

Donor Offspring May Feel Betrayal, Anger: Study

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People conceived using donor sperm who were not told about their true origins until early adulthood could have serious issues with trust, betrayal and anger for years after their discovery, according to new research.

Helen Riley, a Queensland University of Technology postgraduate student in the Humanities Program, has completed a study which looked at the effects late discovery had on those conceived with assistance from a donor, and brought up by their biological mother and a "social" father.

"Not much attention is paid to the effects of intentional concealment of genetic origins, but it is very much a social problem with implications which are social and relational, not just individual and personal, and that's my interest," Ms Riley said.

She put out a call for late-discovery donor offspring to submit their stories and found the late revelation of the truth about their conception could be very destructive and have a devastating impact.

"These are people who have no right to find out who their biological father is - in all states apart from Victoria, there is no legislation for them at all," Ms Riley said.

"When they find out they are a donor offspring they often feel very betrayed and find it hard to trust, which can have implications in all of their relationships and their ability to trust throughout life, so as well as the problem of identity, there is a wider social implication.

"They also have an issue with not being able to forgive everyone who lied to them, including government organisations and institutions."

She said she understood the struggle faced by infertile couples, but had more of a concern for the effect the intentional concealment of genetic origins has on a child both before and after disclosure, as many adult offspring comment that they always felt something was "not right".

"I understand the pressure for people who desperately want children, but I think far too much emphasis is placed on what the infertile couple wants, rather considering the long term issues for all concerned, but especially for the child who cannot speak for itself," she said.

"So many people think love is enough and assume genetic connection doesn't matter to the child, but it was obviously considered important for the couple to maximise their genetic connection to the child."

She said she had found in her research that donor offspring who had discovered the truth late often felt they were now living dual lives, or that they were treated like a science experiment whose opinion and feelings did not matter.

"There can also be a feeling that they were intentionally created with the intention to deny knowledge of the biological father, something that everyone else has the right to know," she said.

"And as well as all this, there is a real feeling that their pain is not being acknowledged in society, as all

the focus and sympathy seems to be on the infertile couple."

[Queensland University of Technology](#)

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