

# Finding the “Appropriate Distance” in Egg Donor Kinship Relations

## ABSTRACT

This article explores kinship formation from the perspective of egg donors in Denmark. Through interviews with Danish egg donors, it investigates how the Danish legal framework and specific context, materialise egg donor kinship relations in third party reproduction. The article shows the ways egg donors negotiate normative ideals about family and motherhood through different kinship strategies. It argues that the donors’ relational kinship work is a form of social pioneering work, wherein donors help define what an egg donor kinship relation is and can be. This is analysed through the analytical concept of “appropriate distance.” The analysis shows how different normative constraints are embedded in the legal framework that structure which kinship relations are available. As an example, the different donor types in Denmark, anonymous, open, and known, become a way of disconnecting or connecting to kinship. In line with existing studies, it demonstrates how egg donation in Denmark is structured around ideals of altruism linked to normative ideals of femininity and motherhood. Further, it is concluded that egg donation proposes subversive potential for deconstructing heteronormative kinship ideals about motherhood. At the same time, however, the analyses conclude that heteronormative family ideals often are re-installed through egg donation practices.

**Keywords:** egg donation, egg donor, kinship, family making, motherhood, mono-maternalism, heteronormativity, kinship choreography

**AS A BURGEONING** field within reproductive technologies in Denmark, we know surprisingly little about egg donation and what it means to be an egg donor. Questions such as how Danish egg donors negotiate kinship relations, and in what ways they feel connected or disconnected to recipient families and donor-conceived children, remain understudied, especially compared to the relatively large amount of research on the recipients of egg donation, the intended mothers (e.g., Gunnarsson Payne 2015; 2016; Hammond 2018), as well as on egg donation's counterpart, sperm donation (e.g., Adrian 2010; Mohr and Høyer 2012; Mohr 2014). This article sheds new light on the egg donor perspective in third party reproduction, with a particular focus on how their understandings contribute to queering ideas of kinship.<sup>1</sup>

In recent years, third party reproduction has become increasingly common among LGBTQ+ people. The latest report from Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority (HFEA) (2019, 13) on trends in fertility treatment in the United Kingdom suggests that the lower increase by 2% of heterosexual couples' use of in vitro fertilisation, IVF, treatment in 2017 compared to female same-sex couples and single women, that have increased with 12% and 4% respectively "indicates a shift in the kinds of families making use of fertility treatment." The use of donor insemination by women with female partners has also increased to more than 40% of the total treatments, and by single women to almost 20%. Another example of this is the emergence of the reception of oocytes from the partner (ROPA) method, the possibility for lesbian couples to share the biological parentage with one woman providing the egg and the other carrying the pregnancy, which supports lesbian couples' desire to create kinship through genetic bond (Pelka 2009). However, ROPA is illegal in most European countries – for example in Denmark and Sweden this type of double donation is not allowed – and lesbian couples thus travel to Spain where the legislation on fertility treatment is less restrictive, though here it is required for couples to be married to receive treatment.<sup>2</sup> It is characteristic for the field of reproductive technologies that the regulations varies throughout Europe, making the access for infertility treatment differ in regard to sperm and egg donation,

double donation (embryo donation), IVF treatments and surrogacy, dependent on whether it is sought by heterosexual or homosexual couples or singles. Furthermore, in most countries the treatments are generally restricted to heterosexual couples. However, recent years have shown a gradual liberalisation of the regulations, allowing single women and lesbian couples to benefit from various types of treatments.

Every day different assisted reproductive technologies (ARTs) help bring babies into the lives of families in modern, 21<sup>st</sup> century societies, and contribute to broaden how families with children can be constructed. In many ways, reproductive technologies such as IVF treatments and sperm and egg donations have become integrated into Danish society through regulations and medical practices, and through the relative commonness of the practices today every tenth child being born,<sup>3</sup> is conceived through ART (Dansk Fertilitetsselskab 2019). Feminist research has highlighted how ARTs challenge heteronormative family structures, as well as reproduce them (e.g., Strathern 1992; Franklin and Ragoné 1998; Franklin 2001; Franklin and McKinnon 2001; Richards et al. 2012), and in a Danish context specifically how ARTs have been regulated and practiced in a heteronormative family ideal, where single and lesbian women have been excluded and stigmatised (M. N. Petersen 2009; Adrian 2010). This article contributes to the existing field of kinship studies in its questioning on how egg donor kinship and family bonds are created and practiced, and how they are narrated within the confines of the law; questions that have been raised in queer kinship studies in regard to LGBTQ+ people, as well as how national contexts challenge or support certain kinship formations (e.g., Dahl and Gunnarsson Payne 2014; Dahl 2018a; 2018b).

Queer studies scholars like Shelley Park (2013) have challenged the concept of motherhood in her analysis of what she calls polymaternal families, that is families with more than one mother (families created through adoption, lesbian parenting, divorce- and marriage-extended kinship networks, or some combination of these). Park (2013, 3) challenges the ideal of “monomaterialism,” “the notion that children must have *one and only one* mother.” It is a normative assumption, she sees

in family production and kinship narratives closely linked to heteronormativity – the traditional ideal of the nuclear family where one woman produce a child with one man, linked to capitalist ideals of the middle-class family construction (Park 2013, 7).

Park's coining of the concepts polymaternal and monomaternal, can be helpful in understanding egg donor kinship formation, being a new kinship practice that challenges normative and traditional narratives about family and motherhood. Egg donation is in itself a disruptive phenomenon to the heteronormative (legal) framework, because the medical practice divides the otherwise singular mother figure into two – the genetic donor and the woman carrying the child and giving birth. The Roman legal notion of *mater semper certa est* is challenged, and the new kinship relations created through egg donation requires new kinship narratives. I argue that a better understanding of the egg donor perspective is needed in order to address challenges, as well as to understand changes related to kinship formations in third party reproduction. The Danish context proves an interesting case to investigate how specific legislation outlines possibilities for kinship formation, and it is analysed how the three donor types (anonymous, open, and known)\* are deeply entangled in egg donor practices and kinship narratives. A better understanding of egg donor kinship narratives, and the challenges of producing polymaternal family narratives, may contribute to counter and push back against the negative consequences of monomaternalism, which are, according to Park (2013):

[C]ompetition among women for maternal status, the erasure of many women's childbearing and childrearing labors, the treatment of children as private property, the separation of children from mothers (and mothers from children), the maternal grief and guilt often suffered both by those who relinquish custody of their children and those who come to bear full responsibility for them, a lack of attention to the ways in which women might – and sometimes do – mother cooperatively, and finally, a lack of imagination concerning ways in which laws, policies, and practices could be transformed to better serve both women and children. (Park 2013, 7)

Thus, analysing egg donor narratives and kinship strategies, this article contributes to the field of queer kinship studies by throwing light on how egg donor narratives challenge and/or reconfirm heteronormative and monomaternalist notions of family and motherhood.

