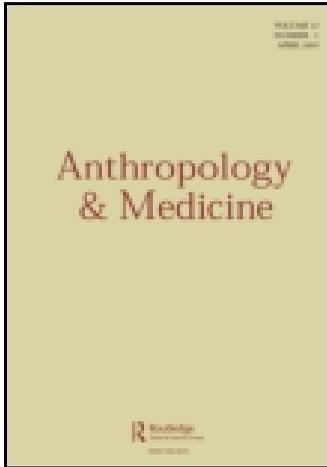


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Beyond motivation: on what it means to be a sperm donor in Denmark

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Beyond motivation: on what it means to be a sperm donor in Denmark

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This paper, analyzing interviews with men that donate their semen in Denmark, explores what it means to be a sperm donor. Breaking with the assumption that men have a specific and clearly identifiable motivation to become sperm donors, this paper leaves the confinement of such an accountable actor model implied in asking for men's motivations to donate semen. Instead, the author describes the experiences of sperm donors to show how the moral, organizational, and biomedical-technological context of sperm donation in Denmark makes for enactments of moral selves as well as specific embodiments of masculinity. Instead of looking for motivations that can be accounted for, the author engages with the question of how donating semen affords men the experience of moral and gendered selves.

Keywords: Denmark; embodiment; masculinity; morality; sperm donors

The question of why men donate their semen has spawned a wide array of research. Since at least the early 1980s, scholars working in disciplines as diverse as endocrinology, gynecology, urology, andrology, psychology, social work, sociology and anthropology have been asking men to explain why they donate their semen. This paper is instead concerned with what it means to be a sperm donor. Becoming a sperm donor, I argue, involves men as whole persons, not only as actors who make decisions that they also can account for.

In exploring men's thoughts on and experiences of donating semen, this paper parts with the assumption that their true motivations can be revealed by asking them why they do it. Logocentric accounts of human behavior only provide certain understandings of what it means to be in the world. Therefore, rather than inquiring what motivates men to donate their semen, I use sperm donors' narratives to explore what it means to be a sperm donor.

Being a sperm donor, I argue, allows men to enact their moral selves and to embody masculinity as they engage the moral, organizational, technological, and biomedical dimensions of sperm donation. Coming to terms with being a sperm donor entails a process of subjectivation grounded in each donor's life history; it is about remaking oneself in light of an idealized moral and gendered self that emerges in the biomedical-technological space of sperm donation. Before turning to these experiences, I will look at the existing research on sperm donors and provide background information on the men I talked to and on sperm donation in Denmark more generally.

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Beyond motivation

With few exceptions, the existing work on sperm donors stems from professional fields directly involved in the administration of donor insemination programs. Covering only the United Kingdom (e.g. Cook and Golombok 1995; Frith, Blyth, and Farrand 2007; Walker, Gregson, and McLaughlin 1987), the USA (e.g. Emond and Scheib 1998; Mahlstedt and Probasco 1991; Sauer et al. 1989), Australia (e.g. Daniels 1989; Godman et al. 2006; Handelsman et al. 1985), New Zealand (e.g. Daniels 1987), Denmark (e.g. Bay et al. 2014; Ernst et al. 2007; Pedersen, Nielsen, and Lauritsen 1994), Sweden (e.g. Daniels, Ericsson, and Burn 1996; Daniels et al. 2005; Ekerhovd and Fauriskov 2008) and Germany (e.g. Thorn, Katzorke, and Daniels 2008), this research is almost exclusively comprised of quantitative studies. Since the 1980s, this research has focused on many different issues but primarily on anonymity and compensation, while an interest in the wider societal ramifications of sperm donation emerged with changing legal contexts and shifting understandings of family and kinship.

