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RESEARCH ARTICLE

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Contact experiences among donor conception parties: donor conceived persons, donors, parents and same-donor siblings – a mixed methods systematic review

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ABSTRACT

As more jurisdictions allow donor-conceived persons (DCPs) access to their genetic information and direct-to-consumer DNA testing becomes increasingly popular, contact between those involved in donor conception, including DCPs, donors, parents and same-donor families, has grown. This mixed methods systematic review (MSSR) collates and examines research on how contact is experienced by these groups in the context of donation from donors previously unknown to recipients prior to donation. A bibliographic search of English-language, peer-reviewed studies was conducted following PRISMA 2020 guidelines across several databases, including CINAHL, JSTOR, MEDLINE, PsycINFO, PubMed, Scopus, Ovid Emcare and Google Scholar. Studies were included if they used empirical methods (quantitative, qualitative, or mixed) and involved participants with post-birth contact experiences following donation to recipients from donors not known to recipients prior to donation. These could include clinic-recruited donors (both anonymous/non-identified and identity-release) and donors recruited by recipients, such as through online platforms. From 1,397 initial records, 231 were full text screened. 57 studies meeting inclusion criteria and varying in methodology and sample size were assessed using the Joanna Briggs Institute (JBI) Checklist for Systematic Reviews and Research Synthesis. Findings were synthesised by stakeholder groups (DCPs, donors, parents), examining the form, frequency and experience of contact, as well as influencing factors. Contact ranged from occasional online interactions to regular in-person meetings, with experiences generally positive across all groups. Variations in experience were associated with attitudes towards and expectations of contact, and the size of donor networks. Further research is needed on how contact evolves over time, particularly regarding early linking (before the legislated age of access in identity-release jurisdictions) and connections made via DNA testing.

ARTICLE HISTORY

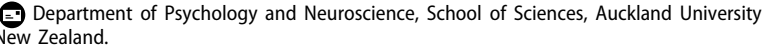
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KEYWORDS

donor conception; contact experiences; linking; identity-release

Introduction

Donor Conception (DC) is increasingly used by individuals and couples facing medical infertility (European Society of Human Reproduction & Embryology, 2022), as well as those experiencing 'social' infertility, such as single people, LGBTQ+ individuals, or others whose circumstances require assisted reproduction (Shaw & Fehoko, 2023). While historically, donation has been anonymous, donation practices have shifted in response to the growing recognition of the needs and rights of donor-conceived persons (DCPs), particularly their interest in, and perceived rights to having access to their genetic information (Duff & Goedeke, 2024; Newton et al., 2024). Many jurisdictions have enacted identity-release provisions: Sweden (1984), Austria (1992), Victoria, Australia (1998), Switzerland (2001), the Netherlands (2004), Western Australia (2004), New Zealand (2004), Norway (2005), the United Kingdom (UK) (2004), Finland (2007), New South Wales Australia (2008), Germany (2018), Portugal (2018), Ireland (2020),

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France (2022), Queensland, Australia (2024), South Australia (2025) and Colorado, the United States of America (USA) (2025) (Colorado Department of Public Health & Environment, 2025; Government of South Australia, 2025; Indekeu et al., 2021; Queensland Government, 2025). These provisions ensure that identifying information about donors unknown to the recipients/intending parents is recorded, and DCPs can access this information, typically when reaching adulthood – usually at age 18 (Canzi et al., 2019; Darroch & Smith, 2021). At the same time, donation contexts have expanded to include donors who were previously unknown to recipients but are recruited directly through online platforms, increasing the likelihood of contact between donors, parents and DCPs. Initiatives have also emerged to facilitate contact for DCPs conceived with anonymous sperm by linking them with donors who were previously anonymous but are now open to identification and future contact, such as voluntary information exchange services, e.g. the US-based Donor Sibling Registry (van Rooij et al., 2026). Beyond these legislative and practice developments, the rise of direct-to-consumer (DTC) DNA testing services (e.g. 23andMe; Ancestry.com), alongside the use of social media, has markedly increased the likelihood of contact among those linked through DC (Darroch & Smith, 2021; Harper et al., 2016; Pasch, 2018) including in cases where parents have not disclosed DC details to their children, donations occurred anonymously, or legal frameworks restrict access to identifying information to specific parties, e.g. DCPs only (Crawshaw, 2018; Harper et al., 2016; Pasch, 2018).

Research suggests that individuals connected through DC, including DCPs, donors, parents and same-donor siblings, may express interest in seeking information about one another. DCPs may seek information to obtain medical or genetic information, explore shared traits relevant to their identity development, connect with donors and same-donor siblings, and in some cases, because they wish to build ongoing relationships (Canzi et al., 2019; Indekeu et al., 2021; Macmillan et al., 2021; Newton et al., 2024; van Rooij et al., 2026). Interestingly, DCPs' motivations for seeking information and making contact, as may be the case for adopted individuals, can emerge during or following life stages, such as adolescence, or transitions, such as marriage or the birth of a child, supporting the concept that identity formation and access to medical information are important motivators (Canzi et al., 2019; Jadva et al., 2010). However, some DCPs may hesitate to seek contact due to a sense of loyalty to their parents and fears of negative outcomes (Canzi et al., 2019).

Donors, even those who donated in anonymous contexts, may similarly be open to contact, in part because they support DCPs' rights to access information recognising that this may be helpful to DCPs (Blyth et al., 2017; Goedeke et al., 2015, 2023; Miettinen et al., 2019), but also because they may be curious about the outcome of their donations or have a sense of responsibility toward their genetic offspring and that of their raised children and families (Indekeu et al., 2021; Nordqvist & Gilman, 2024). While embryo donors may have a particular interest in outcomes, given their potentially full genetic connection with the donor-conceived person (DCP) and the full siblingship between their children (Goedeke et al., 2015), egg and sperm donors may also express interest in contact and/or relationships with recipients and the children born from their donation (Goedeke et al., 2023a, 2023b; Nordqvist & Gilman, 2024).

Likewise, some parents have expressed interest in accessing information about donors or establishing contact and/or a relationship with them (Dempsey et al., 2019), including to obtain relevant medical or psychosocial information, express gratitude to the donor, facilitate future access for their children and potentially develop support networks with same-donor siblings or families (Indekeu et al., 2021; Nordqvist & Gilman, 2024). Single mothers and same-sex female couples may be particularly motivated to establish early connections with donors or same-donor siblings as a way of cultivating a broader kinship network (Indekeu et al., 2021). However, these parents may also express concerns about how such connections might affect family dynamics or their parental autonomy (Goldberg & Scheib, 2015). Parents may also value contact with same-donor siblings/families to help their children build their identity, prevent consanguinity, gain support for shared psychological or developmental challenges, and create an extended family through providing the child with a sibling or future support system (Indekeu et al., 2021).

While contact among DC parties is increasing, including beyond the connection between donor and DCP to broader relational systems, research on how contact is experienced by the different parties involved in donor conception and across contexts has not yet been synthesised. Understanding these

Table 1. Search and selection strategy for mixed methods review on contact experiences in donor conception parties.

Databases searched	CINAHL Complete (via EBSCOHost platform), JSTOR, MEDLINE and PsycINFO (via Ovid Platform), PubMed, Scopus, Ovid Emcare, Google Scholar
Search Keywords	'donor conceived*' OR 'donor-conceived person*' OR 'donor sibling*' OR 'anonymous gamete dono*' OR 'gamete donor' OR 'donor offspring*' OR 'same donor sibling*' OR 'donor conception families' AND contact* OR meet* OR experienc* OR relation* OR 'donor link*' OR interact*
Other Sources	Snowball referencing through eligible articles.
Inclusion Criteria	1. Journal published English language peer-reviewed original articles (including quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods). 2. Articles focused on contact experiences among one or more of the parties involved in donor conception between previously unknown donors and recipients. 3. Articles published in the time frame of 2004-January 2026.
Exclusion Criteria	1. Articles focused on known donors or surrogates (unless data could be extracted separately).

contact experiences is essential given the increasing likelihood of contact and given that contact increasingly occurs before the age set by identity-release laws and through various informal channels. This MMSR collates and synthesises research on the contact experiences of DCPs, donors, parents and same-donor siblings published up until 31 January 2026.

Materials and methods

Search strategy

This systematic review was conducted in accordance with the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses [PRISMA] 2020 and was prospectively registered (Prospero registration number: CRD42024546154). A bibliographic search of English peer-reviewed publications was conducted using eight online databases CINAHL Complete (via EBSCOHost platform), JSTOR, MEDLINE and PsycINFO (via Ovid Platform), PubMed, Scopus, Ovid Emcare and Google Scholar. Search terms and their combinations are presented in Table 1. Reference lists of each article deemed eligible after full-text screening were reviewed to identify possible additional sources, as was Google Scholar's 'cited by' function, and the publication history of the authors of included articles.

Study selection

To be included in the review, publications had to be original empirical research with quantitative, qualitative, or mixed methods; and research participants had to be DCPs, donors, parents or same-donor siblings with experiences of contact following the birth of the DCPs. Donations had to have occurred between donors not known to recipients prior to embarking on donor conception. Donations could thus have been made in the context of anonymous/non-identified donation practice, identity-release donation (where DCPs have access to identifying information, typically upon reaching adulthood) or open-identity donation (where donors and recipients are not known to each other prior to embarking on donor conception but can access each other's identifying information from the outset. This can include donation where donors were expressly recruited by recipients for the purpose of donation, e.g. online donor recruitment). Research which explored contact experiences where donations had occurred between individuals previously known to each other prior to donor conception, e.g. where donors were family members and friends, or where the DC also entailed the use of surrogacy, were not included unless the data on known donation/surrogacy could be separately extracted from data on donations occurring between parties previously unknown to each other. Articles which did not have a primary focus on contact experiences were included if data were also collected on contact.

Screening and quality assessment

All search result citations were exported to the reference manager Zotero, where duplicates were removed using the automatised function. The remaining results were transferred to online abstract screening software Rayyan.ia, where both the first and second authors independently screened the titles, and following removal of ineligible studies, the abstracts of retrieved articles. Disagreements regarding

inclusion were resolved by discussion. Reports, including those found through snowball processes as described above, were assessed based on the Joanna Briggs Institute (JBI) Checklist for Qualitative Research and the JBI Checklist for Analytical Cross Sectional Studies. Most of the qualitative reports met at least 7 of the 10 methodological criteria assessed, with two excluded after assessment. The quantitative reports assessed met all the criteria outlined within the checklist. The quality assessment was performed by K.H. and cross checked by S.G.

Data extraction

A data extraction spreadsheet was developed specifically for this review based on the JBI Mixed Methods Data extraction form (Lizarondo et al., 2020). The data extracted included the article's descriptive data, the stakeholder group/s involved in contact, the research aim of the article and an overview of research findings relevant to contact experiences. Quantitative research findings were 'qualitised' as per the JBI guidelines when using a convergent integrative approach (Lizarondo et al., 2020). In other words, numerical findings were written as qualitative descriptions or themes so they could be integrated with qualitative data. The data were extracted by the first author, and cross checked by the second author with disagreements resolved through discussion.

Results

Search strategy and study selection

The Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) flowchart presented in [Figure 1](#) and [Table 1](#) summarise the screening process. The initial search yielded 1397 records, of which 542 duplicate results were removed using Zotero's automated function. A further 9 duplicate records were removed following the transfer of the records to Rayyan.ia and 621 records were excluded based on title alone. The abstracts of the remaining 225 were reviewed and 148 reports deemed ineligible. Five records were excluded as full text records were unavailable. The full texts of the remaining 77 articles were downloaded into Rayyan.ia for screening. A further 26 articles were found through review of the reference lists of these articles, the 'cited by' function in Google Scholar, and through reviewing the publications of primary authors. Full text screening occurred for all 103 eligible articles – 47 were deemed ineligible following review for reasons including: a focus on the contact expectations rather than actual contact experiences ($n = 16$); a focus on known donors ($n = 8$); articles were opinion based or essays rather than empirical studies ($n = 11$); data on different donation types/surrogacy were not separated out ($n = 2$); articles did not focus on contact experiences and included only limited information related to such experiences ($n = 7$); articles were deemed ineligible following JBI assessment ($n = 2$); and one article was excluded at this stage due to a missed duplicate entry. The second author, S.G., provided consultation and cross-checking of the screening process.

Overall study characteristics

Data from the 57 articles were reviewed and are displayed in [Table 2](#). Articles based on the same study are presented first. Of the 57 articles, 23 were part of five wider collaborative studies: The Donor Sibling Registry (DSR) Study (8 articles), the US National Longitudinal Lesbian Family Study (NLLFS) (4 articles), Pride Angel – UK based Online Donation Connection Website (2 articles), The Single Mothers by Choice in Australia (SMC) Study (3 articles) and the Fiom KID-DNA Network study (2 articles). Two articles of the 23 study-grouped articles presented in [Table 2](#) were part of a follow up study (Hertz et al., 2017; Hertz & Mattes, 2011). ChatGPT-5 was used to edit the table for clarity and conciseness.

Country

29/57 articles drew on participants from the USA; however, 6 of these articles were from the DSR Study and 4 from the NLLFS. 14 articles included participants from the UK, 9 included participants from Australia, 4 included participants from the Netherlands, 3 each included participants from Canada and New Zealand, one article included participants from Norway.