The article focuses on Danish egg donors as an underexplored field within ARTs. By offering new empirical insights to the experiences and meaning-making of egg donors, the becoming of Danish egg donors through specific legal, clinical and social contexts is illuminated. The main aim of the article is to investigate the new kinship relations egg donors become connected to through egg donation, and how they negotiate these new relations within the Danish legal framework. Not surprisingly, the study shows how hegemonic heteronormative kinship ideals are woven into the legal framework and the family ideals that structure the possibilities for the egg donors' kinship formations. Thus, this study falls in line with queer kinship studies (e.g., Weston 1991; Mamo 2007) and egg donation studies that find that egg donors position themselves in relation to traditional nuclear family ideals (e.g., Pollock 2003). From this initial finding, the article analyses how the egg donors use different strategies to negotiate the disruptive position as egg donor in a generally heteronormative framework. Taking into account material-discursive aspects such as legislation and compensation, it is analysed how the Danish context makes way for egg donors to become active participants in the kinship formation through the use of different donor types, providing new insights about egg donor agency in third party reproduction.

The article asks more broadly how the egg donor disrupts or re-establishes heteronormative family ideals and motherhood. Thus, the article draws attention to the egg donor perspective in third party reproduction and the relational pioneer work the donors are doing, while at the same time discussing how donor agency in third party reproduction have "queer" potentials in terms of disrupting and widening heteronormative and monomaternalist understandings of kinship.

## Context and Background

The article is based on a qualitative study,<sup>5</sup> investigating egg donors' experiences and narratives in Denmark through ethnographic fieldwork and interviews (M. L. Petersen 2019). This article is based on the empirical material from interviews with 15 Danish egg donors.<sup>6</sup> The participants are between 20 and 36 years old, some were new while others had donated up to six times before, and some who had and others who had not children of their own. Educational backgrounds range from skilled to highly educated, and from current student to employee. Informants were recruited through online egg donor forums and through Facebook. All names are pseudonyms. I found this sample of egg donors to be representative of Danish egg donors at the time of the study, based on my trawling through the Facebook groups and with conversations with the clinical staff, but there is no systematic documentation of the egg donor demography in Denmark. The women in this study all identify as straight and more than half of them were in heterosexual relationships at the time of the study. Thus, it remains understudied how many queer women (lesbian, non-cis etc.) donate eggs in Denmark, and if they have different narratives. However, at the time of the study, with only a few hundred donors a year, the demography of donors was mostly heterosexual women.

Overall, egg donation in Denmark remains a very "straight business." As I will elaborate on in the following, the legal framework for infertility treatment in Denmark, and in particular egg donation, highly support heteronormative family structures and exclude any other. Only recently has it become possible to receive "double donation" (both egg and sperm from donor), which left lesbian couples excluded from egg donation in Denmark. At the time of this study, double donation was not allowed and egg donations were only made to heterosexual couples.

My research takes place in the midst of the dramatically changing context of egg donation in Denmark, reflecting a field in constant change, both in terms of legal regulations and in actual numbers of treatments with egg donation per year.

Egg donation has been a regulated practice in Denmark since 1992, where women who were already in infertility treatment were allowed to

donate any spare eggs anonymously.<sup>7</sup> In 1997, the new law on artificial reproduction<sup>8</sup> introduced strict regulations on the rather liberal clinical practices, such as excluding single and lesbian women from receiving treatment. In 2006, this was repealed in a new law on assisted reproduction,<sup>9</sup> which also offered an essential change for egg donation practices with the removal of §14, making it legal for all women (and not only those already receiving infertility treatment) to donate. As another step to attract more donors, the law was changed again in 2012,<sup>10</sup> where the demand for anonymity was repealed.

The field has grown substantially during the last five to six years, going from around one to two hundred treatments per year between 1997 and 2012, to 273 treatments in 2013, up to 1.127 treatments in 2017 (Dansk Fertilitetsselskab 2018). In the last period from 2013–2017 the increase was especially dramatic from 396 in 2015 to 596 in 2016, and finally in 2017 to 1.127 treatments (Dansk Fertilitetsselskab 2018).

Since the first regulations of egg donation, a central tenet in Danish law has been that donations of human tissue were done based on “altruistic motives,” and for no or little compensation.<sup>11</sup> But due to the continuous scarcity of eggs, the rules about compensation were changed in 2015<sup>12</sup> going from 500 Danish kroner (DKK) to 2.400 DKK for a donation. Not seeing the desired change in the number of donors the rules were again changed in 2016 to the current compensation, 7.000 DKK per donation (Carlsen 2016).<sup>13</sup> This development is clearly reflected in the aforementioned numbers on treatments with egg donation. Legal and economic aspects thus play a substantial role in the formation of egg donation practices, as well as how the local/national context frames egg donation within a specific clinical practice.

Egg donation is an infertility treatment offered to women in need of eggs because of medical conditions such as being former cancer patients or due to genetic conditions such as Turner’s or Swyer’s syndromes. It can also be offered in cases of “unexplained infertility,” or to patients suffering from premature menopause. To donate eggs, the egg donor goes through a hormonal treatment, starting from the first day of her menstruation cycle, to mature a new cycle of eggs, preferably 6 to 8 in-

stead of just one. After two weeks of treatment and several visits to the clinic, the eggs are retrieved from the ovaries in a minor surgery, potentially involving pain and discomfort in the donor (Fertilitetsklinikken 2014). In Denmark, the clinics use local anesthesia so the donor is conscious during the surgery and can leave the clinic a couple of hours after the procedure. In other national practices the donor is in full anesthesia, and thus the physical experiences of the donors in different national contexts differ. The Danish health recommendations say that donors should receive mild hormonal treatment aiming at 6 to 8 eggs in a cycle to avoid health risks such as overstimulation.<sup>14</sup> The eggs once retrieved are no longer the legal possessions of the donor.

Today, Danish legislation allows for single women and lesbian couples to benefit from state funded infertility treatment, but until recently it was only women in heterosexual relationships that would be eligible for egg donation, since “double donation” (both egg and sperm cells are donated to the intended pregnant woman) was not allowed. The empirical material for this article was provided before the latest legal change which – at least theoretically – opens up the possibility for lesbian couples to receive donor eggs, meaning that the donors in this study have only donated to heterosexual couples. A change in the law in 2017 opened up for double donation in case of a diagnosed health barrier.<sup>15</sup>

The history of the Danish legal framework shows it to have been based on heteronormative family ideals, where those protected by the law and receiving benefits from the welfare state, have been heterosexual couples. This can be seen both in the exclusion of singles and non-heterosexual couples, as well as in the context of donor anonymity, where the initial demand for anonymity protected the confines of the heterosexual nuclear family. However, since 2012, the egg donor population has changed due to the new possibilities of donating openly or known. This, combined with years of scarcity of egg donors, gives donors in the known category a position to choose recipients, and not the other way around, where recipients choose donors. Donors find their recipients in online forums and on Facebook, as did more than half of the informants in this



study. At the time of this study (2016–2017), most donors in Denmark chose to donate openly or known, and this particular empirical context makes an interesting opportunity to study the ways the legal framework – and the changes in it – plays into the egg donors’ kinship narratives and the possibilities for kinship to materialise in certain ways.

