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Some Thoughts about Where are My Eggs?

a blog by [Ellen Glazer](#),
<http://www.fertilityauthority.com/node/1000653>, January
 17, 2014



There is a wonderful essay circulating the internet these days by a woman who was an egg donor 15 plus years ago. It's called "Where are my Eggs?" and if you haven't read it, I hope you will. I found it to be the very moving account of one woman's journey from young, altruistic, idealistic early-20's donor to being a 39 year old mother with many questions about a possible ED offspring.

Several years ago I met with the director of an egg donor agency. I told her that I preferred that egg donors be in their late twenties as I felt that at that point, they had some understanding of what they were doing. I raised the concern that women in their early-mid-twenties might not appreciate that they would always be connected—in some way—with the child or children who came from their eggs. To this the agency director responded emphatically, "Oh no, they have no connection. The lawyers take care of that." At the time, I was too polite or too timid to tell her that there are some things that lawyers simply can't "take care of" --and kinship is surely among them.

And so I come upon Ruth Ragan's essay, "Where are my eggs?" with sadness, but not surprise. I know that there are some women who donate eggs and never look back, but Ragan's essay confirms much of what I feared years ago hearing the connections between donors and offspring and recipient families so easily and cavalierly dismissed. It has long troubled me that some young women are directed to anonymous donation, in many instances never knowing they have the option of meeting the recipient family and/or the child. Worse still is the less common practice, but one that Ragan was subject to, of not telling the donor if a child had been born.

Ragan takes note of how she changed over the 15 years from the time she was a donor until the time she was a mom, but what of the "egg industry." Has it changed? Are today's donor's being reminded that they are doing more than donating eggs—they are helping bring a new life or lives into the world? Are they encouraged to try to anticipate how they will feel about that child and is anyone helping them anticipate that they may feel the need or desire to know that the child is ok. and doing well?

I'd like to say that things are better now and in one sense they are: increasing numbers of donors know they have an option to meet the recipients and many more recipients appreciate the value of these meetings. These are significant changes but they fall short of saying that donor agencies fully recognize and acknowledge the complex dimensions of kinship. One need only glance through a few egg donor questionnaires to see that the emphasis remains on what the donor has to offer the recipients—her beauty, good genes, sparkling personality—not on what it means for a child to be conceived through donated eggs. The sad truth is that questionnaires ask such questions as "Do you kiss with your eyes open?" and "Do you like your handwriting? And "What is your favorite color?" but largely omit questions about how the donor feels about the child she may be bringing into the world. Some questionnaires neglect to even ask her if she is willing to meet the child and/or the parents.

Enter the Donor Sibling Registry. Since it's arrival in 2000, this on line resource has connected thousands of people worldwide with their donors, their offspring and with donor siblings. In 2013 alone, the DSR matched nearly 1000 people with their genetic kin. It has served as an essential resource for Ruth Ragan and others who, like her, are finding that "worry often gives a small thing a big shadow." Undoubtedly there are countless women who are trying to quiet a small voice in their heads that seems to be growing louder as it asks, "Do I have an offspring out there?" "Is she/he ok.?" "Does she think of me?" "Does she know I care?" "Does she have good parents?" and

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take their concerns to others, even their closest family and friends. In some instances they had not told others about the donation for fear of disapproval. And even those who were close and supportive might have difficulty understanding the collision of emotions that can follow egg donation.

The Donor Sibling Registry's reach has extended beyond it's on line registry. This fall marked the arrival of Generation Cryo, a TV series that followed a young woman seeking and finding donor "siblings." It also marked the publication of founder, Wendy Kramer and Law Professor, Naomi Cahn's book Finding Our Families: A First of It's Kind Book For Donor Conceived People and Their Families. In it, Kramer and Cahn offer wise, practical and comprehensive guidance for people like Ragan whose worry is casting a big shadow. And as we begin 2014, over 25 egg donor agencies are offering their clients the option of including the DSR in their contract with donors, ensuring that neither they nor their donors will be left worrying in silence about donor kin.

I appreciate Ruth Ragan stepping forward and sharing—so powerfully and poignantly—her journey from well intentioned, altruistic young donor to older, wiser, wondering woman. Her essay surely furthered the long overdue conversations about the many facets of donor kinship.

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