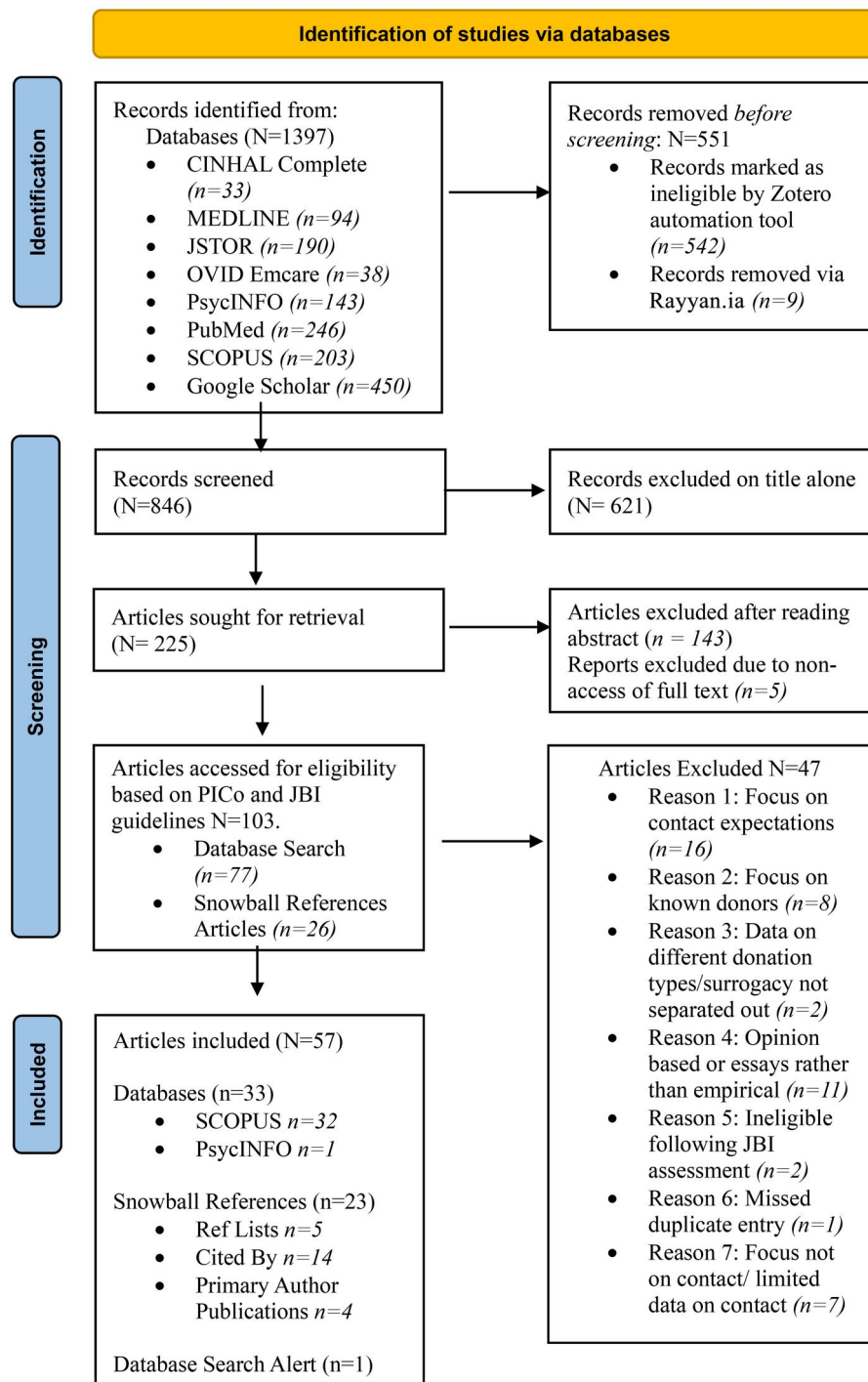


Figure 1. PRISMA flow diagram demonstrating the systematic search method for identification of articles for review.

Date of publication

Articles were published between 2008 and January 2026, with 16 articles published in the last 2 years and 24 (42%) since 2020.

Research design and instruments

Of the 57 articles reviewed, 52.6%% (n = 30) were qualitative, 40.4% (n = 23) employed a mixed-methods approach, and only 7% (n = 4) were quantitative studies. Interviews were the most common data collection method in qualitative studies, while three studies drew on interview data and analysis of social media sites. Surveys were used in 47.4% (n = 27) of the quantitative method articles.

Table 2. Characteristics and findings of stakeholder groups' contact experiences.

Wider Study	Author (Date) Location	Research Aim	Research Design and Methods-Participants (size; gender; age)	Family Form and Type of Donation	Donation Provision	Study Group of focus and Contact Group	Contact Findings
U.S. National Longitudinal Lesbian Family Study (NLLFS), Wave 6	1. Koh et al. (2020) USA	To explore relationships and feelings of adult DCP conceived through donor insemination from NLLFS lesbian-parent families towards their unknown or known sperm donors.	Mixed Methods- Online Survey N = 76; (M = 39, F = 37) Age = 25 Wave 6	Lesbian Parent Families Sperm Donation	Anonymous and Identity Release (The NLLFS study defines 'unknown' donors as anonymous or identity-release donors whom DCP had not met, while 'known' donors are identity-release or open-identity donors whom DCP have met.)	DCP and Donors	Of the 30 DCP who had met their donors, 20 (66.7%) had ongoing relationships, and nearly half (46.7%) reported positive feelings or good relationships. Half viewed donors as acquaintances, 10 (33.3%) as fathers (all known since childhood), six (20%) as friends, and six (20%) as uncles. Frequent contact was often described as considerate and non-intrusive. However, six (20%) wanted more contact, while another six (20%) felt discomfort due to differing expectations (e.g. donors seeing themselves as parents) and difficulty finding common ground. Some (16.7%) reported minimal connection, with contact mainly for genealogical purposes, while others mentioned indirect social media contact. A few did not anticipate close relationships despite recent encounters.
NLLFS, Wave 7	2. Koh, Rothblum et al. (2023) USA	To examine how adult DCP conceived via sperm donation by NLLFS lesbian parents interacted with and felt about their donors.	Quantitative - Online Survey N = 75 (M = 39, F = 36) Age = 30–33 Wave 7	Lesbian Parent Families Sperm Donation	Anonymous and Identity Release	DCP and Donors	Of 75 DCP, 40 (53%) had 'known' donors—via contact through online registries (93%), identity-release access at 18+ (12%), or known since childhood (32%); 35 (47%) did not. Satisfaction with contact was reported regardless of donor knowledge. Among the 40, 16 established contact after 18: seven with anonymous donors and nine with identity-release donors. None viewed donors as fathers; they were seen as donors only (50%), acquaintances (43.8%), relatives (37.5%), or friends (31.3%). No negative relationships were reported; about half described them as positive, the rest neutral. Over half (56.4%) had ongoing relationships, mainly by email and occasionally in person. Contact disclosure effects were mixed or neutral.
	3. Koh, Bos et al. (2023) USA	To explore the relationships and feelings of adult DCP conceived via donor insemination in lesbian-parent families in relation to their donor (half)-siblings.	Quantitative - Online Survey N = 75 (M = 37, F = 36, NS = 2) Age = 30–33 Wave 7	Lesbian Parent Families Sperm Donation	Anonymous and Identity Release	DCP and Same-Donor Siblings	Over half of DCP (53.3%) had found donor siblings; most (77.5%) made contact, with 65% reporting positive, ongoing relationships. Initial contact was typically via sibling/sperm bank registries (45.2%), donors (29%), or parents (29%), at a median offspring age of 19. Contact was usually with 1 sibling (41.9%) or 2–5 siblings (41.9%). Most felt neutral about the importance of knowing siblings but were satisfied with knowledge or contact. Donor siblings were viewed as acquaintances (49%), brothers/sisters (39%), friends (36%), or relatives (26%), with many

(continued)

Table 2. Continued.

Wider Study	Author (Date) Location	Research Aim	Research Design and Methods-Participants (size; gender; age)	Family Form and Type of Donation	Donation Provision	Study Group of focus and Contact Group	Contact Findings
Donor Sibling registry Collaborative Study (DSR)	4. Rothblum et al. (2025) USA	To explore the feelings of adult DCP from lesbian-parent families regarding their conception, donor, and donor siblings.	Mixed Methods - Quantitative analyses of online surveys. (M= 37, F= 36, NS= 2) Age= 30-33 Wave 7	Lesbian Parent Families Sperm Donation	Anonymous and Identity Release	DCP and Donors/ Same-Donor siblings	selecting multiple terms, reflecting varied closeness. Communication occurred mainly through in-person meetings (60%), social media (55%), or phone calls (40%); less commonly email (35%), texting/videochatting (35%), gifts (15%), or a letter (1). All who contacted siblings disclosed this to family/others; most (87.1%) were willing to disclose to anyone. Reactions were generally neutral, suggesting little disruption to family dynamics. Some DCP (19.5%) linked their happiness with DC to relationships with donors, donor siblings, or extended donor family. These DCP reported validation from meeting relatives, sometimes through profound shared interests (e.g. careers) or familial ties across lineages. Among those with donor sibling connections (53.3%), many described the experience as enriching, identity-affirming, and akin to close friendships or valued family bonds, offering support and companionship. Others were indifferent, with little interest in forming connections. Large sibling groups could feel overwhelming, leading to disengagement, though some later reconciled and reconnected. Additional complexities arose from secrecy or lack of awareness of DC, with some DCP burdened by knowing of siblings unaware of their own conception status.
	5. Freeman et al. (2009) USA	To explore the motivations and experiences of parents (and DCP) searching for and contacting their child's donor and/or 'donor siblings'.	Mixed Methods - Online Survey N = 791 (M = 16, F = 775) Age = 26-62	Heterosexual, SMC and Lesbian Parent families Sperm and Egg Donation	Anonymous and Identity-Release	Parents/DCP and Donors/ Same-Donor Siblings	Most parents searched for their child's donor siblings (87%), fewer for the donor (47%) or both (42%). Success rates were higher for sibling searches: 73% found siblings, 63% were in contact, and 23% met in person. In contrast, only 18% located donors, 10% were in contact, and 3% met them; just 5% of children had donor contact and 3% met their donor. Parents overwhelmingly reported sibling contact as positive (85%); 81% said their child's experience was also positive. Relationships were often described as close, with children calling siblings 'brothers' or 'sisters'. For most, sibling meetings exceeded expectations: 69% reported children got along 'very well'. Challenges included parenting differences and distance, but families generally found these ties enriching. One-third of

(continued)

Table 2. Continued.

Wider Study	Author (Date) Location	Research Aim	Research Design and Methods-Participants (size; gender; age)	Family Form and Type of Donation	Donation Provision	Study Group of focus and Contact Group	Contact Findings
Donor Sibling registry Collaborative Study (DSR) USA	6. Jadva et al. (2010)	To investigate the experiences of DCP searching for and contacting their donor and/or 'donor siblings', exploring motivations, family dynamics and the implications of searches.	Mixed Methods - Online Survey N = 165* (M = 42 F = 123) Age = 13-61 *Data was collected in two phases; phase 1 -recruiting offspring aged 18 and over; phase 2 - recruiting offspring aged 13 and over.	Heterosexual, SMC and Lesbian Parent families Sperm Donation	Anonymous	DCP/Donor and Same-Donor Siblings	parents reported frequent ($\geq$ monthly) sibling contact, 24% regular communication, and nearly half of DCP engaged at least every three months. Donor contact, though less common, was also positive. Over half of parents who reached out had regular communication, 40% frequent contact; 44% of children with donor contact communicated frequently. All parents who met donors rated the experience very positive (90%) or fairly positive (10%); children's experiences were similarly positive (82% very, 18% fairly). No negative experiences were reported. Parents highlighted benefits for children's identity and family sense, describing donors as mentors or father-like figures. Still, relationships with donor siblings, and between parents of same-donor siblings, were often valued more than donor contact, perceived as based on shared experiences and 'safer' and 'less complex'. Of all DCP, 78% searched for donor siblings; 33% of these found siblings, and 95% of those were in contact. Among the 77% who searched for donors, only 9% found them and 8% had contact. Contact experiences were generally 'very positive' with siblings (60%) and donors (70%). DCP from lesbian families reported especially favourable feelings toward both, though samples were too small for significance. Most said search/contact did not harm parent relationships, but DCP from heterosexual families (29%) were less likely to tell fathers about their search. Some were also in contact with donors' families (children and parents). On average, DCP found 4 same-donor siblings; 29% found five or more, with some finding up to 13. DCP often described sibling ties as natural and familiar despite not growing up together, though some distinguished between full genetic siblings and same-donor siblings.
Donor Sibling registry Collaborative Study (DSR) USA	7. Beeson et al. (2011)	To examine the experiences of DCP learning about the method of their conception and their desire to contact their donor, with a focus on how family type	Mixed Methods - Online Survey N = 741 (M = 31% F = 69%) Age = 9-40	Heterosexual and Lesbian Parents Sperm Donation	Anonymous	DCP and Donors	Most DCP across family types desired donor contact, with higher interest among those from single lesbian parents (88%). DCP from dual-parent heterosexual families reported some discomfort expressing this to fathers. Only 68 DCP (9.2% of the total sample) had contacted their donor,

(continued)

Table 2. Continued.

Wider Study	Author (Date) Location	Research Aim	Research Design and Methods: Participants (size; gender; age)	Family Form and Type of Donation	Donation Provision	Study Group of focus and Contact Group	Contact Findings
		influences these experiences.					with little variation across family types. The most common route was the Donor Sibling Registry (29 cases), followed by sperm banks/clinics (9 cases), though these were often challenging and required persistence. Others used search engines, parent help, or, in one case, a documentary. Among DCP from heterosexual families, donors were most often described as 'like a friend' (14 cases), then 'like an aunt/uncle' (9), and 'like a parent' (5). Two from heterosexual families and four from lesbian/single-parent families described their donor as 'a complete stranger'. Only one from the lesbian/single-parent group described their donor as 'like a parent'. Most sperm (85.7%) and oocyte donors (72.7%) were willing to make contact or had already done so. Among willing sperm donors, 35% had located and contacted at least one offspring; 72.7% maintained monthly contact, often via parents if children were young. Most sperm donors described meetings as very positive (77%) or fairly positive (23%), reporting profound emotional impact and unexpected similarities in appearance (95.4%, 21), interests (95.4%, 21), and personality (72.9%, 16). Many referred to offspring as 'donor daughters' or 'biological kids', and some relationships extended to donors' raised children, parents, or siblings. Only one egg donor had contacted and met her offspring, describing the experience as very positive with frequent ongoing contact.
	8. Jadia et al. (2011) USA	To examine the motivations and experiences of anonymous donors who made themselves open to contact with their donor offspring.	Mixed Methods - Online Survey N = 74 (M = 63 Age = 20-72, F = 11 Age = 28-47)	Not Specified Sperm and Egg Donation	Anonymous	Donor and DCP/ Parents	Almost all donors (94%) were open to contact with offspring, with 85% open to meeting and 78% willing to establish a relationship. Among donors who had met DCP (22%), most felt closeness, especially with young children/those they had met in person, while emphasizing the need for appropriate boundaries and prioritizing the DCP's needs. Donors initially contacted by DCP (33%) faced challenges adjusting to new relationships, particularly within their own families. Managing partner relationships was common, with some experiencing jealousy or discomfort, though three-quarters of partners supported contact. Explaining half-siblings to their children sometimes
	9. Daniels et al. (2012) USA	To investigate the motivations, views and experiences of sperm donors willing to have contact with DCP	Mixed Methods - Online Survey N = 164 (M = 164) Age = 18-35	Not Specified Sperm Donation	Anonymous	Donors and DCP	

(continued)

Table 2. Continued.