Not only does the open and known donations make it possible to take into account the rights of the donor-conceived children to know their genetic origin, the changes in the legal framework also enable new possibilities for relations and kinship narratives for egg donors in Denmark. Moreover, when new kinship relations are materialised, new narratives challenge the existing ones. As the analysis will show, the egg donors’ negotiations of normative expectations and understandings of family and motherhood are entangled with the Danish legal framework, and show how this framework both supports the re-installment of heteronormative understandings of family and kinship, as well as makes way for kinship relations that challenge this norm.

### **Previous Research**

Providing the egg donor perspective, this study adds to kinship research in egg and sperm donation, where much of the sex cell donation research has focused on the recipients and their negotiations of kinship, for example recipients’ negotiations and choices of egg donations in Spain (Kroløkke 2014), or recipients’ perception and choosing of sperm (Tober 2001). Jenny Gunnarsson Payne’s (e.g., 2016; 2015) work on egg donor recipients and the way they “kin” or “de-kin” themselves to their donor-conceived children, forms an interesting parallel to this study. Gunnarsson Payne (2016, 35) uses the concept of “kinship grammars” to point out the major kinship strategies or logics the recipients use to make meaning of the particular kinship relation. In the same vein, Kathleen Hammond’s (2018, 272) study of egg donor recipients in Canada investigates how intended mothers negotiate understandings of kinship and relatedness along a “relational spectrum,” where she identifies three categories according to the intended mothers’ positioning towards the egg donor; “distance and cancelling out,” “acknowledgement and gratitude,”

and “contact and intimacy.” Here also, the understanding of recipients’ negotiations of kinship provides an interesting parallel to this study, as I will come back to in the theory section and through the analysis.

With its egg donor perspective, this study also fills out a knowledge gap in Danish kinship research, which is also formed by a focus on the recipients, for example in Tine Tjørnhøj-Thomsen’s (1997) study of kinship narratives in fertility clinics in the late 1990s, and Stine Adrian’s (2006) study of the narratives of material-discursive becoming in Swedish and Danish fertility clinics in the 2000s. Also Rikke Andreassen’s research on mediated kinship narratives provides insights to kinship with third party reproduction that is “failing” in the heteronormative nuclear family narrative. Andreassen’s (2016; 2018) work focuses mainly on the mothers and children involved in third party reproduction with sperm donation. Relevant to mention here is also Sebastian Mohr’s (2015; 2016) research on sperm donors in Denmark. It sheds light on the specific Danish context with its legal framework on donor anonymity, on the way sperm banks organise sperm donor practices, and on how a societal expectation of the donors to engage in a certain kinship relation involve them in making meaning of the unique kinship relation they become part of. Focusing on egg donation, my research finds parallels to Mohr’s work, particularly in the ways the donors can be seen as a form of pioneers in kinship relational work.

However, research in egg donation has also focused on the meaning-making of the donors themselves, for example the understanding of kinship by egg donors in Barcelona (Orobitg and Salazar 2005), or Michal Nahman’s (2008) study of Romanian donors selling eggs to Western and Northern European clinics. Nahman’s (2006; 2013) and Michelle Leve’s (2013) studies of egg donation emphasise the importance of taking into account the donors’ own narratives and experiences when discussing the so-called “structure vs. agent” problem regarding questions of exploitation and global inequalities in the fertility industry.

Monica Konrad’s (1998; 2005) studies of egg donors in the United Kingdom is one of a number of studies that find egg donors’ motives to be structured in relation to traditional gendered understandings of

femininity and motherhood, and in relation to the debate on altruism. A wider field of American studies on egg donation also explore how egg donation/egg donors are positioned within heteronormative understandings of family making and traditional understandings of motherhood (e.g., Pollock 2003; Almeling 2007; 2011; Curtis 2010; Haylett 2012). As already mentioned, this article also draws on the insights by queer scholar's work on motherhood, which provides a framework for conceptualising poly- and monomaternal narratives, co-mothering, and jealousy among mothers and notions of who is the "real" mother (e.g., Pelka 2009; Park 2013; Dahl 2018a; 2018b).

This study also relates to other feminist research on how bodies are connected/disconnected and materialised in kinship in studies of surrogacy and donations. For example in Kristin Engh Førde's (2016) study on surrogates in India, where she analyses the surrogates' negotiations of connection to the child they are carrying through an axis of intimacy/distance. Between Førde's work and mine, there are parallels between how the involved parties engage in comprehensive definition- and bodywork. Also, in Gillian Goslinga-Roy's (2000) study of surrogates in California, where she investigates how the surrogates constantly negotiate their bodily boundaries to uphold different categories, such as white or parent, in the meaning-making of the kinship relations in surrogacy. The new materialist approach that the body (or any phenomenon in general) is not an ontologically stable entity enables a study of how new meaning can be attached to different body parts or even cells, when they transform and move as they do in both surrogacy and donation practices. This type of approach is also present in Catherine Waldby's (2002) study of liver and sperm donations, where she gives insight to how body parts and substances retain and produce personal value and identity in the transaction and transformation into another body.

## **Theory and Analytical Strategies**

I use the theoretical approach that phenomena are material-discursively produced, looking to understand how both material and discursive aspects of egg donation determine the effects of the practice in question.

I conceptualise egg donation inspired by a new materialist approach (Haraway 2004; Barad 2007), focusing on egg donation as a practice where an egg donor enters into material-discursive connections to other bodies (see also, M. L. Petersen 2016). For example, zooming in on the egg retrieval, the donor is connected both to the immediate surrounding bodies in the clinic, who are participating and making the egg donation possible, but also to more distant bodies such as the recipients of the egg, the intended parents, and the potential child being born. These connections are established through the egg as a material agent that has genetic, legal, familial, relational, and emotional effects, to name the most prominent. As this article takes point of departure in interview material with egg donors, it is implied that the donors' meaning-making and experiences are produced through the different material and discursive entanglements of the particular context in question (such as the described legal, practical, and clinical context). The connection between the donor and the recipient goes through the egg and what it signifies to the donor, and as the analysis will show, the new bodily connections calls for the donors to produce new conceptualisations of what it means to be related in kinship through egg donation.