However, as a recent review of the existing research observes, sperm donors have been disregarded as people in their own right (Van den Broeck et al. 2013). Since the early 2000s, an emerging body of qualitative work has begun to close this gap (e.g. Almeling 2011; Knecht et al. 2010; Kirkman 2004; Kirkman et al. 2014; Riggs 2008, 2009). That an interest in sperm donors emerged so late in anthropological work on reproductive technologies is probably also due to the focus on the female body and the experiences of women in this research tradition, as some scholars have noted in regards to the treatment of men and masculinities in research on reproductive technologies more generally (Inhorn et al. 2009; Rosenfeld and Faircloth 2006).

The existing research identifies money and the intention to help as primary motives for men to donate semen. Secondary motives include interest in one's fertility, the wish to have children, and spreading one's genes. Within psychology, different theoretical models exist for how to understand motivation (Palladino and Bloom 2008). For example, *drives* such as hunger and thirst are thought to cause certain behaviors aimed at alleviating physical needs. In psychoanalysis, repressed sexual desires are understood as the primary motivation for human behavior. But regardless of where the causes for certain motivations are seen to be situated – in human biology, in human desires – it is assumed that a cause can be determined and that individuals – either through reflection or analytical introspection – are able to pinpoint motivations for their behavior.

This logocentric model posits that individuals are able to intellectualize their every action. Without intending to do so, research on sperm donors' motivations has contributed to an obscure image of the sperm donor as an individual only motivated by certain incentives. I wish to suggest a different perspective. Informed by an anthropological interest in the interplay of selfhood and culture (Carsten 2004; Edwards 2005; Strathern 1990) as well as by conceptual thinking on selfhood as an ongoing and interrelated process of subjectivation (Bourdieu 2003; Butler 1993; Foucault 1990), I approach the experiences of men who donate semen as windows to what it means to be a sperm donor. As my research suggests, being a sperm donor means to engage in the moral, technological, and medical dimensions of sperm donation and thereby enacting moral selves and embodying masculinity, aspects of subjectivation also apparent in the treatment of male infertility (Inhorn 2012; Tjørnhøj-Thomsen 2009) and erectile dysfunction (Wentzell 2013).

Sperm donors enact their moral selves in a similar fashion to what Tine Gammeltoft (2008) calls *moral integrity* in the context of parenting for children with disabilities in

Vietnam: upholding one's status as a responsible actor in a larger moral universe. Meeting men and hearing them talk about their everyday experiences of donating semen made me understand that being a sperm donor afforded them the opportunity to enact and thereby experience themselves as the moral selves they wanted to be.

Yet, being a sperm donor is also about embodying masculinity. It might seem redundant to point out that sperm donation relies on men masturbating in order to procure semen, but as Rene Almeling (2011) rightly observes, and as I have noted elsewhere (Mohr 2010), masturbation is never talked or asked about in research on sperm donors. Asking my informants about their sexual experiences allowed me to see how their sexual practices are interwoven with the organizational logic of sperm banks and how their gendered selves build on embodiments of masculinity informed by biomedical knowledge about semen.

Methods and study context

Twenty-three of the 26 men whom I interviewed between 2011 and 2013 were recruited through an email sent to them by the sperm bank where they donated semen. Three men were recruited through an entry explaining my research on an online contact site for people seeking private donor insemination.

The men were between 18 and 44 years old and had been enrolled as sperm donors between less than one and over eight years. Eleven of them had children. Twelve were single, twelve either married or in a relationship, and two did not want to specify their relationship status. Overwhelmingly, most men self-identified as heterosexual, although three said they had bisexual interests. Nine men were still students and one was unemployed at the time of the interview. All others were employed or self-employed in a variety of fields. None of them held degrees beyond secondary university education or master's degrees.

Denmark allows for both anonymous and non-anonymous sperm donation. Fourteen of the interviewed men were non-anonymous donors; they had agreed to be contacted through the sperm bank should their offspring, once of full age, want to pursue this. No central register for sperm donors, such as in the UK or Australia, exists in Denmark. The information that recipients receive about sperm donors can be limited to standard physical characteristics (basic profile) or can be much more extensive, including handwritten notes, voice samples and childhood pictures (extended profile).