Wider Study	Author (Date) Location	Research Aim	Research Design and Methods: Participants (size; gender; age)	Family Form and Type of Donation	Donation Provision	Study Group of focus and Contact Group	Contact Findings
Donor Sibling registry Collaborative Study (DSR)	10. Beeson et al. (2013) USA	To examine feelings and thoughts of parents of former donors on learning that they have a grandchild, and to examine the relationship they have with DC grandchildren.	Mixed Methods - Online Survey N = 22 (M = 4, F = 18) Age = 41-85	Not Specified Egg, Sperm and Embryo Donation	Not Specified	Donors' Parents and DCP	caused tension, yet two-thirds of donors' children were interested in meeting offspring. Donors also navigated interactions with DCP's families, complicated by secrecy or single-parent situations, and feared rejection or disappointment. Those with many DCP felt overwhelmed by the prospect of maintaining numerous relationships, with some having dozens of potential connections. Twelve of 19 respondents had met their DC grandchildren in person, two had phone/email contact only, and one maintained contact solely with the parents due to the child's age. Four were aware of their DC grandchildren but had no contact. First contact occurred by age 10 for six grandparents; later childhood/adolescence for five, and young adulthood for three. Most connections were facilitated through prior donor-DCP/parent contact, often via structured avenues like the Donor Sibling Registry. Five grandparents (all parents of sperm donors) described ongoing relationships with their first DC grandchildren; others had limited or no interaction, especially with subsequent grandchildren. Fourteen viewed the relationship as akin to a biological grandchild; others felt a more distant familial bond.
Donor Sibling registry Collaborative Study (DSR)	11. Blyth et al. (2013) USA, UK, Australia and Canada	To investigate the perspectives and experiences of parents regarding the disclosure of DC to children conceived through oocyte donation.	Mixed Methods - Online Survey N = 108 (Various combinations of gestational and non-gestational mothers and fathers) Age = 29-49	Heterosexual, SMC and Lesbian Parent Families Egg, Sperm and Surrogacy	Identity Release and Anonymous (This article uses the term 'open-identity term' to refer to the identity release context.)	Parents and Donors/Same-Donor Siblings/Families	Few parents (19%) successfully identified and contacted the donor, mostly via clinics or agencies, with a few using internet searches. Contact experiences revealed occasional inaccuracies in clinic-provided information regarding medical history, skills, and occupation. Fourteen parents established connections with other families via donor siblings, interacting through email, phone, meetings, and reciprocal home visits. Three families developed relationships regarded as familial, illustrating a spectrum from basic contact to acknowledged kinship, highlighting the complex and potentially deepening dynamics of donor-linked relationships.
	12. Sawyer et al. (2013) USA, Canada, UK and Australia	To examine the choices of women who used donor sperm to form families, exploring their	Quantitative - Online Survey N = 1700 (F = 1700)	Heterosexual Mothers, SMC and Lesbian Parent Families/ Sperm Donation	Anonymous and Identity-Release Donation	Parents and Donors/Same-Donor Siblings	Only a small percentage (4.4%) of parent participants successfully identified and contacted their sperm donor, although 276 (19.5%) were still searching for him and about half (51.7%) indicated

(continued)

Table 2. Continued.

Wider Study	Author (Date) Location	Research Aim	Research Design and Methods	Participants (size; gender; age)	Family Form and Type of Donation	Donation Provision	Study Group of focus and Contact Group	Contact Findings
		perspectives on the DC journey.						potential future interest in discovering their donor's identity. Over half (53.0%) of the parents had however made contact with their children's genetic half-siblings, indicating a more accessible and perhaps socially acceptable route for forming familial ties. This interaction was particularly noted among single and lesbian-couple respondents, who not only made contact more frequently but also often recognized these half-siblings as family. Despite the complexities and potential challenges of such contacts, a strong majority (91.1%) supported DCPs' right to seek out their donors, underscoring a broad endorsement for openness in genetic origins irrespective of prior agreements on anonymity.
From KID-DNA Database Netherlands	13. Indekeu et al. (2022) The Netherlands	To explore psychosocial challenges faced by DCP when meeting multiple half-siblings conceived through the same donor.	Qualitative -Semi- Structured Interviews	N = 19 interviewed (Gender Not Specified) Age = 15-42 Participants were a part of a group meeting organized by Fiom KID-DNA counsellors. Meetings took place between May 2017 and February 2018.	Heterosexual, SMC and Lesbian Parent Families Sperm and Egg Donation	Anonymous and Identity Release	Same-Donor Siblings and Same-Donor Siblings	Of 82 DCP, 19 from five same-donor sibling networks (linked via the Fiom KID-DNA Database) were interviewed. While experiences were generally positive, DCP reported challenges in defining group membership, regulating closeness and distance, and managing group dynamics. Membership and feelings toward donor siblings varied individually, with subgroups forming based on shared characteristics (e.g. same-sex households, life stage, childhood experiences, values, or goals). For some, genetics prompted interaction; for others, connections developed over time or remained unchanged. Large, rapidly expanding networks posed particular challenges. Some DCP welcomed new members, while others struggled to re-balance relationships, often feeling closest to those met first. Time constraints from family or work limited the ability to cultivate closeness, leaving some overwhelmed by the number of siblings. Early access to donor information sometimes caused strain, while limited information felt restrictive to others. DCP described difficulties forming group identity, negotiating boundaries, and coping with the emotional demands of new relationships. They expressed a need for targeted support when navigating large sibling networks, including guidance on expectations, managing group dynamics during meetings, and follow-up to process emotions.

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Table 2. Continued.

Wider Study	Author (Date) Location	Research Aim	Research Design and Methods-Participants (size; gender; age)	Family Form and Type of Donation	Donation Provision	Study Group of focus and Contact Group	Contact Findings
From KID-DNA Database Netherlands	14. Bolt et al. (2023) The Netherlands	To explore the experiences and challenges faced by Dutch DCP in forming kinship with donor half-siblings.	Qualitative - Semi-Structured Interviews N = 19 (F = 19) Age = 15-42	Heterosexual, SMC and Lesbian Parent Families Sperm Donation	Anonymous and Identity Release	Same-Donor Siblings and Same-Donor Siblings	Contact experiences within From KID-DNA sibling networks revealed complex emotions and interactions. Many DCP felt nervous and excited before meeting half-siblings, likening it to a job interview or blind date. Newly met siblings often explored physical similarities to establish kinship, then expanded to shared traits like humour, interests, and life experiences. Resemblances fostered excitement and emotional bonding; only three DCP initially found no similarities, leading to disappointment, exclusion, and reduced belief in the importance of genes. Decisions about investing in relationships were often based on these resemblances. Initial enthusiasm for similarities often shifted to the challenges of forming meaningful relationships beyond genetics. As networks grew, excitement sometimes faded, leading to fatigue and reduced interest in new members. Complex group dynamics, including exclusion, jealousy, and rivalry, affected engagement. Establishing and nurturing kinship ties required effort and could impact existing family relationships. While some formed meaningful, friendship-like connections, others felt overwhelmed by the number and complexity of relationships, leading to reduced involvement or disengagement.
Single By Choice Mothers Study- In Australia	15. Kelly and Dempsey (2016a) Australia	To examine experiences of donor-linking practices in Australia for single mothers by choice (SMCs).	Qualitative - Semi-Structured Interviews N = 25 (F = 25)	SMC Sperm Donation	Anonymous and Identity Release Donation	SMC Parents and Donors	Fourteen (56%) knew the donor's identity, with 11 (44%) regularly interacting before the child turned 18. Five were in contact with sperm donors, five with egg donors, and one embryo recipient had relationships with both donors. Egg donor identities were typically known from the start as participants recruited them. Nine women had face-to-face meetings (4 sperm donors, 5 egg donors). Contact was facilitated through formal channels (Central or Voluntary Register, fertility clinics) or informal methods. Of those using clinics, half contacted the sperm donor, and half were refused. One woman sent a thank-you letter via the clinic, leading to ongoing email/photo exchanges without meeting in person. One began contact via the clinic after learning of another couple's success, eventually meeting the donor. Three women used informal linking, identifying donors

(continued)

Table 2. Continued.

Wider Study	Author (Date) Location	Research Aim	Research Design and Methods-Participants (size; gender; age)	Family Form and Type of Donation	Donation Provision	Study Group of focus and Contact Group	Contact Findings
	16. Kelly and Dempsey (2016b) Australia	To understand how Australian Qualitative – Semi- Structured Interviews SMCs engage with donor linking and what mechanisms they used to make contact.	N = 25 (F = 25)	SMC Sperm Donation	Anonymous and Identity Release Donation	SMC Parents and Donors	online without direct contact; two continued 'monitoring' donors online due to lack of confidence in the identity-release process. Donor linking was common, with 16/25 (64%) having engaged in some form and 4 planning to do so. Eleven were in regular contact with sperm donors and eleven with same-donor siblings. Early contact (before DCP age 18) was more common in single-mother families. Various avenues were used, including clinics, internet searches, and state registers, though most relied on informal methods. Clinics were often the first contact point for sperm donors, with women sending 'thank-you letters' including anonymous email addresses. Some donors responded promptly, leading to ongoing emails or in-person meetings, despite initial anonymity expectations. Experiences varied due to inconsistent clinic practices and concerns about record accuracy. Internet and social media searches allowed some women to locate donors easily, highlighting the potential to bypass anonymity and statutory safeguards. A few used state registers, which required counselling and donor consent, providing structured but sometimes delayed or limited contact. Egg donors were typically recruited by participants, with ongoing contact maintained after the child's birth; some DCP also met the donor's children. Thirteen women had contact with donor siblings through informal means such as forums, online registries, or existing connections with egg donors. Among nine SMBC who knew their child's donor, seven maintained regular contact. Twelve mothers engaged with donor sibling families, eleven met in person, and some children had ongoing relationships. Most described linking positively, though one experienced discomfort after early contact via Victoria's Voluntary Register, initially seeing the donor as a 'father' but later questioning this. Some used contact to prevent idealization of the donor or initiated it without involving their child due to age concerns. For mothers valuing openness, donor involvement did not necessarily alter family dynamics. One was concerned about others calling
	17. Kelly et al. (2019) Australia	To explore challenges for Australian SMBCs involved in donor linking, with special consideration of legal challenges they may be facing.	Qualitative – Semi- Structured Interviews N = 25 (F = 25)	SMC Sperm Donation	Anonymous and Identity Release Donation	SMC Parents and Donors	

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Table 2. Continued.

Wider Study	Author (Date) Location	Research Aim	Research Design and Methods-Participants (size; gender; age)	Family Form and Type of Donation	Donation Provision	Study Group of focus and Contact Group	Contact Findings
Snowflakes Embryo Adoption Programme in US	18. Frith et al. (2017) USA	To understand contact arrangements established between providers (donors) and recipients of embryos using Snowflakes® Embryo Adoption Program.	Mixed Methods - Online Survey and Semi-Structured Interviews PHASE 1: N = 45 (Donors n = 17; Parents n = 28) PHASE 2: N = 8 Donors N = 12 Parents	Not Specified Embryo Donation	Open Identity	Parents and Donors	the donor 'father', while four feeling societal pressure to provide a paternal figure used terms like 'father' or 'dad'. One mother used DNA testing and social media to contact an anonymous donor, forming a virtual relationship; her daughter later expressed distress over the donor's absence. Another, influenced by social norms, initiated contact via the Victorian Central Register and was satisfied with the donor's involvement. In the Snowflakes 'open identity' programme, embryo donors and recipients frequently sought and valued contact. Most established contact before the child's birth, communicating every 2–6 months, though some contact occurred post-birth or between families of the same donor. Contact intentions often evolved, from limited initial contact to ongoing relationships. Interactions were generally positive and considered in the child's best interests, though children were not always involved, with recipients leading the development of contact. Some donors and recipients met multiple times, including annual visits, forming deep familial bonds extending to extended relatives, often facilitated via social media. Contact provided reassurance: donors gained confidence in the child's wellbeing, while recipients overcame fears of donor claims.
Pride Angel- Online Sperm Donation Website	19. Byth et al. (2019) USA	To investigate how relationships are negotiated in embryo 'adoption' programmes.	Mixed Methods- Online Survey & Semi-Structured Interviews PHASE 1: N = 17 Donors N = 28 Parents PHASE 2: N = 8 Donors N = 12 Parents	Not Specified Embryo Donation	Open Identity	Parents and Donors/Same-Donor Parents	Recipients described warm connections with donors and other families sharing the same donors, exchanging gifts and hand-me-downs, fostering extended familial bonds, with children often seen as siblings. Challenges included maintaining relationships across multiple families, diverging life paths, and uneven closeness. Both donors and parents highlighted the importance of clear boundaries, open communication, and ensuring all parties feel comfortable and valued. Of sperm donors with resulting children, most were heterosexual (82.9%), with smaller numbers gay (11.4%) or bisexual (5.7%). Among donors using a UK online sperm donation site, 72.9% (51) had seen photos of their offspring, while 25.7% (18) had met and maintained ongoing contact. Gay and bisexual donors were more likely than heterosexual donors to have met
Pride Angel- Online Sperm Donation Website	20. Freeman et al. (2016) UK based website (multiple countries; majority from UK)	To understand motivations, preferences and experiences of heterosexual, gay and bisexual sperm donors	Mixed Methods - Online Survey N = 383 (M = 383)	Not Specified Sperm Donation	Open Identity	Donors and Parents/ DCP	(continued)

Table 2. Continued.