In Charis Thompson's (2005) work on fertility clinics, she develops the concept of ontological choreography, which relates to the dynamic interaction of technical, social, affective, legal, and biological elements that normally are seen to pertain to different ontological orders. Thompson (2005, 9) addresses how these different aspects are included in the production of pregnancies and babies in fertility clinics, and how the bodies' interactions with the clinic can be viewed as an interaction of ontologically different elements. Inspired by the concept of ontological choreography, I use an analytical concept of "kinship choreography" – how different discursive and material aspects of kinship engage in particular choreographies in the individual donors' situations. Thus, similarly to for example Adrian's (2006, 103) use of "emotional choreographies," also inspired by Thompson's concept, where she focuses on the emotional performativity choreographed in fertility clinics, I use the overarching idea of choreography to see how the coming-together

of legal, economic, affective and clinical material and discursive aspects of kinship are choreographed in particular ways to create a balanced and meaningful experience of kinship to the donors. Analysing how the egg donors choreograph their kinship in different ways through connecting and disconnecting practices, I use the concept of “appropriate distance” to analyse how the donors position themselves “appropriately” according to their experiences of affective, moral, and practical concerns in their newly materialised egg donor kinship. Different combinations of these aspects appear and are negotiated differently in relation to the different elements in the egg donation process. For example, one donor might choreograph her kinship relation connecting herself “closer” to the donation through open donation as the legal aspect, but might distance herself through her understanding of motherhood, where motherhood is understood through pregnancy and not genetics. The donors’ kinship choreographies involve strategies that enable them to protect themselves, their own families, the recipients’ families, and/or the donor child. A major structuring force in the donors’ kinship strategies is heteronormativity, but also different conceptualisations of motherhood play a central role – both as a discursive backdrop to their choreographies, and as concepts which some of the donors actively use to narrate the egg donor kinship.

Understanding the donors’ negotiations of kinship compliments the existing studies of recipients’ negotiations of kinship by both Gunnarsson Payne (2016) and Hammond (2018). These studies also evolve around the ways in which new kinship relations are narrated in meaningful ways through negotiations of the normative and restrictive understandings of family and motherhood that dominate possible kinship narratives. As mentioned, Gunnarsson Payne analyses how recipients “kin” or “de-kin” themselves in regard to the closeness of the relation, while Hammond analyses how the recipients position themselves on a “relational spectrum” in regard to understandings of “normal motherhood.” Along these lines, my concept of “appropriate distance” also relates to Thompson’s (2005, 146) concept of “disambiguate” kinship. However, in relation to the analysis of donor experiences (as opposed to recipient

experiences), I find a concept more relevant and useful that emphasises how kinship formation can involve the creation of meaningful *distance* (although that can be a very intimate and close distance), as opposed to disambiguate closeness or kinship bonding.

The following analysis highlights how the egg donors use different strategies to connect and disconnect to kinship with the right balance of closeness or distance to fit their personal needs – strategies that involve different concrete and abstract aspects, such as choice of donor type, compensation and experience of gratitude and acknowledgment, as well as understandings of motherhood, biology, and genetics.

### **Appropriate through Distance**

Several of the donors in the study wish to protect or safeguard their own nuclear family through distance to the donation. In those cases, a heteronormative family ideal structure the donors' own family lives, which seem to be disturbed or challenged by the egg donation. Ditte, 34 years old and mother of four, gives voice to this concern, when she recalls her husband's reaction to her egg donation:

It got too real for him, the thing about me... that we were making me mate with another man.<sup>16</sup> (Ditte interview)

The quote – though it was said jokingly – points to an underlying discourse that Ditte draws on, of the family as a monogamous relationship between Ditte and her husband. Here, the act of egg donation is challenging the monogamous character of the heteronormative family structure. To disconnect as much as possible from the relation created through the donation, Ditte decides to be an anonymous donor. In this way, she can keep a distance and protect her family by securing no contact between her own family and the recipient family, even though she feels that it would be morally better to give the potential donor-conceived children the option to know their biological origin (her). This ambivalence is the same for Gitte, 35 years old and mother of three, who also chooses to be an anonymous donor:

I really have my doubts whether this is the right thing to do... It is such a pity for this child that it won't have the option to... it's not certain that it's siblings the child will come looking for, but just to know who its mom is, right? (Gitte interview)

Yet, Gitte opts for the anonymous donation to protect her own family. A further disconnecting strategy for Gitte was to ask the clinic to make sure that her eggs goes to a non-Danish residents couple, as to assure that her own children would not grow up and potentially fall in love with an unknown sibling. Other donors in the study mention this concern as well, although the chance of such a meeting is quite unrealistic. It points to the disruptive agency of the donation to the heterosexual nuclear family as a closed and quite rigid unity, where couplings for family members are made of a pool of eligible non-members (meaning incestuous relationships inside the family are not an option), according to a patriarchal, family bloodline. The concerns for both Ditte and Gitte show how the Danish legal framework enables a donor practice where the heteronormative family can be upheld through concrete practices of disconnecting to kinship.

Other donors in the study who reflect this concern are Signe and Christina, both 21 years old and with no children of their own. They donate anonymously to disconnect from the donor kinship to protect their future families. The act of being an egg donor seems to be very disruptive to a heteronormative family ideal – even to an imagined future family.

The use of the anonymity as a disconnecting strategy involves a different concern for Lise, 26 years old and with no children of her own, the concern for her own feelings towards the potential donor children. Lise is ambivalent towards how she understands the children born from her eggs – on the one hand, she rejects that they are “her children,” but on the other hand, she feels both a moral and emotional connection to the lives of the potential children that she handles through anonymity:

Is that someone I want my children to be raised by?... I can't meddle in this, of course, so by being anonymous I can tell myself that they live in safe nuclear families where everything is fine. (Lise interview)

This quote discloses some of the ambivalence and worries that Lise experiences, where she worries about the well-being of the children she helps bring into the world, where the idea that “her children” could end up in something other than “safe nuclear families” would worry her too much. In general, Lise narrates quite a lot of ambivalence towards her own status as egg donor, where she sees a kinship relation through the idea of bloodline, and it is easier for her to choose the anonymous donation to protect her own feelings. She recalls how she once brought her mother to the clinic, and her mother was sure that some of the babies in the photo collage in the clinic were her grandchildren – thus cementing the experience of a connection through the egg to unknown babies, and emphasising a familial bond by connecting herself as grandmother.

In Lise’s case, it seems as if the connection installed between Lise and the potential children is experienced as so strong in itself, through an understanding of kinship as emotional bond and relatedness through bloodline, that she has to disconnect to be able to feel an appropriate (emotional) distance as an egg donor. There is no room for the egg donor as an emotionally attached relation in Lise’s experience, and the ambivalence she feels towards the potential children as simultaneously hers and not hers, emphasises the need for her to distance herself from the donation to avoid inappropriate or uncomfortable feelings and doubts.