Compensation for semen samples is taxable income in Denmark. Donors receive compensation in cash and the amount varies, averaging between €40–80 per sample that passes quality assessments. Donors are not informed whether and when their semen is used for insemination; nor are they informed how many children are born as a result. Sperm donors receive information about the use of their semen only when they need to undergo special testing to avoid fatal consequences for the newborn child. In Denmark, one sperm donor may be used for up to 12 families/individuals trying to conceive. Internationally, countries differ in their specific regulations on how many times samples from one donor can be used.

More general provisions are important as well for understanding Danish men's narratives about being a sperm donor. For one, the Danish welfare system provides healthcare to all who reside permanently in the country and register with the National Register of Persons. The recurrent health check-ups which are part of being a donor are thus not a means to access healthcare, as for example has been reported in the USA and China.¹ In addition, sperm donation in Denmark is the subject of frequent media coverage and

political debate (Mohr 2013), which enables certain narratives about being a sperm donor to resonate, something that would not be possible in other cultural contexts (Simpson 2004).

Moreover, Denmark institutionalized mandatory sex education in 1970 and was the first country to legalize pornography in 1967 (Graugaard et al. 2004). How men talked about masturbation reflected this national discursivation of sexual experience. Conversations about masturbation were nevertheless a sensitive topic for the men whom I interviewed. Aware of this, I only asked about masturbation and other sexual practices later in the interview, after the men had a better understanding of what the interview was about as well as who I was and my interest in the topic. What they told me was informed by the assumption that I as a man understood what it means to masturbate, especially concerning sexual abstinence and the use of pornography.

Enacting moral selves

Part of enacting a moral self as a sperm donor is the ability to account for why one wants to be a donor. When I asked Oliver, a single man in his late twenties who had been donating semen for about a year, how he came to be a sperm donor, he gave me the following answer:

Oliver: First of all, what got me started was finances, that I was short on money, and if I didn't get money for it then I don't think I would do it because I think it is too troublesome [besværlig]. And I think, as I said, on top of it, I have a tiny, odd feeling of shame, because it involves masturbation, and I don't think I would do it if there was no money in it. But then I am also doing it because, I have studied psychology and I have a special interest for evolutionary psychology: to donate sperm is a logical thing to do for a man seen from an evolutionary standpoint, because I get my genes spread. I think that I have good genes, and I think that a lot of our personality comes from our genes; so, there is for sure also a part of me which gets satisfaction because I have an influence on this world, since I have a lot of children to whom, I feel, I am giving a lot of personal characteristics which I think are important. Yes, I can feel that this means something to me, just as it is important to me that I will have [my own] children one day.

Being asked to rationalize the decision to become a sperm donor is part of the screening logic at Danish sperm banks. In a number of conversations and formal interviews with either sperm bank staff or physicians who act as consultants for sperm banks, potential donors are asked to put into words why they want to donate semen. Being able to answer this question makes them into good donors. But what can be asked in questionnaires about motivations or through screening regimes at Danish sperm banks is only one part of a complex set of engagements that men have to deal with when they become sperm donors.

Like most of the men I talked to, Lucas, a single man in his mid-twenties who had been a donor for a little less than one year, did not mind the screening process. In our conversation it became clear that he had integrated the medical and organizational logic of the screening procedure into his moral self:

Lucas: Of course it is irritating that you have to go through it. But I think that is totally okay, because you also want only the best of the best. [...] I think it is important, because if I were in a situation in which I had to choose a donor, then I would also like to know these things before I make a decision on whom I will choose.

Commenting on whether filling out various forms as part of the screening takes a lot of time, he said:

Lucas: Well, this is also because I really want to do this properly. I take my time and go through the different things properly, since these things are supposed to be read by future parents, and that's why things should be in order, of course they should be. [...] That I get paid to do this is not important for me. But it matters to me that things are, that I do things properly.