Wider Study	Author (Date) Location	Research Aim	Research Design and Methods-Participants (size; gender; age)	Family Form and Type of Donation	Donation Provision	Study Group of focus and Contact Group	Contact Findings
	21. Jadva et al. (2018) UK based website (multiple countries; majority from UK)	To determine the reasons recipients sought a sperm donor online, how contact was made, and what aspects of donation were discussed prior to donation.	Mixed Methods -Online Survey N= 429 (F = 429)	Lesbian and SMC Parent Families Sperm Donation	Open Identity	Parents/DCP and Donors	their offspring (58.3% vs. 17.2%) and be in ongoing contact (66.7% vs. 17.2%). Parents in the sample were members of Pride Angel, a UK-based online sperm and egg donation site. Twenty-nine (32%) had a child via an online sperm donor, and ten (11%) were currently pregnant. Of those with children, 27.6% reported donor contact, while 62% had none. Contact varied: one donor held the baby, one mother sent photos but planned to meet only when the child turned 18, and one mother was open to future, distant contact, choosing a geographically distant donor accordingly. One mother referred to the donor as 'the father of her child'.
Follow Up Study by Hertz	22. Hertz and Mattes (2011) USA	To gain insight into how mothers of DCP engage with same donor siblings/families.	Mixed Methods -Online Survey N= 596 (M = 2 F = 594) Age = 30-49	Not Specified Sperm Donation	Anonymous	Mothers and Same-Donor Siblings/Families	Sixty-one percent (356/587) of mothers searched for same-donor siblings; most of those who had not searched said they would if their children showed interest later. Of those who searched, 84% found at least one same-donor family, mainly via online registries, often creating a network effect with an average of 4.4 families found. Nearly all exchanged emails/messages, shared photos, and provided updates on milestones, health, and traits. Ongoing contact was more selective: 64% stayed in touch with at least one family (average 2.8); in-person meetings were less common (20%, averaging 2.3 per year). Only 24% reported no continuing contact. Mothers who maintained contact described it as meaningful, fostering kinship, though some experienced emotional challenges, mismatched expectations, or difficulty managing growing networks. Geographical distance limited in-person contact, but internet groups facilitated connection. Relationships were described as 'distant family' (34%), 'close friends' (18.4%), 'acquaintances' (32%), or 'close family' (7.8%), reflecting the variety of connections.
	23. Hertz et al. (2017) USA	To replicate aspects of Hertz and Mattes (2011) while comparing parents and DCP, and to examine relationships among individuals connected by a shared donor.	Mixed Methods -Online Survey N= 2636 (Parents n = 2134, DCP n= 327)	Not Specified Sperm Donation	Anonymous and Identity Release	Parents and Same-Donor Siblings/ Families	This study replicates the 2011 research, surveying 2134 parents and 327 DCP aged 13-50+. Most parents (74%) and fewer DCP (69%) had taken steps to locate same-donor siblings. Only 11% of parents and 13% of DCP were uninterested, with teenagers less likely than older DCP to report no plan to search for siblings. Parents were

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Table 2. Continued.

Wider Study	Author (Date) Location	Research Aim	Research Design and Methods-Participants (size; gender; age)	Family Form and Type of Donation	Donation Provision	Study Group of focus and Contact Group	Contact Findings
	24. Andreassen (2016) Denmark	To explore how the intersections of social media and kinship potentially transform family formations and gender constructions.	Qualitative - Semi-Structured Interviews and Analysis of Facebook Group Discussions N = 13 (F = 13)	SMC and Lesbian Parent Families Sperm Donation	Identity-Release	Parents and Same-Donor Families	motivated by obtaining access to medical information, genetic knowledge, and at times, extended family for their child; DCP were motivated by curiosity, heritage, and forming sibling relationships. Seventy-two percent of parents found at least one same-donor family, compared with 47% of DCP, with under-19s more likely to find siblings. Internet registries like the Donor Sibling Registry (DSR) facilitated 72% of successful connections. In contrast to 64% of mothers maintaining contact in 2011, 91% now maintained ongoing communication, and while contact was often online, contact was also more frequent, likely to be face-to-face and with more families than in the previous study; about half had met in person, with 68% of these meetings occurring more than once. DCP were more likely than parents to meet siblings (64%) and often focused communication on specific individuals. Relationships varied widely. Parents generally regarded same-donor siblings/families as acquaintances, more often as extended family if met. DCP were more likely to see met siblings (but not their parents) as part of their nuclear or extended family. Factors affecting relationships included geographical proximity (especially for young DCP), child age, in-person contact, group size, and perceived compatibility or shared traits. Through initial posts in DCP Facebook groups, parents sought connections with others whose children shared the same donor, often forming closed, private groups for deeper interaction. These connections were motivated by a desire to give their children a sense of extended family and belonging, compensating for the absence of a traditional paternal figure. Parents frequently shared photos and updates, fostering a sense of kinship despite geographical distance. Solo mothers especially valued these networks for providing sibling relationships and broader family context, supporting their children's social and emotional development. They organized gatherings and holiday celebrations, sharing these moments online to maintain connection. Engagement varied: some parents embraced

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Table 2. Continued.

Wider Study	Author (Date) Location	Research Aim	Research Design and Methods: Participants (size; gender; age)	Family Form and Type of Donation	Donation Provision	Study Group of focus and Contact Group	Contact Findings
	25. Andreassen (2017) Denmark, Sweden and Norway	To explore experiences of same donor families connecting with each other online	Qualitative - Semi-Structured Interviews and Analysis of Facebook Group Discussions N = 11 (Interviewed) N = 12 (Discussions on Facebook Group)	SMC and Lesbian Parent Families Sperm Donation	Anonymous	Parents and Same-Donor Siblings/ Families	expansive networks, finding joy and support in their children's relationships with other DCP, while others avoided participation, concerned about complicating family dynamics or their children's understanding of kinship and parental roles. Parents engaging in same-donor sibling contact reported positive, supportive experiences for their children. Many, especially those with only one child, sought donor siblings to enrich their child's social and familial life. Single mothers and their DCP often formed deep, family-like bonds with other single mothers and their children through regular meetings and shared holidays. For some, securing kinship was important to ensure their child had supportive connections if something happened to them. While occurring in semi-public online spaces, interactions within Facebook donor groups often felt deeply personal. Initial online encounters frequently triggered strong emotional reactions—excitement, nervousness, even physical symptoms—amplified by social media's immediacy. Connections were shaped by physical resemblances, but introducing donor siblings also raised tensions as families navigated differing views on biological versus social ties. For some, these relationships challenged nuclear family dynamics, particularly for non-biological parents in lesbian families who sometimes felt sidelined by the focus on biology. Mothers of donor-conceived children often initiated contact by posting shared donor ID numbers in DCP-specific groups. These connections frequently led to the formation of extended donor families, maintained through online interactions like photo sharing and daily life updates. Solo mothers were more likely than lesbian couples to seek contact, aiming to provide their children with a larger family network, while some lesbian couples avoided contact to protect the nuclear family and ensure equality between biological and non-biological parents. Online interactions fostered a sense of belonging and kinship across distances. Shared photos often helped identify similarities among same-donor families. Once connections were established, some families created
	26. Andreassen (2023) Denmark	To explore online-initiated connections between donor siblings and how such connections can reinscribe biology as important to queer kins.	Qualitative - Semi-Structured Interviews and Analysis of Facebook Group Discussions N = 13 N = 13 (f = 13)	SMC and Lesbian Parent Families Sperm Donation	Identity-Release	Parents and Same-Donor Siblings/ Families	

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Table 2. Continued.

Wider Study	Author (Date) Location	Research Aim	Research Design and Methods: Participants (size; gender; age)	Family Form and Type of Donation	Donation Provision	Study Group of focus and Contact Group	Contact Findings
	27. Bartholomaeus and Riggs (2019) Australia	To understand the experiences and views of embryo donors and recipients in Australia.	Qualitative - Semi-Structured Interviews N = 15 (F = 14, M = 1) Donors n = 6; Recipients/parents n = 3; Participants with embryos in storage n = 5; Egg donor with embryo donated to third party n = 1 Age = 27–50	Heterosexual, SMC and Lesbian Parent Families Embryo Donation	Identity Release	Donors and Parents	private groups for ongoing contact, which sometimes developed into in-person meetings. Some donors saw the relationships between families as important mainly because they allowed connections between genetically related children. They preferred informal, family-like arrangements, encouraging children to refer to the recipients as 'aunt' or 'uncle', and to view the donor-conceived children as 'cousins' or, in some cases, as 'brothers' and 'sisters' to reflect their biological ties. Some DCP with previously anonymous donors reported positive, affirming experiences meeting their donors, while others faced rejection or disappointing contact. Negative experiences also stemmed from concerns about parental reactions or lack of support from parents, clinics, or legal processes. Some found solidarity and comfort in donor-conceived communities, but others found them distressing, with stories of deceit and rejection.
	28. Best et al. (2023) New Zealand	To explore the experiences of DCP born prior to the enactment of the HART Act legislation in New Zealand	Qualitative - Semi-Structured Interviews N = 10 (M = 2, W = 8) Age = 23–43	Not Specified Sperm Donation	Anonymous	DCP and Donors	In gestational surrogacy arrangements, most parents (94%; n = 34) used an unknown egg donor. Fathers were far more likely to meet the surrogate than the egg donor: 25% (n = 9) had met the egg donor, while a higher percentage had met the surrogate. In the past year, 53% (n = 21) of fathers met the surrogate versus only 6% (n = 2) meeting the egg donor. Among the 11 parents (31%) maintaining contact with the egg donor, most had used open-identity or identity-release donors (n = 9), and two had known donors (a friend and a sister). Contact was mostly via Facebook and email, with phone or Skype less common. Of those maintaining contact, 63% (n = 7) were content or neutral, while 36% (n = 4) desired more interaction. Fathers were more likely to be dissatisfied with egg donor than surrogate contact. In the nine families (25%) where fathers had met the egg donor, the child's relationship with the donor was usually non-existent (56%; n = 5) or distant (11%; n = 1), though two children (22%) had close relationships, both with donors who were a relative or family friend.
	29. Blake et al. (2016) USA	To explore gay fathers' relationships with surrogates and egg donors	Mixed Methods - Cross-Sectional Survey and Interviews N = 40	Gay Father Parented Families Egg Donation and Surrogacy	Anonymous, Identity-Release and Open-Identity	Fathers and Donors	
					Anonymous		(continued)

Table 2. Continued.

Wider Study	Author (Date) Location	Research Aim	Research Design and Methods: Participants (size; gender; age)	Family Form and Type of Donation	Donation Provision	Study Group of focus and Contact Group	Contact Findings
	30. Blyth (2012a) USA and UK	To explore the experiences of a group of DCP (Clan X) in tracing their donor and same donor siblings	Semi-Structured Interviews N = 7 (Gender not Specified) Age = 44–65	Not Specified Sperm Donation		DCP and Same-Donor Siblings	DCP in the 'Clan X' project sought information about their genetic heritage after learning of their donor conception. Despite no established protocols, they identified their donor and connected with same-donor siblings. Upon meeting, they noted physical and behavioural similarities, while recognizing these could reflect genetics or shared environments. Forming these relationships brought happiness, described as having 'an extra dimension' beyond friendship, and helped redefine their identities. However, connections also brought emotional pressures. Maintaining contact with a large, geographically distant group could be overwhelming. Some felt regret over siblings who chose not to connect, and sadness over lost time due to late connections. The impact extended beyond the DCP, affecting mothers, raised siblings, partners, spouses, and children, with relationships with living mothers often improving following contact.
	31. Blyth (2012b) USA and UK	To investigate the experiences of adult DCP conceived following anonymous sperm donation and who had discovered the identity of their donor and same donor siblings.	Qualitative - Semi-Structured Interviews N = 8 (M = 3, F = 5) Age = 44–65	Not Specified Sperm Donation	Anonymous	DCP and Same-Donor Siblings	When meeting donor half-siblings for the first time, DCP often looked for similarities in appearance, behaviour, and traits, with experiences varying—some felt connected, others saw little resemblance. Relationships were generally positive, with some developing close, ongoing connections, including frequent visits and gatherings. Logistical challenges like distance and the emotional complexity of connecting with previously unknown siblings were noted. These relationships often extended beyond genetics, providing support and belonging, described as a 'protective band of brothers and sisters' or a 'vast, extended family'. Participants expressed mixed feelings about the growing number of potential siblings, experiencing both excitement and unease. Emotional challenges included forming bonds with genetic strangers, missed earlier connections, and feelings of responsibility toward unengaged siblings. New sibling relationships also reshaped participants' understanding of family dynamics. Donors expressed curiosity about the outcomes of their donations, a sense of responsibility to provide personal and medical history to their donor-
	32. Blyth et al. (2017) UK	To examine donors' reasons for searching for, or making information about themselves available	Mixed Methods - Online Survey N = 26 (M = 21/Sperm Donors Age = 42–78); (F = 5)	Not Specified Sperm and Egg Donation	Anonymous	Donors and DCP	Donors expressed curiosity about the outcomes of their donations, a sense of responsibility to provide personal and medical history to their donor-

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Table 2. Continued.

