with DI kids is time taken away from the regular kids, and I parent them less because of it. It's a rearrangement of the social order to have relationships established this late in life. It needs to be there from the outset. For all of us, it would be best to start establishing our traditions at birth. Now that we've been forced to try to negotiate these relationships somewhere around the middle part of life - lots of turf has already been claimed. That sucks. But it's not all bad. Tears came to my eyes when my daughter first sent me an e-mail with her photo. It was such a relief to just see her, looking exactly like a brown-eyed version of my niece, and know that she was O.K. Healthy. Ready to go to college. Who you get matched up with in life, whether it's parents, spouses, bio-Dad's, etc - it's all a crap shoot. What you make of it is what decides the kind of person you really are.:)-Sandman, Former Donor, Yahoo Group 7/06

In truth, we will likely never know what MOST offspring feel since most were never told about the method of their conception because their parents often felt a sense of shame about their infertility & because they followed the advice given by the 'experts' to whom they turned for help (doctors, clinics, sperm banks & counselors) to never, ever tell. So, it is a relatively small sub-group of donor conceived people who do, in fact, know of their origins. And it is an even smaller sub-group of these who reach out (via websites, support groups, the media) to share their stories & connect with others. However, among this latter group, there do seem to be several consistent trends:

- * most are completely opposed to donor anonymity & want it to end; some want records opened retrospectively (as adoption records have been in many countries/jurisdictions)
- * many (most?) are opposed to donors being paid more than reimbursement for expenses directly related to the act of donation, for they feel that payment commodifies their lives
- * some are opposed to donor conception itself because of how it deliberately severs a human being from their genetic kinship roots. They also feel that there are significant moral, social & legal issues that arise from donor conception practices that have intergenerational consequences for the wider community.
- * many experience a sense of 'genetic bewilderment' similar to that experienced by adoptees because their appearance, interests, talents, etc are often totally different from their social father's
- * those who want more info about their donor, or want to meet him, are not looking for a replacement parent, but rather for the 'missing 50% of the puzzle that makes up who [they] are.' The parents who raised them have no reason to fear 'losing' their child to the genetic parent. Diane, Infertility Network Director, Yahoo Groups, 7/06

I did just a little research as to how sperm banks have actually reacted in the past when informed either by a donor or by a physician that there may be genetic defects in their frozen sample vials. I think many of the women posting on this site already know how they react to concerns raised by Moms - it's a mixture of denial, prevarication, and general indifference. In both the Dutch cerebellar ataxia (ADCA) case (donor informed bank) and the Michigan immunodeficiency (SCN) case (physician informed bank) the first response by the bank was to destroy (incinerate) the remaining vials. In both cases, this significantly hampered physicians from pinpointing the source and time of the mutation event. It appears to be classic destruction of evidence; the implied rationale of the banks seems to be, "We're so sloppy around here that we can't be trusted not to inseminate people with this unless we destroy it." In the Michigan case, the donor was never found or notified; in the Dutch case, the bank thought about it for 3 years and then

notified the remaining recipient families and offered them counseling. So...the record of the sperm banks falls far short of anything that might be confused with the ethical practice of medicine. Sandman, Former Donor, Yahoo Group 7/06

Up until recently, I hadn't paid much attention to the Cryobank integrity discussions in this forum but as our number of matches has surpassed 20 children I am finding myself increasingly annoyed by the fact that Farifax has a policy of not disclosing the criteria for determining their numbers for distribution of a particular donor. I could have sworn when I ordered sperm from them in 2004 I read that they limited sales of a given donor to 10 families but maybe I am hallucinating. In any case...I am sure this has already been discussed but what is the rationale for this secrecy? That being said, we've connected with 15 of the other families through a private discussion group born out of the DSR and recently had a reunion where 9 kids attended (all under the age of 4.) The connections are truly remarkable and I am so glad to have these families as fixtures in our lives - particularly from such an early age for all our kids. But it's funny - as I get closer with the other families, and as the kids get older, the implications of the fertility clinic trade have taken on a much greater significance. The long and short of it is that the emotional ramifications of the donor conception process are many and deep. I find it stunning that nowhere on the website could I find any sort of information on "things you might want to think about before getting pregnant in this way." Not that I would change anything but, through this process you really can be at mercy of a series of total strangers who may have a profound impact on the health and well being of your child. Navigating this path goes so far beyond the health and well being of the sperm you are buying... which is where the information from the cryobanks seems to end. Donor Parent Yahoo Group 10/2007