The screening process proved to Lucas that things are in order. An employee of the public judiciary system in Denmark, he expressed that keeping things in order was a good way of approaching sperm donation. Filling out forms provided him with the opportunity to enact himself as a morally responsible person.

The enactment of a moral self was also apparent when discussing the issue of donor anonymity. In my sample, slightly more than half of the men had opted for open-identity donation. Making decisions about anonymity gave men the opportunity to reflect on their role as family members and, in case they had children, on their responsibilities as fathers.

Oscar, a single man in his early thirties who had been a donor for about two years, chose to be an open-identity donor. He came to this decision after talking with his friends and family. For him, being non-anonymous meant being morally responsible:

Oscar: Well, that was actually something that I thought about for a really long time, around half a year or even a year. And I chose to be non-anonymous because I came to the decision, that if it was me, that was a donor child, then I think I would like to have the opportunity to find out who I am, if one would like to know that.

Malthe, a man in his late thirties who had been donating semen for more than five years, was an anonymous donor. He had started when the option for open-identity donations was not yet available. For Malthe, anonymity protected his immediate family from any possible interference by donor children and their parents. He had therefore also chosen not to tell his wife and two children that he donates semen:

Malthe: This is because, well, as a sperm donor I have to live with the knowledge that there are a lot of [my] biological children in this world, that I don't know personally, and that is a choice that I made, I have accepted this special relation. I don't think that I can force this choice onto other people, force the knowledge onto them that there are biological kinsmen whom they cannot contact and whom they don't know. For my wife they wouldn't even be kinsmen, but they would be for my children, and I think they deserve to live completely unaware of this fact.

Enacting his moral self, Malthe sees his choice to stay anonymous as acting upon his moral obligations as a responsible father. Being anonymous and not telling his family is the result of engaging with the moral obligations that come with being a sperm donor. Making this difficult decision and carrying its moral burden contributes to his self-understanding: a responsible father who looks out for his wife and children.

Similar enactments of the moral self, involving notions of fatherhood, were apparent when the men and I discussed the compensation that they receive for their donations. Money was most of the time seen as unproblematic. Much in line with what Almeling (2011) reports from her interviews in the US, being a sperm donor was often framed as a form of labor for which compensation was deemed appropriate, a finding also supported by ethnographic research on sperm donors in Germany (Knecht et al. 2010). Time spent on getting to sperm banks, expenses for gasoline or public transport, and daily inconveniences such as abstaining from ejaculation for a couple of days before delivering a semen sample were all seen as costs that deserved reimbursement.

But my research suggests that money's role in what it means to be a sperm donor cannot be reduced to an incentive. Rather, talking about money opened up narratives about the moral role of the good father, husband, and life partner. Emil, a married father of two in his late thirties, had been jobless for several years and was struggling to support his family when he learned about the option to donate semen:

Emil: Well, this might sound strange, but it was actually my mother in law that came up with the idea. When you are unemployed as I was and have all these expenses that have to be paid every month, well, I thought: why not. I mean, it was really hard; I could not even get a job as a cleaner, not even that. So, I thought: I am going to try this and see if there is some money to be made with this. And as it turns out, there is money in it. I was lucky that I at least could deliver that [laughing], you could say. And soon afterwards I actually also found a job. So, last year, I was able to take my wife on a tour to New York for a week, so there is some money in it.

Emil's narrative unveils the complexity of life situations in which men who decide to donate semen can find themselves in. Like the stories of Anton and Magnus, two donors with children who also invoked ideas about being able to provide for their life partner and family, Emil's story is about the moral obligations that he sees bestowed upon him as a family provider. Making his body available to biomedical interventions by becoming a sperm donor enabled him to fulfill these obligations, reinstating him as the good father and husband that he wanted to be.