Wider Study	Author (Date) Location	Research Aim	Research Design and Methods-Participants (size; gender; age)	Family Form and Type of Donation	Donation Provision	Study Group of focus and Contact Group	Contact Findings
		through UK Donor Link to DCP and their experiences of contact	Egg Donors Age= 51–61				conceived children, and a desire to share information with their own families. For those with contact with DCP (n = 3) experiences influenced their sense of family and self-identity. However, the search process also posed challenges, including navigating new relationships with offspring and defining their roles. Some donors raised concerns about the accuracy of DNA results from UKDL, noting the potential for false positives.
33. Bolt et al. (2024) The Netherlands		To understand the experiences of DCP, parents, sperm donors and counsellors related to legal age limits on accessing donor information in the Netherlands	Qualitative - Interviews and Focus Group N = 46 (DCP n = 20 M = 2, F = 18; Parents n = 15 [n = 1, F = 14]; Sperm Donors n = 6; Counsellors n = 5 [M = 2, F = 3]) Age = 12–64	Heterosexual, SMC and Lesbian Parent Families Sperm Donation	Anonymous and Identity Release Donation	DCP, Donors, Parents, Same-Donor Siblings	This article focused on how age limits for information access influence experiences, including contact. Contact experiences were shaped by complex family dynamics and personal needs. Some DCP struggled to engage with donors due to dominant siblings, feeling overshadowed and withdrawing, while others felt pushed into contact by eager half-siblings, showing sibling relationships can affect timing and nature of donor contact. Meeting donors in early childhood was often positive, boosting self-confidence and identity affirmation. Donors found contact enriching, though experiences varied depending on DCP needs, with some donors wanting more contact than DCP or parents desired.
34. Davis et al. (2020) USA		To understand the experiences of embryo adoption couples in considering what kind of connection they wished to have with the donor.	Qualitative - Semi-Structured Interviews N = 36 couples (W = Age 30–47, M = Age 30–54)	Not Specified Egg Donation	Open Identity and Anonymous	Parents and Donors	Half of the parents chose 'open' donation arrangements to allow relationships with the donors and DCP. A few selected semi-open arrangements, where contact was mediated by the agency to allow gradual acquaintance. Slightly fewer than half opted for closed arrangements. Overall, nearly a quarter of parents had contact with donors, reporting that interactions often deepened over time into mutually caring relationships, resembling extended family bonds rather than threatening the parent-child relationship.
35. Duff and Goedeke (2025) New Zealand		To explore heterosexual parents' experiences of their donor-conceived children's (DCC) search for and/or contact with donors in New Zealand, focusing on families who largely conceived before identity-release provisions.	Qualitative, Semi Structured interviews N = 9 Parents (seven individuals and one couple i.e. eight families with 15 DCP)	Heterosexual Parents, Sperm and Egg Donation	Anonymous and Identity-Release	Parents and Donors	All DCP in these families had made contact with their donors (5 with egg donors, 10 with sperm donors), most commonly face-to-face or via written/social-media channels. Eleven DCP (73.3%) had ongoing relationships with the donor. Three of nine parents (33%) described parent-initiated contact before the child was 1 year old, while the remainder reported DCP-led searches supported by parents. Parents considered their children's access to their genetic background as important

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Table 2. Continued.

Wider Study	Author (Date) Location	Research Aim	Research Design and Methods-Participants (size; gender; age)	Family Form and Type of Donation	Donation Provision	Study Group of focus and Contact Group	Contact Findings
				NA	Anonymous and Identity Release	DCP and Donors/ Same-Donor Siblings	and viewed donor linking as a natural and inevitable outcome of disclosure. They saw themselves as facilitators or supporters of their DCP having contact with donors, while most believed that the contact should be led by the DCP. Parents consistently noted that donor willingness and donor family responses strongly shaped contact trajectories. Relationships with donors ranged from distant acquaintance level to friend or extended family, with parents noting the DCP valued connections with siblings. Early disclosure and parental support for contact were held to lead to stronger parent-child relationships, while late disclosure and difficulties accessing donor information were linked to tension or relationship rupture.
36. Frith et al. (2018) UK	To explore the impact that being DC had on adult DCP conceived via sperm donation and their experience of searching for their donor and same donor siblings	Mixed Methods - Online Survey	N = 65 (M = 14, F = 40) Age = 21-65	Sperm and Egg Donation	Anonymous and Identity Release	DCP and Donors/ Same-Donor Siblings	Of 65 participants, 23 (35%) had a connection: six (9%) with their donor, 18 (28%) with DC siblings, and one with both, totalling 24 connections. Most viewed these links positively, describing them as enriching and significant for their identity and sense of belonging. Participants expressed gratitude for these 'new' family members and noted physical and personality similarities. Challenges included difficulties forming relationships due to large sibling numbers or interpersonal conflicts. Despite such challenges, most remained appreciative of the opportunity to connect with genetic relatives.
37. Gilman et al. (2024) UK	To understand information finding and sharing in donor conception when using direct-to-consumer genetic testing (DTCGT)	Qualitative - Semi-Structured Interviews	Donors N = 19 (M = 13, F = 6) Age = 18-60+ [DCP N = 25 (M = 7, F = 18, NS = 1)] (Parents N = 20 (M = 2, F = 18))	Herosexual SMC and Lesbian Parent Families Sperm, Egg and Embryo (Double Donation)	Anonymous/ Identity Release and Open Identity	Parents, Donors, DCP	Some participants using direct-to-consumer genetic testing unexpectedly became gatekeepers, holding knowledge of another's DC, creating emotional and moral complexities. Both donors and DCP faced challenges managing sensitive information, sometimes feeling guilt or anxiety over sharing or withholding details. DCP formed meaningful relationships not only with donors or siblings but also with extended donor relatives via DTC DNA platforms. While some donor families welcomed these connections, reactions varied. In two cases, donors had died before contact, yet DCP were welcomed by the extended family. Some DCP built relationships simultaneously with donors and relatives, occasionally feeling closer to

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Table 2. Continued.

Wider Study	Author (Date) Location	Research Aim	Research Design and Methods: Participants (size; gender; age)	Family Form and Type of Donation	Donation Provision	Study Group of focus and Contact Group	Contact Findings
	38. Gilman and Davis (2026) UK	To explore how digital technologies shape what it means for donors, recipients and DCP to be known/unknown in informal donor conception (IDC) arranged outside clinics	Qualitative – Semi-Structured Interviews N = 49 (n = 19 Donors; n = 30 Parents)	Heterosexual SMC, Lesbian Parent Families and other non-traditional arrangements Sperm Donation	Informal, non-clinic donation; donors were non-anonymous, with degrees of identifiability and contact negotiated directly via digital platforms.	Parents/ Donors	a donor relative than the donor themselves. Participants were informal donors (n = 19) and intended parents (n = 30) who connected via digital platforms supporting informal donor conception. Contact varied in form and intensity, from minimal information exchange to ongoing relationships before and after conception. Digital technologies (e.g. donor profiles, messaging, spreadsheets, video calls) enabled participants to establish, manage, and adjust contact over time, including staged identity disclosure. Contact most often took the form of low-intrusion 'staying in touch', with recipients providing updates while donors remained peripheral, although video calls and in-person meetings also occurred. Connections were typically initiated through online communities (e.g. Facebook groups), sometimes using pseudonyms, contributing to variability and fragility of contact, including abrupt loss of contact. Some donors used spreadsheets or groups to organize or signal donor-sibling connections. The study did not report contact rates.
	39. Goedeke et al. (2023b) New Zealand	To explore donors' ideas around their role in relation to DCP and their expectations and experiences of information-exchange and contact.	Qualitative – Semi-Structured Interviews N = 21 (F = 21, Egg Donors)	Not Specified Egg Donation	Identity Release	Donors and Parents/DCP	Donors did not see themselves as parents but felt connected to DCP, viewing themselves as extended family due to shared genetics. They expected updates on the DCP's wellbeing, framing this as typical extended-family contact, and were open to contact, prioritizing the DCP's needs. Some donors maintained distance, communicating mainly via social media with parents, while others developed closer, more familial relationships, including face-to-face visits and participation in family events, fostering a sense of being part of the recipient's extended family. However, donors also noted challenges in managing appropriate levels of contact and were cautious about overstepping boundaries.
	40. Goldberg and Scheib (2015) USA	To explore the motivations and experiences of lesbian and single mothers with respect to contacting other families who share the same sperm donor.	Qualitative – Semi-Structured Interviews N = 50 (F = 50)	Lesbian and SMC Parent Families Sperm Donation	Anonymous and Identity Release	Mothers and Same-Donor Families	Mothers sought contact with same-donor families to support their children, build support networks for themselves, and gather information on shared physical or psychological traits. Some aimed to expand their children's family network, often in the form of extended family connections. Eleven women (22%), mostly in female-partnered families,

(continued)

Table 2. Continued.

Wider Study	Author (Date) Location	Research Aim	Research Design and Methods-Participants (size; gender; age)	Family Form and Type of Donation	Donation Provision	Study Group of focus and Contact Group	Contact Findings
							reported positive interactions, feeling a special bond through shared donor-conception experiences. However, seven women described awkward interactions when they did not 'click' with other families. Discomfort often arose from pressure to connect quickly or mismatched expectations about contact intensity, requiring clearer boundaries. Seventeen women reported disappointment due to lack of reciprocal interest, and four noted other families wanted closer contact than they desired. Differences in contact preferences among partners in same-sex couples occasionally caused conflict, usually resolved after establishing a positive relationship with at least one family.
	41. Goldberg and Scheib (2016) USA	To explore how lesbian couples explained their own, and their children's, relationships with families who share their unknown sperm donor	Qualitative -Semi-Structured Interviews N = 36 (F = 36)	Lesbian Parented Families Sperm Donation	Anonymous and Identity Release	Mothers and Same-Donor Families	Mothers described connections with same-donor 'linked' families as meaningful but not fitting traditional family roles. Relationships were labelled as family (n = 2), extended family (n = 9), friends (n = 5), acquaintances (n = 7), or unique relationships (n = 13) that defied typical labels. Extended family ties carried significance without necessarily involving frequent or close contact. Friendships involved more regular, supportive interaction, while acquaintances had minimal contact, though some could evolve into friendships with shared interests and geographic proximity. Mothers also reported their children sometimes viewed donor-linked peers as siblings or cousins, depending on parental narratives. Some mothers preferred the term 'donor siblings' to highlight genetic connections without implying traditional sibling roles.
	42. Hertz et al. (2015) USA	To explore the attitudes and experiences of sperm donors that had had contact with DCP or the parents of DCP.	Mixed Methods - Online Survey Open and Closed Qs N= 57 (M = 57)	Not Specified Sperm Donation	Anonymous (n = 35), known (n = 5) and Identity Release (n = 17)	Donors and DCP/Parents	Most sperm donors (84%) were curious about their offspring, and 86% had located them via sperm banks or registries like the DSR, while 12% were contacted directly by DCP. Half (52%) had connected with only one or two offspring, with a maximum of 25 and an average of 4.3. Communication often included photo exchanges; two-thirds had met in person at least once, two-thirds also communicated via email or text. Sixteen percent did not maintain contact, while 62% of those staying in touch maintained relationships with all known offspring. DCP-initiated contact (n = 6) tended to be less intense. Most donors reported

(continued)

Table 2. Continued.

Wider Study	Author (Date) Location	Research Aim	Research Design and Methods-Participants (size; gender; age)	Family Form and Type of Donation	Donation Provision	Study Group of focus and Contact Group	Contact Findings
	43. Hertz (2022) USA	To explore how DCP teens and young adults navigate relationships with their same donor siblings	Qualitative- Secondary Analysis and Interviews N= 62 (M = 26, F = 36), Age= 14–28	Heterosexual, SMC and Lesbian Parent Families Sperm Donation	Identity Release	DCP and Same-Donor Siblings DCP	a stronger sense of responsibility after contact. Relationship depth varied: about 20% felt a parental bond. Identity-release donors most often likened DCP to sons or daughters, while others described them as close relatives (16%), friends (11%), acquaintances (9%), distant relatives (7%), or strangers (4%). Nearly half thus viewed DCP as family, although donors were mindful of the recipient family's integrity; two-thirds also considered DCP as extended family. Donors were generally comfortable with their partners and children interacting with DCP. Contact was typically positive, though establishing boundaries could be challenging, and closer bonds were sometimes formed with younger children. No significant difference was found between identity-release and anonymous donors.
	44. Kirkman et al. (2014) Australia	To explore the expectations and experiences of anonymous gamete donors about contact with their DCP	Qualitative - Semi-Structured Interviews N = 42 (M = 36, F = 6) Age = 40–73	Not Specified Sperm and Egg Donation	Anonymous	Donors and DCP	DCP had varied expectations of meeting same-donor siblings, from forming brother/sister-type bonds to new friendships. Physical and personality similarities often fostered kinship, and gatherings sometimes created a makeshift family, with older siblings feeling protective of younger ones. After positive first meetings, DCP made intentional efforts to maintain relationships, often via social media when distance hindered in-person contact. Disappointing first meetings reduced follow-up, though simply knowing siblings existed provided a sense of belonging. Some young DCP proactively cultivated closer relationships independently of their parents. Relationships varied, but 70.6% found at least one sibling connection meaningful. Only children were more likely to regard same-donor siblings as 'immediate' family. Contact between previously anonymous donors and DCP ranged from minimal, one-time interactions (often for medical updates via clinics) to developing ongoing relationships. Positive relationships emerged when contact was gradual and sensitive to DCP vulnerabilities. Donors noted that these relationships could extend to include both families and be influenced by each family's attitudes toward contact.
			Quantitative- Online Survey		Identity Release	DCP and Donors	

(continued)

Table 2. Continued.