The anonymous donors choreograph their kinship relations by disconnecting completely through anonymity. This is to deal with their experience of the egg donor position as disruptive either to heteronormative family ideals or the ambivalent feelings by inhabiting this position, where the idea of inherent kinship through bloodline is difficult to manage when the children will be someone else’s. In Lise’s case, the possibility of donor anonymity becomes an enabler to protect her emotional meaning-making (it is too difficult if the relation is too close), and as well as the cases of Ditte and Gitte, it does so within a logic of kinship as established through bloodline and the donor as a disturbing figure in the nuclear family. Through the concept of kinship choreography, it becomes clear how the donors position themselves to create “appropriate distance” to different aspects of the kinship formation. For these donors,



it is necessary to create distance due to the understanding of an inherent “closeness” in the donation through bloodline, connecting the egg donor through the eggs as the “true kinship.” Based on this understanding, these donors disconnect to choreograph themselves appropriately, because they experience to disrupt this family ideal. The understanding of bloodline as “inherent kinship” or “closeness” also responds to the idea of a “genetic kinship grammar” as identified by Gunnarsson Payne (2016) in her study of egg donation recipients. Here she also sees how third party reproduction is often narrated through this conception of the eggs (genes) as kinship bond. Furthermore, the anonymous donors mirror to some extent the recipients “cancelling out and distancing” in Hammond’s analysis of Canadian recipients. As the Canadian recipients deal with egg donation in a context that have strong parallels to the Danish – anonymous, open and known donations are possible and egg donors receive none or little compensation (Hammond 2018, 269) – it is interesting to see how the three donor types in the Danish context are integrated into the donors’ kinship narratives in ways that mirror Hammond’s relational spectrum.

Other donors deal with the ambivalence of wanting to “protect” both the heterosexual family and the donor children’s rights, by donating openly. This is still anonymous but the potential children of the donation will be able to make contact, when they come of age. Amanda, 27 years old and mother of one, is one of the donors who chooses open donation because she feels it is important to consider the child’s right to know its biological origin. For her, the open donation is a connecting strategy to balance a relation, where her moral belief inclines her towards a closer connection to kinship with the potential donor-conceived child. Her moral beliefs take a central place in her choreography, and we see how the open donation enables her to include her individual priority in what feels like an appropriate distance to her. The importance of biological – bloodline – kinship is then managed quite the opposite way than the donors mentioned above. For Amanda, the importance of “knowing” is outweighing other concerns of nuclear family disruptions, and the connecting strategy through open donation thus becomes

a way to protect a kinship relation that builds on the logic of biology and bloodline – the kinship between her and the potential child.

In Amanda's kinship choreography, she connects herself closer to the potential child through the open donation, and another disconnecting strategy becomes necessary to form an appropriate distance that is not "too close":

But I've also heard that even if my egg is inside another woman, that the child gets something from her... I think, I've read. (Amanda interview)

The disconnecting is done through Amanda's knowledge about epigenetics and her general understanding of motherhood. For Amanda, the woman who carries the child will become the mother, even though the egg is not the pregnant woman's own. This understanding is formed through Amanda's own experience of being pregnant with her own child, and through the understanding of epigenetics where the pregnant woman influences the DNA of the egg cell and in this sense makes the egg (and child) more hers. This finding also forms a parallel to Gunnarsson Payne's (2016, 40) identification of specific kinship grammars in recipients' narratives, and how they form a "closer" ("disambiguate") kinship to their babies through the knowledge of epigenetics. Here, in the case of Amanda and also a few of the other donors in the study, we see the reverse use of this logic or "grammar," where epigenetics becomes a way to distance herself from the otherwise genetic kinship relation that is materialised in the donation.

There is ambivalence inherent in Amanda's story, specifically in the role of genes. She both finds the idea of biological origin (that she sees herself as) as important for the child to know, as well as she downplays the biological origin in the understanding of "who is mother." Biological relatedness is relatively understood as different combinations of bloodline, genetic relatedness, and "epigenetically" relatedness. Motherhood as a singular unity of origin for a child is challenged by the egg donation, and Amanda finds a way to discursively "repair" this disturbance of motherhood by the epigenetics logic.

Louise, 31 years old and mother of three, uses a similar negotiation of motherhood in her kinship choreography. She also donates openly and makes her own logic of egg donation, where she creates an appropriate distance through the emphasis on the recipient's motherhood:

When you are a sperm donor, you can say it is only two people involved. Biologically and so on. But when you are an egg donor. I just give my egg, an egg that won't mean a thing if not for the woman who receives it, and the man who gives his sperm to it. So, for me, the egg is just a shell.  
(Louise interview)

Here Louise is literally hollowing out the meaning of the egg to disconnect herself from the donation. When trying to position herself as egg donor in the kinship relation to the child (and the recipient), the ambivalence Louise feels becomes apparent through the vivid discursive negotiations she makes to position herself in an appropriate distance:

Well I don't see it as my genes, because it is *her* who carries the child, it is *her*, who gives birth to the child, and it is *her* who... I don't see it as my child running around out there. I know it sounds odd, because in theory it is, but I don't see it that way. (Louise interview)

From the quote, we can see how Louise puts a lot of effort into emphasising the intended mother's legitimacy as the "right mother," both through repetition (three times "her") and pronounced emphasis (she puts emphasis on the word "her"), and through repetition of "I don't see it," three times. This actually points to the fact that Louise feels challenged in making a clear positioning of herself as a donor and not mother. She uses the disconnecting strategy that she does not "see it as her genes" because the recipient carries and gives birth to the child – and in Louise's logic, the egg is just a hollow shell (something like the epigenetics logic). This strategy also serves to protect her own motherhood of her own children, and by equalling motherhood with birthmother,

she creates an appropriate distance to avoid multiple (and disturbing) notions about motherhood offered by the egg donation.

Another way the choice of donor type is used as a strategy to create the appropriate distances is when many of the donors change their type of donation if they donate multiple times. For example for Camilla, 20 years old and with no children of her own, who changed from anonymous to open, wishing to apprehend her own experience and feelings, and then open it up if it felt right to her, and in Mette's case, 25 years old and mother of two, who changed her mind about the donor children's right to know, and thus decided to open up her last donation.

Through this first part of the analysis, it becomes clear how the choice of donor type is part of the individual donors' kinship strategies. This involves taking into account emotional aspects (being too emotionally attached to the child), moral aspects (wanting to protect the child's right to know), and concerns relating to the donors' own families and motherhood. Through the different donor narratives, it is brought forward how specific ideals of the nuclear family are challenged by egg donation and likewise how a dominating ideal of motherhood is challenged – and then repaired. The possibility for a polymaternal narrative seems to bring an uncomfortable inappropriate intimacy to the egg donation, and the donors in this group distance themselves to not interrupt the monomaternalist ideal. The need to negotiate, to “repair,” and overall to choreograph themselves in a way they find meaningful in the donation, is part of what it means to make an appropriate distance in the relation. Here, the different donor types are involved as strategies to enable the appropriate distance, as well as understandings of kinship as bloodline, genetics, and epigenetics. In the next section, I focus on the known donors, and how different strategies are used to provide them with a feeling that their donation is meaningful, and thus, help form an appropriate distance.