Victor, in his late thirties with a child from an earlier marriage and now married to a woman who cannot conceive, did not face such dire economic circumstances. Nevertheless, being able to help with the money he receives from donating semen was an important moral obligation for him:

Victor: I thought that this whole thing [sperm donation] was suspect, something strange you know, and then you get money for it on top of that. It just seemed strange, getting money for something that is supposed to help other people. I thought it was weird that I was supposed to get money for it and money was never my motivation. That would be the last thing that I would want to be paid for. We [his wife and he] have a nice life, we don't need it. But of course, if you are supposed to get money for it then you take the money. But we made the decision that all the money that I make with my donations, we donate that money, we have a couple of children in Africa and India which receive the money every month.

Using the money to support children in poor countries enables Victor to fulfill his obligations as a moral person, in his case to the extent of linking being a sperm donor to the global politics of inequality. Here, donating semen becomes a contribution to bettering the world. Far from being about a clearly identifiable motivation, being a sperm donor for Victor is about the enactment of a moral self, a self that takes responsibility for its actions.

For Chris, a man in his mid-twenties who had just recently become a sperm donor, donating semen was related to the moral obligations of being an only child. I had met Chris during fieldwork at a Danish sperm bank. About half a year after his parents had died, he contacted the sperm bank for the very first time. His father had been diagnosed with leukemia. While he and his mother had tried to come to terms with this diagnosis, his mother suddenly died of heart failure. Three months later, his father passed away. Chris then thought about becoming a sperm donor because he saw it as a way of fulfilling his parents' dream of having grandchildren. In his narrative, being a sperm donor was thus connected to the moral obligations of family ties and especially parent-child relationships. Donating semen opened a way for him to mourn his parents' sudden death

while simultaneously providing a space in which he was able to experience himself as a responsible son who honors his parents' last wish.

Embodying masculinities

Being a sperm donor means accepting certain moral obligations. As I have argued thus far, donating semen provides men with the opportunity to live up to these obligations, be it by enacting oneself as a responsible individual, a good husband and father, a person with global political consciousness, or as a loving son. In addition, being a sperm donor means embodying masculinity in certain ways enabled through an interplay of sperm bank's organizational logics and biomedical knowledge about semen with men's gendered self-conceptions and sexual practices.

Being a sperm donor means being subjected to a control regime of recurrent medical check-ups, ongoing assessments of semen quality, and supervision of sexual practices. Abstaining from ejaculation for at least 48 hours prior to delivering semen samples was the form of control most frequently discussed by the men. Much to my surprise, however, the integration of this control regime into one's everyday life was often seen as a lust-centered experience. Haldor, a married father of two in his late thirties who had been a sperm donor for two years, stated:

Haldor: You know, you are more or less prepared for that in one way or another. I mean, partly you have planned this [donating semen] three days in advance, that you are supposed to be there. In this way, strangely enough, it becomes some kind of boost, you know, yes, you know, just like the forbidden cake or something.

This experience of a boost was echoed in other interviews. It represented a way of talking about sexual excitement and gratification through masturbation at the sperm bank, an embodiment of masculinity that incorporated the organizational logic of sperm donation in Denmark. The boost-experience was thereby both an immediate experience of sexual excitement as described by Haldor and an embodiment of masculinity that extends through space and time. Two accounts, by Elias and Storm, shall serve as examples for what I mean by this form of embodied masculinity.

Elias, a single divorcee, had been a donor for about two years. In his early thirties, he had a part-time job selling insurances that financed his aviation training. Elias was self-confident and open about his sexual life. His views on gender roles can best be described as stereotypical. Elias exemplified his way of understanding gender relations in reference to a book called *The Game: Penetrating the Secret Society of Pickup Artists* by journalist Neil Darrow Strauss, which investigates the so-called seduction community, a group of men whose aim is to seduce women. Elias understood his masculinity within this seduction framework:

Elias: It is about how you are, if you are too funny women will think you are a clown, if you are too cocky [kæphøj] then they will think that you are arrogant. But if you are able to mix these two, that you are funny, that you can give a compliment, but a compliment which contains just a hint of an insult [fornærmelse], so that the woman has to work for it at all times, that actually makes a lot of sense. It is just the same as when you put a toy right in front of a cat: the cat will ignore it. But when you put it just out of its reach then you can get the cat to do acrobatics just to get that toy.