Wider Study	Author (Date) Location	Research Aim	Research Design and Methods	Participants (size; gender; age)	Family Form and Type of Donation	Donation Provision	Study Group of focus and Contact Group	Contact Findings
	45. Lampic et al. (2022) Sweden	To understand the experiences of disclosure, information and donor contact for DCP born under identity-release provisions		N = 40 (M = 12, W = 27, NS = 1) Mean age = 21.5	Heterosexual parents Sperm Donation			Of 35 DCP with donor identity access, 4 discovered their donor had died and 2 could not access contact information. Of those with contact details, 12 (41%); 9 women, 3 men) had made contact via letters, emails, texts, or phone calls. Seven had met the donor in person, and two had meetings planned. Five reported regular contact with the donor and his family. Those told of their donor after age 12 were more likely to make contact (62%) than those informed earlier (25%). A third shared contact only with their mother, often due to concern it would upset the father.
	46. Martin et al. (2023) USA, Australia and Canada	To analyze how past sperm and egg donors' retrospective perceptions develop over time in response to changing anonymity regimes, life-course dynamics, and direct contact from donor-conceived people.	Qualitative- Semi Structured Interviews	N = 27 [Donors: n = 15 sperm donors and n = 12 egg donors] Ages 38–80 years (mean 58)	Not Specified, Sperm and Egg donation	Anonymous, Identity Release and Open Identity	Donors and DCP	All donors had been contacted by DCP, with first contact occurring on average 6 years prior either as a result of direct-to-consumer DNA testing (56%), recipient parents/agency-mediated contact (15%), independent/official registers (15%), and other routes (15%). Donors had donated an average of 31 years earlier. Contact with DCP often prompted donors to re-evaluate their donations as long-term commitments rather than time-limited acts, recognizing that they had helped create individuals with ongoing needs and rights. Donors experienced a sense of responsibility regarding what they may have passed on to DCP, the DCP's family circumstances, and the longer-term impact of donations on their own families. Most donors reported positive experiences of contact with DCP, including ongoing relationships with DCP and their families, though two sperm donors declined ongoing contact, highlighting variation in post-contact outcomes. Several donors reported that they felt a connection and affinity with the parents of the DCP, sometimes more so than with the child itself. While supporting DCP rights to initiate contact, some donors expressed discomfort about their own children's lack of outreach rights. Donor family members also reported unease about limited rights to contact with donor relatives. Relationships varied between donors and recipients, resulting in different levels of contact with DCP. The complexity was compounded by differing disclosure practices: some families openly integrate the donor into their narrative, while others
	47. Nordqvist and Gilman (2024) UK	To explore egg and sperm donors' experiences of connectedness and how this is framed by current law and policy.	Mixed Methods - Online Survey	N = 75 (Egg Donors n = 25; Embryo Donors n = 1; Sperm Donors n = 26; Relatives of Donors n = 23)	Not Specified Sperm and Egg Donation	Identity Release and Known Donation (a small number of anonymous donors)	Donors and DCP/Parents	

(continued)

Table 2. Continued.

Wider Study	Author (Date) Location	Research Aim	Research Design and Methods	Participants (size; gender; age)	Family Form and Type of Donation	Donation Provision	Study Group of focus and Contact Group	Contact Findings
	48. Nordqvist et al. (2025) UK	This study aims to understand how DCP using Direct-to-Consumer Genetic Testing (DTCGT) react when they discover a new genetic connection.	Qualitative, Semi-Structured interviews	N = 60: (Donors: n = 19, DCP n = 25, Parents n = 20) Relatives n = 2 (some participants occupied more than one role). Note that the current manuscript draws on 5 illustrative cases from the wider sample.	SMC, Lesbian and Heterosexual Families; Sperm, Egg and Embryo Donation	Anonymous and Identity-release	DCP and Donors/Same-Donor Siblings	maintain privacy, creating ethical tensions and potential conflicts over contact. Across the wider sample, 31/60 participants had experienced a DNA match, with reactions spreading across a continuum from enthusiastic 'embrace' to defensive 'rejection'. The case studies reviewed suggest that some adult DCP form rapid, emotionally intense bonds, or 'accelerated kinship' with same-donor siblings or donors, meeting soon after discovery of their match, exchanging family stories, sharing photos, and attempting to 'catch up' on decades of missed relational time. Others respond with fear, discomfort, or avoidance, rejecting contact due to concerns about destabilizing existing family relationships, secrecy, parental sensitivities, or threats to belonging within their born-and-bred family. Donors, too, were reported by DCP to vary in reactions: some welcome donor-conceived offspring, while others refuse contact entirely, citing marital or familial implications. Negative or ambivalent reactions within a family can be destabilizing or produce 'relational dynamite', demonstrating that contact, or adding 'new kin' impacts not only individuals but entire family networks, with outcomes contingent on secrecy, power, belonging, and ontological beliefs about genetics and kinship.
	49. Persaud et al. (2017) USA	To explore the experiences of DCP adolescents conceived using sperm donation in contacting and meeting 'same-donor siblings'.	Qualitative - Semi-Structured interviews	N = 23 (Gender not Specified) Age = 12–19	SMC and Lesbian Parent Families Sperm Donation	Anonymous	DCP and Same-Donor Siblings	Most DCP (83%) were curious about their genetic origins, and just over half (65%) wanted to extend their family. Contact with same-donor siblings was described as normal/neutral (70%) or unique (39%), contributing to their sense of identity. Many (56%) felt meeting donor siblings helped them understand themselves and their donor, while for some (17%), these relationships provided a sense of family. Relationship types varied from close sibling-like bonds (22%) to distant or neutral ties.
	50. Scheib et al. (2020) USA	To understand the interests and experiences that DCP adults have regarding same-donor siblings.	Qualitative - Semi-Structured interviews	N = 47 (M = 31.9%, F = 68.1%) Age = 19–29	Heterosexual, SMC and Lesbian Parent Families Sperm Donation	Identity-Release	DCP and Same-Donor Siblings	Approximately half of DCP (52.4%) were in active contact with same-donor siblings. Initial contact was often facilitated by parents during childhood or adolescence, sometimes before any request for donor identity, showing a proactive parental role. Connections were made via platforms like the

(continued)

Table 2. Continued.

Wider Study	Author (Date) Location	Research Aim	Research Design and Methods	Participants (size; gender; age)	Family Form and Type of Donation	Donation Provision	Study Group of focus and Contact Group	Contact Findings
					Heterosexual, SMC and Lesbian Parent Families Sperm Donation	Identity-Release	Parents/ DCP and Same-Donor Most Families	Family Contact registry and Donor Sibling Registry, occasionally resulting in unexpected reunions, such as discovering a donor sibling among existing friends. Of the 22 DCP in contact, 17 (77.3%) had met siblings in person, sometimes including family members, donors' children, or parents of same-donor siblings. Regular contact via text, phone, social media, or in-person meetings continued for 13 participants (59.1%). Experiences were generally positive, with participants valuing shared traits, personalities, and interests, which helped them understand their origins. Contact also allowed DCP to learn about the donor without direct contact, and 36.4% found sibling contact easier and less intimidating than donor contact. Some negative aspects were reported, including difficulty maintaining contact with larger sibling groups, disappointment when relationships did not develop as hoped, and polarization when differences in interest regarding the donor emerged. Most families (78.6%) initiated contact by phone, rating their first interaction highly (4.7/5). About 41.7% 'clicked' with their matched family, while 25% did not connect due to differing openness about the child's origins. Conversations often included comparing children's physical features (58.3%) and discussing donor disclosure (66.7%), sometimes prompting children to learn about their donor. Among children aware of the match, all were curious and positive, with 66.7% excited. In-person meetings occurred in 14.3% of cases, and 71.4% maintained contact a year later. The main motivation for contact (85.7%) was to create a sense of extended family, fostering 'cousin-like' relationships with half-siblings; 42.9% also aimed to explore curiosity about the donor and shared genetics. Single mothers (50%) and lesbian couples (42.9%) were overrepresented, highlighting the role of contact in building extended family networks. Recipients of donor embryos reported that contact with their child's biological family was key to supporting the child's sense of identity, history, and shared traits. Building relationships
	51. Scheib and Ruby (2008) USA	To explore experiences of DI parents who participated in a same-donor family-matching service.	Mixed Methods - Mail Back Survey	N = 14 (F = 13, M = 1)				
	52. Tasker et al. (2018) USA	To explore the experiences of embryo donation recipients	Qualitative- Semi-Structured Interviews	N = 5 parents (4 families)	Heterosexual Parents Embryo Donation	Open-identity	Parents and Donors	

(continued)

Table 2. Continued.

Wider Study	Author (Date) Location	Research Aim	Research Design and Methods: Participants (size; gender; age)	Family Form and Type of Donation	Donation Provision	Study Group of focus and Contact Group	Contact Findings
	53. van den Akker et al. (2015) UK	To understand experiences of DCP and donors who are searching for a genetic link using a DNA-based voluntary register service.	N = 91 [DCP n = 65; M = 14, F = 51] [Sperm donors n = 21, Egg donors n = 5]	Not Specified Sperm and Egg Donation	Anonymous	DCP and Donors/Same-Donor Siblings	with donor families allowed parents and children to discover common interests and form familial bonds, often leading to the inclusion of donors in the family narrative. Even when direct contact was limited or absent, due to agency policies or donors choosing to withdraw, recipients still recognized the donors' presence, showing that the connection remained meaningful regardless of the level of interaction. Among the participants, six connected with their donor and 18 with siblings, ranging from one to fourteen links. Most reported regular ongoing contact with donor siblings, generally perceived as positive. However, 22% (five individuals) did not maintain regular contact, and 26% (six individuals) reported some negative consequences, though these were not further explored. Of those in contact, 65% (fifteen individuals) reported changes in their sense of family and self-identity, without typically disrupting existing family relationships. Participants' experiences of meeting their sperm donor were generally positive, characterized by feelings such as happiness, relief, and recognition, although some reported awkwardness, insecurity, or disappointment. Emotional responses were shaped by varying strengths of desire to meet the donor, and complex search processes, which were often prolonged for those with anonymous donors. Recognition of shared physical or personality traits was common, with 15 of 17 participants reporting some level of recognition. Experiences were further influenced by donor engagement (e.g. interest shown, conversational ease, disclosure of medical or psychological history) and by the alignment or mismatch between expectations and the encounter. Professional counselling, provided to all included participants, supported expectation management, facilitated communication during meetings, and offered aftercare, with participants reporting that tailored guidance before, during, and after the meeting enhanced overall experience while overly formal support occasionally detracted from it.
	54. van Rooij et al. (2026), The Netherlands	The study aimed to understand how DCP experience being linked with and meeting their sperm donor for the first time, and how these experiences are shaped by individual factors and professional support.	N = 17 (M = 2, F = 15) Age = 17–42	Heterosexual, SMC & Lesbian Parented Families Sperm Donation	Anonymous and Identity Release	DCP and Donor	Participants' experiences of meeting their sperm donor were generally positive, characterized by feelings such as happiness, relief, and recognition, although some reported awkwardness, insecurity, or disappointment. Emotional responses were shaped by varying strengths of desire to meet the donor, and complex search processes, which were often prolonged for those with anonymous donors. Recognition of shared physical or personality traits was common, with 15 of 17 participants reporting some level of recognition. Experiences were further influenced by donor engagement (e.g. interest shown, conversational ease, disclosure of medical or psychological history) and by the alignment or mismatch between expectations and the encounter. Professional counselling, provided to all included participants, supported expectation management, facilitated communication during meetings, and offered aftercare, with participants reporting that tailored guidance before, during, and after the meeting enhanced overall experience while overly formal support occasionally detracted from it.

N = 24 Egg donors (F = 24)

Donors and Parents/DCP

Identity Release

(continued)

Table 2. Continued.

Wider Study	Author (Date) Location	Research Aim	Research Design and Methods: Participants (size; gender; age)	Family Form and Type of Donation	Donation Provision	Study Group of focus and Contact Group	Contact Findings
	55. Volks et al. (2025), Australia	To examine how Australian online egg donors (meeting recipients via social platforms) negotiate early contact and relationships with recipient families and donor-conceived children	Qualitative- Semi-Structured Interviews	Not Specified Egg Donation			All participants were Australian egg donors who engaged in early contact with recipients and donor-conceived children following online-facilitated donation. Donors met recipients primarily via Facebook groups, enabling contact prior to donation and continuing post-birth. Early contact typically involved ongoing communication and relationship development, with donors and recipients intentionally crafting kin-like ties (e.g. donors positioned as 'aunt-like', children as 'nieces/nephews' or 'cousins'). Contact often included family gatherings and regular updates, with donors seeking to be known without assuming parental roles. Donors reported selecting recipients based on shared expectations regarding openness and contact. While many relationships were sustained and described as meaningful, a minority experienced relationship breakdowns when recipients ceased contact despite pre-donation agreements, indicating variability in post-birth contact outcomes.
	56. Wiblom et al. (2021) Sweden	To explore the experiences of parents of adult DCP who received information about their sperm donor.	Qualitative - Semi-Structured Interviews	Heterosexual Parented Families Sperm Donation	Identity Release	Parents and Donors	Some fathers saw the donor as a potential threat to their parental role and tended to distance themselves when the DCP received information about or made contact with the donor. In contrast, mothers generally viewed the donor and such meetings more positively and did not feel their parental role was threatened.
	57. Zadeh et al. (2024) UK	To explore experiences and outcomes of DCP adults searching/ not searching for their donor connections.	Mixed Methods - Online Survey	Heterosexual, SMC and Lesbian Parented Families Sperm, Egg and Embryo Donation	Anonymous and Identity Release	DCP and Donors/ Same-Donor Siblings	Across all participant groups (whether actively searching, open to contact, or not) just over half (67%) had found or been found by a donor connection, mostly via genetic testing. All but five of these participants made contact once a connection was established. Establishing contact was often awkward and uncertain, due to factors such as the number of siblings discovered and the timing of these connections. Participants reported a range of experiences with donors and same-donor siblings, including varying interest in contact and both positive and negative outcomes, such as disappointment in the donor or in meeting siblings.

ChatGPT-5 was used to edit the table for clarity and conciseness.