### **Appropriate through Closeness**

The third overall donor category is the known donors – meaning they have some sort of relationship with the recipient, or at least everyone know of each other's identity before the donation. There is no national

registration of how many egg donors choose which category, but my impression from the egg donor online forums and Facebook groups is that at least half the donors choose this category. In the present study, more than half of the donors I interviewed have tried to donate known (some have also donated anonymously but have later changed to known donation). One of those is Maria, age 25 and mother of four, who chose her recipients through Facebook:

It is kind of hard, when you sit and select and choose... because you know that everyone wants a child right, it's kind of... who should you pick, who should be the lucky ones. (Maria interview)

This is characteristic for the Danish context for egg donors, where the scarcity of eggs makes it possible for the donors to attend more to their own needs and preferences. Maria explains later that for what she calls “egoistic reasons” she chooses her recipient because of the convenience to go to a private clinic nearest her home (Maria interview).

As with the anonymous and open donors, the known donors also use disconnecting strategies such as the particular understanding of motherhood (mother = birthmother) or geographical distance. Yet, to the known donors, the main concern is creating the appropriate *closeness* to the donation, meaning that they are very concerned about knowing what happens to the eggs and the potential child. Their connecting strategies involve their own need to experience and feel the recipients' gratitude as a significant part of a meaningful donation.

The category of known donation opens up for a different understanding of egg donation as an exchange of not only eggs and money, but also of presents and affects such as gratitude, joy, intimacy, and friendship and can thus be understood as a larger affective economy. I relate this understanding of affect to Sara Ahmed's (2004; 2010) work on how affect can be understood as “doings” that relate to social and discursive phenomena in specific ways. An analysis of how particular emotions “stick” to particular objects can shed light on how egg donation is both discursively and affectively materialised, placing affect as a sort of glue

to which societal norms and structures are being manifested in social life and interaction. In Anne's case, 33 years old and mother of two, she donates openly to a couple she found on Facebook. She explains:

It is almost the whole payment, the happiness you receive from the recipients, because, when you have kids yourself, you know it's the greatest thing in the world, and the fact that they have fought so many years to get where they are now, and the happiness they feel is, it just can't be described. [...] That gratitude is just all the payment I need. It's... the foundation to why I do it. (Anne interview)

For Anne, the experience of the recipients' joy and happiness over receiving eggs to hopefully get a child is essential to her motivation to be an egg donor and is part of the reason why she chooses the known category. In this way, she can share the emotional and intimate experience with the recipients. She builds her story on the logic of the giving, devoted, and generous mother figure, where becoming a mother is seen as the ultimate experience of happiness ("greatest thing in the world"). Anne's case is a good example of how several of the donors in the study position themselves in line with an understanding of motherhood as having traditional stereotype feminine characteristics such as self-sacrificing, giving and caring, that lies perfectly in line with the expectation of egg donation as a practice motivated by altruistic motives (for studies elaborating on this issue, see e.g., Pollock 2003; Almeling 2007; Curtis 2010; Haylett 2012). In this expectation, altruism is entangled with notions of motherhood and femininity, and by emphasising her story in line with an overarching story of motherhood, Anne makes her position as egg donor both legitimate and recognisable.

This negotiation of the relationship between donor and recipient relation shows how it, for the known donors in particular, is characterised by different transactions such as affective and intimate involvement, which nuance the understanding of what an altruistic motivated donation is. By emphasising the importance of sharing emotions and receiving gratitude, it becomes evident in several of the donors' narratives

that the relation formed to recipients relies on transactions of affects. The affects circulating in egg donation reflect and reproduce specific social and cultural norms, such as becoming a parent/a mother as a key to happiness. The donor eggs become loaded with this potential happiness, which plays into a certain choreographed affective egg donor practice, where the donation of affects upholds the normative ideal of the emotionally invested woman as mother, and of motherhood as a cultural idealised practice of sharing, caring, and loving. This finding is in line with Anna Curtis' (2010) study where she points to how the ideal of altruism is gendered and how this provides an invisible pressure upon egg donors to invest themselves emotionally as "good women" would do, and not require economic compensation.

Julie also draws on narratives about motherhood to choreograph her kinship relation as a known donor. Julie is 23 years old and mother of three, and the desire to donate and help others is central to her. She has donated breast milk when she was on maternity leave, and she dreams of being a surrogate mother too. She sees the eggs she donates as "bricks" for the recipients to make a child, and explains her understanding of motherhood like this:

Her body will be pregnant, and it's the one that will produce milk, and it's her voice the child will get used to, and movements, and will know the mother's face and voice when she gets out, and stuff like that. So it will be 100% her child. I think so. (Julie interview)

When I ask her, how she would feel about being a surrogate mother, she explains that it would be easier for her not to attach to the baby if it was not her egg. Shortly after, she realises her idea of motherhood as birth-mother is inconsistent, and she says it is of course different to give a child away than to give an egg cell away. Julie's inconsistent use of motherhood narratives in her choreography points to a trend in many of the donors' stories: the kinship choreographies are flexible. Not only are the many connecting and disconnecting strategies used differently (and sometimes in opposite ways) by the donors, but also the individual donors' choreog-

raphies are changing and elastic. Finding out how they choreograph their individual “appropriate distances,” sheds light on the difficulties they have in placing the egg donor category within common kinship understandings, as well as the new relational work these donors are in fact doing, in order to find out how to be part of modern family making as an egg donor.

The known donors’ emphasis on the importance of feeling acknowledgement and gratitude again mirrors Hammond’s (2018, 275) study of recipients and how they too relate to their donors in terms of gratitude and acknowledgement. This points to how an affective economy in egg donation lies deeply entangled with both the donors’ and the recipients’ experiences and meaning-making, and how the emotional, relational and economic aspects of the donation are entangled in complex ways.

Also the known donor Rose, 28 years old and mother of two, uses the epigenetics logic in her kinship choreography, which points out how certain disconnecting strategies are used by the donors whether they are anonymous or known. In her narration, the donation goes from being, “Like, genetically speaking, it is half a child of mine, right?” to being:

It really helps a lot to think that it’s a cell you give away, so, it’s nothing at all. And I talk a lot to my recipients... that apparently studies show that the child receives a great deal from the mother, because genetically, you know, it is her blood the child is formed by. (Rose interview)

Here the disconnecting strategy of epigenetics is transforming Rose’s donation from a “half child” to a “cell,” and even to “nothing at all.”