Elias' story developed into a narrative about how he invests much of his time and energy controlling his sexual activity and acquiring sexual skills to please women. Controlling

his sexuality became part of being a man who knows how to seduce. Controlling sexual lust is also a requirement for being a sperm donor; by developing ways of masturbating and having intercourse without ejaculating, Elias was able to comply with the period of abstinence required by sperm banks while still engaging in sexual activity. Describing to me how he usually masturbates, it became apparent that controlling orgasmic experiences was his way of embodying masculinity, something that he could relive again and again by being a sperm donor:

Elias: For example when I am jerking off to porn: I start out with something which is okay, but it is not quite good enough for me to come just then. And so I find something else while I am jerking off: Yeah, this is also very good but not quite good enough yet. And so I continue in this way. Sometimes I don't feel like I want to come right away because I really like the actual experience [of continuing on]. Just as I like it sometimes to just jack off and get it over with because I need to wash my clothes or something. And sometimes it is also the actual sex that I like, if you know what I mean. And then I can transfer that [continuing to jerk off] to when I am together with a girl. [. . .] Actually, much of what I think is good about sex for me is how far I can get her [hvort langt ud jeg kan få hende] because the actual orgasm is not really better most of the time than when I just do it myself.

Subjecting himself to the regime of the sperm bank and controlling his orgasms is a way for Elias to embody his masculinity. Masturbating for him is not only a release of tension or sexual lust, but also a mantra that enables him to embody his way of understanding gender relations. Forced to withhold from ejaculation for at least 48 hours prior to masturbating at the sperm bank, his controlled orgasms become part of how he understands himself as a man, or, as he put it:

But on the days when I have been there [at the sperm bank] I can come as much as I want. I almost feel sorry for the girl [næsten synd for pigen], all that she has to go through after I am two days behind.

Embodying masculinity was different for Storm, single and in his late twenties. He had been a donor for about three years and was training for a new job involving work outdoors after originally having been trained in a more technical field. Whereas Elias' narrative of embodied masculinity centered on orgasmic control, Storm's narrative rested on the biomedical knowledge produced by assessments of donor semen. These continuous assessments of semen quality became part of how he understood himself as a man. He had integrated the model of good semen quality (Mohr and Høyer 2012) applied at Danish sperm banks into his embodiment of masculinity.

From the outset of the interview, it was clear that Storm was proud of having good semen quality. He stated that he was one of the top three donors. At some point during the interview I asked him who he had told that he was a sperm donor. He said that he was open about it and that he also used being a sperm donor to 'score women' as he put it. Storm explained that in these instances he would make sure to use a condom and to discard it afterwards so that the women couldn't secretly use his ejaculate. Startled by this story, I asked Storm if his semen quality reflected on him as a person:

Storm: Mmm [thinking]. It is in some way the physical side of me and what I am in flesh and blood. I have begun to be more proud about this than I was before, sometimes even to the point of being arrogant. I mean, it is what it is. I have changed since I found out that I have such good sperm quality. And most of the samples are of the same quality most of the time.

Sebastian: And this feeling of pride, how does that express itself?

Storm: More self-confidence. When I am talking with someone who says something annoying or irritating, then you can look at them once and say [to yourself]: He has probably just 10 million sperm cells or just 5 million. And then you can say [to yourself]: I have without doubt sperm quality ten times better than yours. I can be the father of your children because you are not able to impregnate your wife. And with that you feel uplifted, and you can be a little bit more relaxed about the whole thing.

Storm was not the only sperm donor who had integrated the experience of good semen quality into his embodiment of masculinity. The value of good semen quality was mentioned by most men. Most immediately, it was tied to the monetary compensation which allowed them to be good providers or fathers. But having good semen quality also reflected an embodiment of masculinity as part of which sperm donors saw their bodies as being able to produce semen sought after by women around the world. Being a sperm donor means to acquire a masculine self-image appropriated by biomedicine: measurements of sperm counts and sperm cell motility become part of how sperm donors think masculinity and male bodies.