Participants

Of the 57 included articles, 49 were from a single stakeholder perspective with 19 (33.3%) focusing on DCPs' contact experience with either their donor and/or same donor-siblings. Only 13 articles focused on DCPs' contact with donors. Thirteen studies explored donors' experiences of contact with parents and/or DCPs, and 18 studies explored parents' contact with donors and/or same donor siblings and families. Sample sizes ranged from 5 to 2636 participants, with a median of 42, and with 24 studies having fewer than 40 participants. Participants' age in DCP-focused publications ranged from 9 to 70 years and in donor-focused studies from 18 to 73 years. In terms of family type, 22.8% ($n = 13$) of articles reported on participants being from one specific type of family ($n = 1$ same-sex father couple, $n = 5$ lesbian couple, $n = 4$ heterosexual couple, $n = 3$ Single Mothers by Choice – SMC), 40.4% ($n = 23$) articles reported multiple family forms and 36.8% ($n = 21$) articles did not report the family form of participants. In sum, 29 articles included data on lesbian couples, 13 on SMC and 21 on heterosexual parents. All articles except one that reported on same-sex families were comprised of lesbian parent families. Blake et al. (2016) is the only article that focuses on gay father families. Parent-focused articles explored the experiences of parents of DCPs. Two studies focused on the experiences of extended families: Beeson et al. (2013), who focused on the parents of former donors reaching out to their DC 'grandchildren', and Jadva et al. (2011), who also referenced experiences of the donors' families.

Donation type/s

This refers to whether donation occurred *via* sperm, egg or embryo donation. The majority, 86% ($n = 49$) of the included articles, involved sperm donation, with 59.6% ($n = 34$) solely focused on sperm donation. 33.3% ($n = 19$) of the included articles involved egg donation, but only 7% ($n = 4$) focused exclusively on egg donation. Only 14% ($n = 8$) of the included articles involved embryo donation, with 7% ($n = 4$) solely focused on DCPs born from embryo donation. The rest of the articles included a variation of multiple donation types (i.e. sperm and egg donation or egg and embryo donation).

Donation context

Of 56, 22 studies included participants in anonymous and identity-release contexts, with 11 focused on anonymous contexts only, 10 on identity release contexts only, 5 on open-identity contexts and the remainder a mix of these contexts. One included study (Gilman & Davis, 2026) did not specify a donation context, as the donations occurred in an informal, non-clinical setting where donors were non-anonymous and negotiated identifiability and contact *via* digital platforms.

Synthesis of findings

This MMSR follows other reviews within DC research in presenting and synthesising findings with respect to each of the key stakeholder groups involved in DC, i.e. DCPs, donors, parents, same-donor siblings and which are the focus of research (e.g. Indekeu et al., 2013). While contact experiences and factors affecting these experiences are discussed for each group, we recognise that there may be overlap across the different groups.

Experiences of contact

Donor conceived persons (DCPs) – contact with donors

DCPs' contact with the donor was initiated either by DCPs themselves (Gilman et al., 2024; Jadva et al., 2010; Lampic et al., 2022; van den Akker et al., 2015; Zadeh et al., 2024) and/or by their parents (Beeson et al., 2011; Best et al., 2023; Duff & Goedeke, 2025). Factors such as the DCPs' age, perceived maturity and legal constraints on access to identifying donor information influenced the degree of parental involvement in initiating contact as well as their attitude towards contact (Beeson et al., 2011; Best et al., 2023). In some cases, DCPs deliberately limited parental involvement after learning of their conception status through DTC genetic testing (Gilman et al., 2024). DCPs initiated contact during adolescence or adulthood, primarily motivated by curiosity about their donor and seeking information relevant to their identity development (Bolt et al., 2024; Jadva et al., 2010; Koh, Rothblum, et al., 2023). In the

study by Lampic et al. (2022), DCPs who learned of their conception after age 12 were more likely to contact the donor than those who were informed earlier.

In studies examining DCP to donor contact, most DCPs reported their experiences as positive or neutral/indifferent (Jadva et al., 2010; Koh et al., 2020; Koh, Rothblum, et al., 2023; van den Akker et al., 2015; van Rooij et al., 2026) although positive and negative feelings related to contact could also co-exist (van Rooij et al., 2026). Positive experiences were often associated with feelings of happiness, validation and recognition and described as highly significant (Frith et al., 2017; Rothblum et al., 2025), even where initial feelings of awkwardness, ambivalence or uncertainty in what was labelled as ‘a strange situation’ were reported (van Rooij et al., 2026; Zadeh et al., 2024). In some cases, relationships expanded to include the donor’s family or DCP’s relatives (Gilman et al., 2024; Jadva et al., 2010; Koh, Rothblum, et al., 2023; Rothblum et al., 2025). Donor contact could lead to meaningful shifts in DCPs’ sense of self and family (Bolt et al., 2024; Frith et al., 2017) with DCPs assimilating the donor and donor family into their family constructs (Frith et al., 2017; van den Akker et al., 2015). For some DCPs, contact with their donor was meaningful in terms of making sense of relationships with their immediate family, with some ascribing any relationship difficulties or tensions to their lack of biological ties (Bolt et al., 2024; Frith et al., 2017). Positive contact experiences were sometimes attributed to being raised in LGBTQ+ communities or in environments of openness and transparency, which DCPs felt fostered a more flexible worldview (Rothblum et al., 2025). Establishing contact following a DNA match sometimes led to the development of ‘accelerated kinship’, with DCPs meeting with donors and/or same-donor siblings soon after the discovery of their match, exchanging family stories, sharing photos and attempting to ‘catch up’ on decades of missed relational time (Nordqvist et al., 2025).

The varying nature of relationships, however, was reflected in the terms DCPs used for their donors, ranging from ‘donor’, ‘stranger’ or ‘acquaintance’ to ‘extended family member’, ‘relative’, or ‘parent’ (Beeson et al., 2011; Koh et al., 2020; Koh, Rothblum, et al., 2023). Koh and colleagues found that the small number of DCPs who used intimate terms such as ‘father’ to describe their donor had typically known their donor since childhood (Koh et al., 2020) or had met them at an early age (Bolt et al., 2024; Jadva et al., 2018). In contrast, those who initiated contact at age 18 or later were less likely to use terms such as ‘father’ or ‘parent’ when referring to their donor (Beeson et al., 2011; Koh, Rothblum, et al., 2023). Some DCPs described largely positive relationships with donors even when contact was minimal, online-only or marked by relational challenges (Koh et al., 2020; Koh, Rothblum, et al., 2023). However, a small number reported negative or challenging experiences. These were often attributed to lifestyle disagreements, e.g. career choice, a reported lack of personal connection or common ground, unmet or conflicting expectations, negative donor reactions, low levels of donor interest or donor non-response, or negative reactions from donors’ families (Jadva et al., 2010; Koh et al., 2020; Nordqvist et al., 2025; van Rooij et al., 2026; Zadeh et al., 2024). Some DCPs expressed concern around destabilising existing family relationships, parental sensitivity or threats to belonging within their ‘born-and-bred’ families (Nordqvist et al., 2025). Donor non-response, especially when due to the donor’s death, could elicit strong feelings of disappointment and injustice in DCPs (Bolt et al., 2024). Even when donors were perceived as disinterested, some DCPs continued to hope for future contact (Zadeh et al., 2024).

While parental attitudes could play a key role in shaping how DCPs approached donor contact, and in some cases, DCPs were reluctant to inform their parents of their search or contact (Bolt et al., 2024; Jadva et al., 2010; Nordqvist et al., 2025), parent-child relationships did not appear to be negatively affected by contact between DCPs and donors (e.g. Jadva et al., 2010). In Duff and Goedeke’s (2025) study, early disclosure and parental support for linking were held to lead to stronger parent-child relationships, while late disclosure and difficulties accessing donor information were linked to tension or relationship rupture.

Donor conceived persons (DCPs) – contact with same-donor siblings

Across studies, most DCPs reported positive or neutral experiences when connecting with same-donor siblings, whether one-on-one or in group settings (Blyth, 2012a, 2012b; Bolt et al., 2024; Hertz, 2022; Indekeu et al., 2022; Jadva et al., 2010; Koh, Bos, et al., 2023; Persaud et al., 2017; Scheib et al., 2020). While experiences overall were often positive, establishing new kinship connections could require

considerable effort and be challenging due to group dynamics, the complexity of interactions and difficulties in staying in contact (Blyth, 2012b; Bolt et al., 2024; Hertz, 2022; Scheib et al., 2020).

For those who made contact in childhood, frequently initiated by parents, experiences were generally positive and contributed to a smoother integration of DC into their identity (Blyth et al., 2013; Bolt et al., 2024; Persaud et al., 2017; Scheib et al., 2020). Those meeting same-donor siblings later in life often described mixed emotions beforehand, typically a blend of nervousness and excitement, sometimes likened to a job interview (Bolt et al., 2024; Indekeu et al., 2022). Many later expressed a wish to have known their same-donor siblings earlier and regret at missed opportunities (Blyth, 2012a; Bolt et al., 2024; Indekeu et al., 2022). Initial meetings with same-donor siblings regularly began with comparing physical features, shared traits and experiences, which could be reassuring, foster a sense of connection (Blyth, 2012a; Bolt et al., 2024; Hertz, 2022) and sometimes lead to a redefining of identity (Blyth, 2012a; Scheib et al., 2020). For some DCPs, focus on resemblance or other similarities reflected prior feelings of disconnection from their family due to perceived differences in appearance or personality (Blyth, 2012b; Hertz, 2022; Persaud et al., 2017). Positive first encounters frequently evolved into closer relationships, with DCPs drawing support from people who could understand the experience of being DC (Bolt et al., 2024; Hertz, 2022; Scheib et al., 2020). As with DCP: donor contact, contact following a DNA match sometimes led to the rapid development of 'accelerated kinship' (Nordqvist et al., 2025).

Many DCPs referred to one another using nuclear familial terms like 'brother' or 'sister' (Frith et al., 2018; Hertz et al., 2017; Hertz, 2022; Persaud et al., 2017; Scheib et al., 2020). However, DCPs also used multiple terms, such as acquaintances, siblings, friends and relatives, and often simultaneously, to describe the nature of their relationships (Blyth, 2012a; Koh, Bos, et al., 2023; Rothblum et al., 2025) reflecting the range of relationship experiences that may develop. Interestingly, one study suggests that DCPs do not tend to invoke the concept of 'extended family' to the parents of their same-donor siblings where this is used in reference to same-donor siblings (Hertz et al., 2017), although same-donor sibling contact could also extend to contact with parents and family of same-donor siblings and children raised by the donor (Scheib et al., 2020).

Even limited or non-face-to-face contact with same-donor siblings was valued, with some DCPs citing benefits to identity development simply from knowing of their siblings' existence (Hertz, 2022; Persaud et al., 2017). Some DCPs reported feeling burdened by learning of same-donor siblings who were unaware of their existence (Rothblum et al., 2025). Others described feeling conflicted by having inconsistent or unexpected information about the donor or same-donor siblings, with some learning details about the donor through their same-donor siblings (Scheib et al., 2020) and earlier than they would have preferred (Indekeu et al., 2022). However, contact with same-donor siblings could also be experienced as leading to easier relationships with their donors (Scheib et al., 2020).

Online platforms were also important in initiating and maintaining sibling contact, especially given geographic distances, familiarity with digital communication, or the size of sibling networks (Blyth, 2012b; Hertz, 2022; Hertz et al., 2017; Hertz & Mattes, 2011; Koh, Bos, et al., 2023; Scheib et al., 2020). Social media were used to facilitate connections following registry disclosures, parent-led contact efforts, or unexpected discoveries through DTC DNA testing (Hertz, 2022; Hertz & Mattes, 2011). These tools also allowed DCPs to maintain boundaries, with some using them to 'keep tabs' on same-donor siblings without direct engagement (Hertz, 2022; Hertz & Mattes, 2011). On the other hand, DCPs were also reported to be more likely than their parents to meet their same-donor siblings in person, and more likely to direct their communication to a particular sibling than to the group (Hertz et al., 2017).

While small sibling networks were typically described positively (Blyth, 2012b), larger groups introduced challenges due to complex group dynamics (Blyth, 2012a; Bolt et al., 2024; Frith et al., 2018). Some DCPs experienced emotional fatigue or waning enthusiasm as donor connection networks (facilitated by DNA linking based websites/databases such as Fiom KID-DNA) expanded, especially when large sibling groups were identified within a short period (Bolt et al., 2024; Indekeu et al., 2022; Rothblum et al., 2025). Nonetheless, many maintained at least occasional contact, often online or through in-person meetings (Blyth, 2012b; Hertz et al., 2017).

Donors – contact with parents and DCPs

Many donors across donation contexts expressed a sense of responsibility to make themselves available to DCPs, particularly to share personal and medical history (Blyth et al., 2017; Goedeke et al., 2023b; Hertz et al., 2015; Jadva et al., 2011; Martin et al., 2025; Nordqvist & Gilman, 2024; Volks et al., 2025). Many were also motivated by curiosity about the offspring resulting from their donations (Daniels et al., 2012; Hertz et al., 2015; Kirkman et al., 2014). However, donors often appeared to remain passive or be ‘waiting on the sideline’ for DCPs to initiate communication (Daniels et al., 2012; Goedeke et al., 2023b; Kirkman et al., 2014) although some donors also made use of sperm banks or donor registries to reach out to their donor offspring (Blyth et al., 2017; Hertz et al., 2015). While many of the donors included in this review – regardless of donation type i.e. sperm, egg or embryo donation – expressed interest in contact, they tended to be cautious to avoid undermining the role of DCPs’ parents and disrupting family dynamics, and stressed the importance of respecting boundaries and prioritising the preferences of DCPs and their parents (Daniels et al., 2012; Frith et al., 2017; Gilman & Davis, 2026; Goedeke et al., 2023b; Hertz et al., 2015; Kirkman et al., 2014). At times, they suppressed their own needs to avoid being perceived as intrusive (Goedeke et al., 2023b; Hertz et al., 2015; Kirkman et al., 2014). Thus, some preferred to first engage with parents before connecting with young DCPs, or to have their contact with DCPs mediated by parents, viewing this as a way to manage expectations, establish boundaries and minimise emotional disruption (Hertz et al., 2015; Jadva et al., 2011). Digital platforms were sometimes used by donors to stay in touch with parents without being intrusive, as these allowed asynchronous, non-intrusive communication (Gilman & Davis, 2026). In identity-release contexts, some donors also reported a significant interest and/or emotional connection with the parents, sometimes more so than with the DCPs (Goedeke et al., 2023a; Nordqvist & Gilman, 2024).