The analysis has so far primarily shown how the egg donors use different strategies to distance themselves appropriately to the disturbing kinship relation of egg donation. For the known donors however, they have different ways they choreograph kinship as an affective relation, where it is important to them to know what happens to the eggs and to receive the gratitude of the recipients. Nevertheless, it is also the known donors in particular who do the social pioneer work in terms of creating new forms of kinship relations. Several of the known donors in the study have established close relations with the recipients. Among them is Christina,



21 years old and with no children of her own, who explains how she had a particular close relation to one couple that meant a lot to her:

So the fact that they had involved me in their grief, when they were sad, when they had an abortion, and their joy when... I was the first to know that they got pregnant. They didn't tell their family until she was 12 weeks pregnant, not even their friends, so it was kind of like, the three of us had made something together. (Christina interview)

In Christina's story it is not the distance that makes for an appropriate relation, in fact it is on the contrary. The closeness of the relation makes it possible for Christina and the intended mother to talk about their different roles and how they define each other, which seems to give Christina a feeling that the relation is established with appropriate distance. The closeness makes Christina feel included, which she describes as, "the three of us made something together." A notion that reflects Christina's (and other of the donors') need to feel acknowledged and recognised in order to be able to feel that the donation is meaningful. One of Christina's disconnecting strategies to balance the closeness of the relation is to emphasise how little resemblance there is between her and the babies born with help from her eggs, and how "it's scary they look so much like the mother" (Christina interview).

Marie, 30 years old and with no children of her own, tells a similar story where she also develops a close relationship to her recipient, and it is very important for her, that she and the intended mother discuss and make room for the particularity of the egg donor relation and the new feelings it can entail. In this way, the intimate relationship between Marie and her recipient points to how the relation, and not the transaction, becomes centre of attention:

And this whole... You know, closeness through e-mails and that kind of thing, that we wrote, even though we didn't know each other at all, has actually really meant a lot. I think this, uhm, yes maybe that acknowledgement of me as the donor. (Marie interview)

In the two examples of Christina and Marie's stories, the appropriate distance seems to be established through closeness. The importance of feeling recognised and acknowledged as donor makes the donation meaningful to them. The negotiation of the kinship relation thus becomes entangled with the donor's understanding of the donation as meaningful, a central feature in the appropriate distance perceived between donor and recipient. Another similarity between Christina's and Marie's narratives is that they do not build their stories upon a motherhood discourse. The central issue for them is to be counted as a contributing part, as the donor who is an essential part of the family making that takes place. Also here, the known donors mirror the recipients in Hammond's (2018, 276) study that narrate relations to their donors through contact and intimacy.

The relatively new legal possibility of being a known donor leaves room for kinship relations that expand the existing norms, where you can be three people involved in producing a baby instead of two, and where the close emotional ties and mutual respect between donor and intended mother provides another foundation for a kinship relation seemingly expanding a heteronormative family ideal. This is essentially not so different from how LGBTQ+ people for years have formed families also consisting of three or more people making a baby together. These family making practices have their own stories, struggles, and successes going against a heteronormative institutionalised health system. However, what this study shows in terms of egg donors' family making with hetero couples; the involved parties do not share intentions to create a specific family union. They are known to each other at an acquaintance level, and they do not intend to be a part of each other's lives as such. They form intimate and close bonds during the donation process and through the sharing of this experience, and their relation is typically limited to this relation work. What is unique in the material is thus the insight into how the known donor category leaves room for different kinship relations and connections established through egg donation, than was possible (and sustained) by the anonymous donor type. The known donor category opens up for the donors' desire to engage and

be involved in the family making at individually balanced appropriate distances, and in this way, not necessarily be an invisible part in third party reproduction.

Related to this, I will mention the last donor of this study, Susanne, 26 years old and mother of three, who defines herself very explicitly in the egg donor kinship relation:

Well I... always see myself as donor... That is a thought I'm very firm on. I will never be the mother of those children. I am a donor, I will always be a donor, and no one can take that away from me. And that is what I would like to be called, if they are going to get to know me, they are not going to call me "mom." They have a mom and dad, you know I donate *one* cell to them, and they do the rest, right. (Susanne interview)

Susanne positions herself clearly by emphasising the donor status, a category that helps her achieve the appropriate distance necessary to make up for the strong motherhood discourse. By positioning herself clearly as a donor and by emphasising "no one can take that away from me," she installs a sort of build-in connectedness to the donations. In this way, she is not "nothing," and she is not "mother." At the same time, her strategy still protects the mother and father in the heteronormative family and the normative expectations of primary kinship relations residing here.

Susanne's choreography is an example of the intrinsic ambivalence in the donors' positioning within a normative understanding of kinship relations in family making. The fact that she needs to position herself "very firmly," even when invoking the donor position (and not mother, not "nothing"), also points to the challenges donors have in finding the appropriate distance. It confirms the trouble of kinship-making, but at the same time can be seen as the donors' pioneering effort to invoke a new position within the family making, and thereby make room for recognition and acknowledgement of the egg donor.

## Conclusion

Through the concept of kinship choreographies, the analyses show how the donors create individual “appropriate distances,” positioning themselves through different connecting and disconnecting strategies. The analyses show how the Danish legal framework plays into the donors’ possibilities of entering into kinship relations – and that they take active part in defining themselves as donors. The different connecting and disconnecting strategies also point to the ways in which a heteronormative monomaternistic family ideal is the structuring norm of kinship relations. In different ways, the donors are conforming to or challenging this norm, by negotiating distance and closeness and thereby negotiating the level of disturbance the egg donor category is causing.

The anonymous donors use this donor type primarily to disconnect from kinship and to protect their own nuclear family. The anonymity is also used to shield the donor from emotional attachment or concern about the potential donor-conceived child, which she has no right to know. The open donors use this category to satisfy their moral considerations about the child’s right to know its biological origin, but use other disconnecting strategies to form an appropriate distance. They especially draw on discourses about motherhood, where “the right mother” is understood as the birthmother, and draw on knowledge about epigenetics or make their own genetic logics to form an understanding of the kinship relation that has the appropriate distance – that does not disturb the dominating motherhood discourse. This finding adds to existing knowledge about egg donor recipients and how kinship making (and unmaking) is narrated here, for example Gunnarsson Payne’s (2016) study on recipients’ kinship grammars.

The analysis of the known donors’ kinship strategies demonstrate how they also draw on discourses about motherhood in line with existing egg donor research (e.g., Pollock 2003; Almeling 2007; Curtis 2010; Haylett 2012), showing how the framing of donation as altruistic is gendered and linked to an ideal of the self-sacrificing and generous woman. The analysis also shows how the known donors negotiate kinship through closeness, where affective transactions are central to their experience of

appropriate relations. This points to how egg donor practices of kinship can be viewed as forming part of larger affective economies. Also in line with Diane Tober's (2001) research, the donors are not motivated by what could be called "pure altruism," but are equally practicing the egg donation based on their own needs, and are thus connected to other bodies not only through eggs, but through affects of recognition and gratitude.