I am new to the world of donor insemination, however, 18 years ago I was conceived through this method. Recently my parents sat me down and told me about my roots. It was quite the shock to me but it made sense because I have never looked like my parents. Now I wish to seek my birth father, but in light of not being able to find him, I find myself asking why I am denied the right to know where I come from. Donor Conceived, Yahoo Group 10/06

My name is Ryan Kramer, I am the DI conceived son of Wendy Kramer, and I think it's about time I posted something on this site. I know that there has been a lot of negativity and hostility floating around here lately, which is why what I'm about to say should in no way be taken as an attack of any sort by anyone. 1st of all, I would like to point out that the generalization "all DI conceived children suffer pain and hurt" is completely unjust. It perhaps would be more fair to say that some DI children who were lied to, and later discovered that truth were hurt in some way. I was donor conceived 15 years ago, and to this day, due in part to my mother's SUCSESSFUL parenting, I have never once felt anger or hurt of any sort for being conceived. Indeed, sometimes I become curious about my roots, but I am who I am, and knowing my father wouldn't change that. My mother has not "brainwashed" me, or "tricked" me into being a happy young man. The truth is, not knowing my father is not something I think about on a day to day basis. It's not that I ignore it, but having known it since I was only two years of age has made it a part of my life that I embrace and accept. You repeatedly say that I "don't know who half of me

is". That's absolutely not true. While, indeed I don't know where half of me came from, I still know what it is. There are parts of me, both physically and emotionally that I can distinctly pull out of my mother's side. Things about my nose and eyes and hands, and also emotional resemblance. Once I have isolated all of these things, the process of elimination shows me the side I obtained from my father. So while I have never met my father, make no mistake, I do see him in myself, in my brown eyes, in my love for math and passion for engineering. Secondly, My mother is not to blame for my "horrible" means of conception. Nor was it selfish of her to want a child. That's human nature, and if this was the way she was to do it, so be it. I feel that growing up in a one parent household has brought me closer to my mother, and today we have one of the strongest parent-offspring relationships of anyone I know. Sperm Donor Yahoo Group, 4/04

My name is Lara and I'm new to the group. I'm 19 and was conceived through DI. Ironically, the sperm bank where I was conceived is part of the college that I am currently attending. I can see this facility from my dorm room window and am overcome by emotions knowing that nineteen years ago (March 2 1987 to be exact) the missing part of me, my biological father, was physically there, so close I can almost touch it. And here I am today...curious and frustrated yet so thankful for my life. I'm happy and healthy and am grateful for all my blessings. I just wish I had a right to my identity. I'm an only child with no "social" father and when people ask me what it feels like to be in my situation I tell them to imagine life if everything you knew about your paternal side was erased...every aunt, uncle, cousin, grandparent, and friend. Hopefully one day laws will be passed that favor DI offspring's right to their identity over the privacy of donors. All I ever wanted was a picture...a name that I could match to a face...that would be more than enough for me. My family is out there somewhere and knowing that is so surreal. The DSR is my biggest chance for achieving my dream and just knowing that such a medium exists is enough to give me tingles and put a smile on my face. I am so very thankful for the DSR. I mean, what other organization gives people the opportunity to find something as profound as biological family? For all other DI offspring in my situation... GOOD LUCK!! DSR Yahoo Group 12/06

I can say that yes, it was a lot like donating a blood sample when I donated in that it wasn't difficult, and I wasn't contemplating a great deal of long term consequences. However, even then I knew that the potential human life would have a special connection to me... It didn't bother me that I might never meet any resultant children. It was an "anonymous" donation after all. Still, there was the altruistic feeling of helping someone else and the biological drive to contribute my genes to the perpetuation of the human race. Such were the thoughts of a graduate student.... and that was then.

Now, I have known the joys of happy marriage and the desire to have children of our own. I have a few more years of life experience under my belt. I have taught children and observed adults. Reality is that genetic and emotional connections are more intertwined than I realized when I was a twenty-something grad student making a fresh sperm donation.

If a child does exist who bears some of my genetic inheritance, I am curious about what his or her life is like and how similar we and our lives are. Furthermore, I am obliged as the donor to care about both the good and the bad that my genes may have injected into someone else's life. I find that altruism did not end with a donation then: a caring individual has to be willing to answer questions if there are any now. If I ever do meet such a child and his or her parents, my hope would be that we could have something of a family/friend relationship. We get together as much as is possible and comfortable, but we are not trying to live a life together. We know things about each other that mere acquaintances wouldn't, but we are not actively tied to the others' lives. Obviously children are much more than the result of sperm and ova meeting, as are the sources of both the sperm and the ova. Greg, Former Sperm Donor, DSR Yahoo Group
4/06

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