Conclusion

Deciding to donate semen is surely about money. If Danish sperm donors did not receive compensation, many of them would not commit to it. Yet this well-documented circumstance does not allow for the conclusion that becoming a sperm donor rests solely on such readily identifiable motivations. Being a sperm donor cannot be reduced to an incentive scheme. But despite early attempts from within the field of social work to acknowledge sperm donors as individuals in their own right (Daniels 1998), sperm donors have often only been regarded as providers of semen. As I have argued here, being a sperm donor is also about enacting one's moral self and about embodiments of masculinity.

Leaving the confined space of asking for motivations, I invited men to describe their everyday lives as sperm donors. Their accounts attest to how donating semen means engaging selfhood and masculinity within the moral, organizational, technological, and biomedical dimensions of sperm donation. Donating semen is about more than money, something that is also evident in other instances of bodily donations (Hoeyer 2009, 2013). Donating semen engages men's self-perceptions as moral actors – e.g. responsible individuals, caring husbands and fathers – and leads to embodiments of masculinity appropriated by biomedicine, directly influencing how they live intimacy and partnerships as well as how they understand gender relations. Enacting their moral selves by donating semen, men live and remake the moral universes that they are part of; embodying masculinity, they give meaning to these engagements with the world as men.

These insights into what it means to be a sperm donor warrant two general points: epistemologically, asking men *why* they donate semen rests on a distorted view of human agency. Reducing this decision to an act that can be put into words and objectified for intellectual inquiry says more about established modes of scientific inquiry than it does about sperm donors' engagements with the world.

And ethically, even if the intent behind the research on sperm donors' motivations was never to make men into semen providers, it has achieved just that. A specific research agenda lacking sensitivity for the wider performative effects of research has contributed to misinformed understandings of what donating semen is all about. The established notion of sperm donors as individuals motivated by money has rendered men that donate semen as suspect individuals.

For anthropological research more specifically, my research points to a need to reflect on the dominant focus on recipients and their kinship-making as well as to rethink the emphasis on commodification. Whereas research on women who use donor semen has provided valuable insights, leaving out sperm donors made research on donor assisted reproduction a rather one-sided affair. There now is a fairly good understanding of how women legitimize the use of donor semen and how relatedness is established when children are conceived with the help of donor semen (Lewin 1993; Luce 2010; Mamo 2007; Nordqvist and Smart 2014). However, little to nothing is known about how sperm donation affects the social networks of men who donate semen. My findings indicate that donating semen impacts how sperm donors engage with life partners, family, friends and colleagues. When men's self-perceptions change due to donating semen, their relationships to people close to them are prone to change as well.

The same kind of reconsideration applies to the understanding of sperm donation as a market-driven endeavor. As work on the history and development of sperm donation (Daniels and Golden 2004) suggests, making human semen exchangeable entails a commodification logic. Yet my findings suggest that meaning-making occurs beyond commodification (cf. Almeling 2007; Tober 2001), warranting a reconsideration of how sperm donation and people's engagements with it are understood in anthropological work.

The experiences of Danish sperm donors show how donating semen makes for specific engagements with the world. Being a sperm donor in Denmark is about the enactment of moral selves and embodiments of masculinity. These are subjectivation processes that are particular to the experience of donating semen and the moral, organizational and biomedical-technological contexts of sperm donation in Denmark. These men's stories might be about money and possible motivations to donate semen, but they are also about how biomedical knowledge, assessment and intervention intersect with men's conceptions of their moral, gendered, bodily selves.

Note

1. During fieldwork at an American location of one of the Danish sperm banks, I encountered sperm donors talking about the benefits of the medical care they received as part of donating semen. Ayo Wahlberg who did fieldwork in Chinese sperm banks reported the same phenomenon.

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