The known donors generally balance what they experience as appropriate kinship through closeness rather than distance. The close and intimate relations that are recounted in the interviews, where the donors feel included in the family making, points to how known egg donation practices can expand and challenge heteronormative family making (they are three not two participants) in third party reproduction. In the same way the insistence on being donor (and not "nothing" or "mother") is a strategy to position oneself within a kinship norm, where the donor position does not really exist (yet). In these cases, the donors' relational work can be understood as a form of social pioneer work, much in line with Mohr's (2014) research on Danish sperm donors. Furthermore, the study adds the egg donors' perspective to the understanding of relational work in egg donation, in particular to Hammond's (2018) recent study of recipients' kinship and motherhood narratives.

My analysis also points to the constructive and fruitful insights that come from seeking knowledge from the perspectives of the donors, which nuance and broadens the understanding of the egg donors' possibilities for negotiating kinship. A central feminist point of producing knowledge *with*, and not *about*, as also Nahman (2008) points to in her study of Romanian egg donors. The particular Danish context and the insight into Danish egg donors' experiences points to an understanding of egg donation as a field where donors' partake in defining what it means to be a donor, for example how the different donor categories enable the donors to act upon their own moral values and concerns, and to choose their own level of engagement in the relation. Conversely, the analyses also show how the donors' agency and the donor identities they can inhabit are structured along specific heteronormative ideals about family and motherhood.

The article adds to queer kinship studies by exploring whether the egg donor category in itself can be seen as a form of queer kinship position. In this analysis, the egg donor as disruptive (or queer) figure exposes how third party reproduction is heteronormatively structured, as well as through other dominating norms about motherhood and understandings of what it means to be genetically related. The egg donors in this study try to manage the disruptive egg donor position and by doing so often reproduce and reinforce heteronorms and motherhood discourses. However, some of the donors' kinship choreographies also challenge the normative ideas about what third party reproduction should look like. A finding in line with for example Hammond's (2018, 277) point that new family making involving egg donation might gradually change normative and conservative kinship narratives. The Danish legal framework makes room for egg donors to choose the known donor type, which is a popular choice amongst the donors at the time of this study. These donors engage in the disruptive potential of the egg donation in the sense that they wish to form intimate or close relations with the recipient families. In so doing, the egg donor becomes an involved third party in the third party reproduction, thus challenging the monogamous character of heteronormative kinship, as well as become the second party in the otherwise singular motherhood, disrupting and queering the understanding of these otherwise rigid kinship norms. Egg donation is a relatively new kinship practice, and in the Danish context, eggs are initially created as part of a heterosexual kinship practice. Nevertheless, the egg donors in this study demonstrate how the practices in the Danish context hold potentials to widen the ways kinship can be narrated. By engaging as active participants in family making in third party reproduction, the known egg donors are involved in widening the norms that structure family making, something that potentially benefits everyone who struggles to conform to those norms. A more flexible and open understanding of third party reproduction would potentially also benefit the donor-conceived children if they wish to know their donor. Lastly, the flexibility of kinship norms would benefit the egg donors' position in getting involved in kinship making in various ways.

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## NOTES

1. In third party reproduction, DNA or gestation is provided by a third party or donor, other than the one or two parents who will raise the resulting child.
2. See <https://www.institutobernabeu.com/en/ib/spanish-law-on-assisted-reproduction/>.
3. 6,019 of 61,476 children born in Denmark in 2018.
4. Open donation means the donor-conceived child will be able to make contact with the donor when they come of legal age, and known donation is where all involved parties know of each other's identities at the time of the donation.
5. The article builds on research conducted in my PhD dissertation, "Egg Donor: A Sensory Ethnographic Study of Eggs, Bodies and New Kinship Relations" (2019), in particular on the findings in chapter 5, "Slægtskab og forbundetheder" ["Kinship and Connections"].
6. The empirical material in the dissertation is comprised of 15 interviews with Danish egg donors of which I followed 7 in their egg donation processes in Danish fertility clinics. All fieldwork and interviews are conducted in 2016 in private and public clinics throughout Denmark as part of my PhD dissertation.
7. Bekendtgørelse nr. 650/1992, Bekendtgørelse om nedfrysning og donation af menneskelige æg.
8. Lov nr. 460/1997, Lov om kunstig befrugtning.
9. LBK nr. 923/2006, Lov om assisteret reproduktion.
10. Lov nr. 602/2012, Lov om kunstig befrugtning i forbindelse med behandling, diagnostik og forskning m.v.

11. Lov nr. 460/1997, Lov om kunstig befrugtning §12.
12. VEJ nr. 9351/2015, Vejledning til vævsbekendtgørelsen 2015.
13. From around 65 Euros to 320 Euros, and then later to 940 Euros.
14. Ovarian Hyper Stimulation Syndrome is when the ovaries swell uncontrollably and fill with fluid, due to hormonal overstimulation, a condition that can be very painful and depending on the severity will require hospitalisation.
15. Lov nr. 1688/2017, Lov om ændring af lov om assisteret reproduktion i forbindelse med behandling, diagnostik og forskning m.v. og sundhedsloven.
16. This quote, as well as all the following have been translated from Danish by me.

## SAMMENFATNING

Med udgangspunkt i ægdonorernes perspektiv undersøger denne artikel slægtskabsforbindelser i fertilitetsbehandling med tredje parts donation. Gennem interviews med danske ægdonorer undersøges det, hvordan den danske lovgivning og specifikke nationale kontekst danner rammen for ægdonorslægtskab. Artiklen belyser, hvordan ægdonorerne forhandler normative idealer om familie og moderskab gennem forskellige slægtskabsstrategier. Det vises, hvordan ægdonorernes relationelle slægtskabsarbejde er en form for socialt pionerarbejde, hvor ægdonorer er med til at definere, hvad en ægdonor slægtskabsrelation er og kan være. Dette analyseres gennem begrebet "passende afstand". Analysen viser, hvordan forskellige normative begrænsninger er indlejret i lovgivningen, der strukturerer hvilke slægtskabsrelationer der er tilgængelige. Eksempelvis bliver de forskellige donortyper i Danmark, anonym, åben og kendt donation, en måde at frakoble eller forbinde sig i slægtskab på. I tråd med eksisterende forskning viser analysen, hvordan ægdonation i Danmark er struktureret langs idealer om altruisme, som er kædet sammen med normative idealer om femininitet og moderskab. Artiklen viser, hvordan ægdonoren rummer subversive potentialer til at dekonstruere det heteronormative ideal om kernefamilien og mono-moderskab. Dog konkluderes det samtidig, at heteronormative familieideal ofte geninstalleres gennem ægdonationpraksisser.