A minority of donors described feeling a parental bond with DCPs (Hertz et al., 2015; Kirkman et al., 2014), with most donors instead perceiving themselves as relatives or as important sources of medical and genealogical information (Daniels et al., 2012; Hertz et al., 2015; Kirkman et al., 2014) and describing DCPs as ‘donor children’ and ‘biological’ children rather than ‘their’ children. (Jadva et al., 2011). Indeed, donors (egg, sperm and embryo) often positioned themselves, and/or were positioned by recipient families, as extended family members – similar to aunts or uncles – providing a framework that allowed for continued interest in the DCPs’ lives without threatening parental roles (Bartholomaeus & Riggs, 2019; Blyth et al., 2019; Davis et al., 2020; Frith et al., 2017; Goedeke et al., 2023b; Kirkman et al., 2014; Nordqvist & Gilman, 2024; Volks et al., 2025).

Donor to DCP contact ranged widely, from brief, one-off exchanges to deeper, ongoing relationships, which generally developed more positively when initiated gradually and with emotional sensitivity (Daniels et al., 2012; Kirkman et al., 2014). For embryo donors in the Snowflakes Embryo Adoption Program, contact – including with the DCPs – provided comfort and reassurance about the DCPs’ well-being (Frith et al., 2017) a finding also reported in relation to sperm donors in Hertz et al.’s (2015) study, and egg donors in Goedeke et al.’s (2023b) study. On the other hand, donors’ sense of responsibility towards their genetic offspring was also reported to increase following contact (e.g. Hertz et al., 2015; Martin et al., 2025). Donors’ relationship with different DCPs or recipient families could also vary, with some recipient families openly acknowledging the donor and others choosing to keep their distance (Nordqvist & Gilman, 2024).

Some relationships expanded to include extended family members on both sides, including siblings, parents and children of donors (Beeson et al., 2013; Frith et al., 2017; Gilman et al., 2024; Hertz et al., 2015; Jadva et al., 2011; Kirkman et al., 2014; Volks et al., 2025), though these could be complicated by prior negative experiences, such as difficult interactions with same-donor siblings (Kirkman et al., 2014). Beeson et al.’s (2013) study of the parents of donors, found that these parents frequently had an interest in meeting DCPs, with many regarding the DCPs as their grandchildren, a finding also mentioned by some embryo donors in Bartholomaeus & Riggs’ (2019) study. Similarly, in Nordqvist and Gilman’s (2024) study, some donor family members were uncomfortable with their lack of rights in relation to donor relatives, as were donors in relation to their raised children’s lack of rights in terms of contact with the DCPs.

Ultimately however, many donors reported that contact experiences reshaped their understandings of family and identity (e.g. Martin et al., 2025), and they often reported positive feelings about their

participation in DC, particularly when contact between donors and DCPs' parents occurred and was positive (Blyth et al., 2019; Frith et al., 2017; Hertz et al., 2015; Jadva et al., 2011). While often rewarding, these relationships could also bring emotional complexity, including at times, tension within or challenges with the donors' own families (Bartholomaeus & Riggs, 2019; Blyth et al., 2017; Daniels et al., 2012; Kirkman et al., 2014; Martin et al., 2025) or with recipient parents (Jadva et al., 2011), and the need for boundaries, expectations and clear communication was emphasised (Blyth et al., 2019; Goedeke et al., 2023b; Hertz et al., 2015).

Parents – contact with donors and same-donor families

Parents established contact with donors and same-donor families for various reasons, including accessing medical information, supporting their children's identity development, and – especially in non-traditional family structures – to foster a sense of extended family and support for their children or themselves (Andreassen, 2017; Davis et al., 2020; Duff & Goedeke, 2025; Goldberg & Scheib, 2015; Kelly et al., 2019; Tasker et al., 2018). Early contact between parents and donors was sometimes aimed at laying the foundation for future connections, anticipating their children's potential interest (Duff & Goedeke, 2025; Gilman & Davis, 2026; Jadva et al., 2018; Kelly & Dempsey, 2016a), with some parents, such as in Jadva et al.'s (2018) study of women's experiences with online-recruited sperm donors, making it clear that the contact between the donor and their child would not occur until the DCP was 18 years old.

When contact between parents and donors was made, however, many parents reported positive outcomes (Blyth et al., 2013; 2019; Davis et al., 2020; Frith et al., 2017), even when initial meetings were marked by anxiety or emotional overwhelm, feelings that tended to ease over time (Frith et al., 2017; Kelly et al., 2019). For example, parents described contact with donors as 'satisfying', 'remarkable' and 'a huge blessing', with relationships forming (Frith et al., 2017). They also described mutually satisfactory boundaries and gratitude within extended donor-linked networks (Blyth et al., 2019). For example, contact with donors in the Snowflakes Embryo Adoption program helped recipients/parents overcome any fears that embryo donors might want to claim the child and built trust between the donors and recipients (Davis et al., 2020; Frith et al., 2017), although continued fears related to embryo donors' involvement in the DCP's life or clarity around family roles were also noted (Blyth et al., 2019).

In some cases, despite such concerns, contact extended to the development of a relationship, with the donor becoming part of an extended family network, enriching family life beyond purely a genetic contribution (Freeman et al., 2009; Frith et al., 2017; Kelly et al., 2019; Tasker et al., 2018), while in other cases, parents intentionally selected geographically distant donors to maintain relational boundaries (Hertz & Mattes, 2011; Jadva et al., 2018).

Single mothers, often motivated by societal expectations and children's inquiries about paternal identity, generally found donor contact helpful in accessing information about and affirming their child's genetic heritage although some reported discomfort, especially when contact occurred before they felt secure in their parental role (Kelly et al., 2019; Kelly & Dempsey, 2016). Similarly, in same-sex lesbian families, some parents felt that the donor's involvement diminished their sense of agency in their child's life and raised concerns about parental autonomy, especially for the non-biological mother (Andreassen, 2016, 2023; Goldberg & Scheib, 2015; 2016). Similarly, fathers in heterosexual relationships perceived sperm donor involvement at times as a challenge to their parental role (Frith et al., 2018; Widbom et al., 2021). These concerns could relate to insecurities related to the lack of a biological connection, creating barriers to contact for the child, and on occasion, generating tension within the couple. Biological mothers in same sex couples frequently described a dual response: empathy for their partner's vulnerable position alongside frustration as they attempted to balance these concerns with the perceived benefits of contact for the child (Goldberg & Scheib, 2015; 2016). Some gay fathers, on the other hand, expressed a desire for more interaction with the egg donor who had helped build their families, and reported more contact with the surrogates who had helped build their families than with the donors (Blake et al., 2016).

Many parents, in particular single-mother and lesbian parent families, contacted, or even preferred to connect with same-donor families over and above contact with the donor, seeking to build kinship networks for their children while still preserving parental autonomy (Freeman et al., 2009; Goldberg &

Scheib, 2015; Kelly et al., 2019; Sawyer et al., 2013). Families who connected with same-donor families used various terms including family, extended family, acquaintances, and 'unique relationships' to describe their relationships, and mentioned a range of contact, from one-off to occasional to ongoing (Goldberg & Scheib, 2015; 2016; Hertz & Mattes, 2011; Scheib & Ruby, 2008). Ongoing contact included sharing health updates and developmental milestones, and in some cases, fostering kin-like bonds despite differences in geography or parenting style, with some parents describing their connections to same-donor families in kin or friendship terms (Goldberg & Scheib, 2015; 2016; Hertz & Mattes, 2011). These networks could be especially meaningful for LGBTQ+ families, who found support and validation in shared experiences (Andreassen, 2016; 2017; 2023; Goldberg & Scheib, 2015).

Where relationships were described in extended family terms, the relationships were able to be given significance but did not necessarily always involve particularly regular or close contact (Goldberg & Scheib, 2016). The online environment could provide parents with a way of keeping in contact and having 'loose connections', but without any obligations to one another (Hertz & Mattes, 2011). Those describing their relationships as acquaintances had more minimal contact without deeper emotional ties, although most also noted that these relationships could evolve into friendship if they shared good connections and geographic proximity (Goldberg & Scheib, 2016). Indeed, although early meetings were sometimes awkward, many of these relationships proved enriching and became closer over time for both children and parents (Freeman et al., 2009; Goldberg & Scheib, 2015; Hertz & Mattes, 2011). Parents frequently described these connections as important for their children's sense of identity and belonging (Freeman et al., 2009; Hertz et al., 2017). On the other hand, mismatched expectations of contact (e.g. desiring more, or less, contact than the same donor family) were sometimes reported and described as challenging (Goldberg & Scheib, 2015).

Children's relationships with same-donor siblings were commonly described by parents as either sibling-like or resembling those of extended family. The description varied depending on the nature of contact, shared experiences between DCPs and same-donor siblings, and the parents' investment in the contact (Andreassen, 2017; Goldberg & Scheib, 2015). Goldberg and Scheib (2016) reported that mothers felt that their children were more likely than they were to view their relationship with same-donor peers as siblings, with mothers preferring to describe the relationship as 'donor siblings' to emphasise the genetic connection without the implications of traditional sibling relationships.

Factors associated with contact experiences

Expectations of contact

Expectations of contact played a crucial role in shaping experiences across all groups involved in DC. Romanticised or idealised notions about the other party, alongside strong desires to meet, could impact the contact experience – with disappointment if the other party did not live up to the idealised image (van Rooij et al., 2026; Zadeh et al., 2024). DCPs also expressed disappointment when contact expectations were unmet – either because the donor had passed away or was unwilling to reciprocate contact (Bolt et al., 2024; Koh et al., 2020; van Rooij et al., 2026; Zadeh et al., 2024). Despite these challenges, most DCPs across studies felt their expectations had been met (e.g. Koh, Rothblum, et al., 2023).

While most donors respected boundaries, a minority hoped for more involvement than the parents or DCPs anticipated, or donors assumed roles with which DCPs were uncomfortable (Bolt et al., 2024; Hertz et al., 2015; Koh et al., 2020). This could happen even after early contact arrangements had been negotiated and agreed upon, as in Volks et al.'s (2025) study of egg donors and parents, where communication breakdown was reported to generate significant stress for donors concerned about the possible implications for DCPs, e.g. their ability to access information.

Similarly, expectations among same-donor siblings/families varied – some sought close sibling and/or family relationships, while others preferred limited contact. Mismatched expectations sometimes led to challenges such as conflict over the frequency of communication, disagreements about the level of involvement in each other's lives, or discomfort when one family desired intimacy while the other wished to maintain distance (Bolt et al., 2024; Goldberg & Scheib, 2015; Hertz, 2022; Rothblum et al., 2025; Zadeh et al., 2024). Even when contact was desired, individuals often prioritised the needs and comfort of the other party over their own.

Family type and pre-existing family relationships

While causality between family type and contact cannot be assumed due to the small number of studies and participants, informal early donor linking was reported in studies involving SMC and same sex lesbian parent families who sought contact with sperm donors to provide a father-like presence for their child, often in response to external societal or familial pressures (Andreassen, 2023; Kelly et al., 2019; Kelly & Dempsey, 2016a).

Further, SMC and same-sex lesbian couples were not only to open to contact with sperm and egg donors, but also to have contact with their child's same-donor siblings and families, sometimes preferring this to donor contact (Goldberg & Scheib, 2015). These connections were frequently made using informal means, even when such approaches were noted to lack some of the safety mechanisms provided by statutory registers (Kelly & Dempsey, 2016b). Parents reported seeking contact to obtain information about shared traits and medical histories, to provide support for their children and/or themselves, and to expand their child's family network (Goldberg & Scheib, 2015). One study found that parents from single and lesbian couple families were somewhat more likely than heterosexual parents to have in-home contact with their children's genetic half siblings/same-donor siblings and regard one another as relatives (Sawyer et al., 2013). In addition, gay and bisexual sperm donors were reported to be more likely to have met and have ongoing contact with DCPs than heterosexual donors (Freeman et al., 2016).

The quality of pre-existing family relationships also appeared to be associated with interest in and the forming of donor-related connections. DCPs with strong bonds to their raised siblings often prioritised these over genetic ties, although they still valued relationships with same-donor siblings (Scheib et al., 2020). Conversely, those without siblings or with weaker sibling ties often showed greater interest in connection with genetically related individuals, sometimes attributing poor sibling relationships to the lack of genetic ties (Hertz, 2022). In strained family contexts, DCPs could develop closer ties with donors or members of the donors' families (Beeson et al., 2013).

Attitudes from others toward contact

Parents who openly integrated DC into family narratives generally facilitated more positive contact experiences. In such cases, donors and DCPs felt more comfortable engaging with each other (Daniels et al., 2012; Duff & Goedeke, 2025; Persaud et al., 2017). Conversely, when parents were secretive, avoided the topic or felt uncomfortable with it, DCPs often felt confused about linking with their donors, or felt betrayed – particularly when their donor-conceived status was discovered through DNA testing (Beeson et al., 2011; Best et al., 2023; Duff & Goedeke, 2025). Negative parental reactions were occasionally observed following DCP-initiated contact with donors, particularly for fathers in heterosexual relationships, who at times perceived donor involvement as a challenge to their parental role (Frith et al., 2018; Widbom et al., 2021). Mismatched parental attitudes towards contact e.g. to same-donor families, could be challenging; however in one study these were reported to resolve following positive experiences of contact (Goldberg & Scheib, 2015).

The families of the donor also navigated complex emotional dynamics. Where donors' families were supportive of or involved in the contact process, experiences for DCPs tended to be more positive, alleviating jealousy and fostering stronger bonds (Daniels et al., 2012; Kirkman et al., 2014). Finally, siblings who shared a donor sometimes had different desires for and experiences of contact, partly influenced by the different age of access within the same family (Bolt et al., 2024).

Age of contact & geographic proximity

The age at which contact was established was a factor that influenced relationship outcomes. Donors who connected with DCPs in childhood or early adolescence were more likely to develop strong, family-like bonds, as the donors' role could seemingly be integrated more naturally (Bolt et al., 2024; Hertz et al., 2015; Koh et al., 2020). In contrast, contact initiated in adulthood tended to be more complex and emotionally fraught (Koh et al., 2020). Similar trends were seen in same-donor sibling relationships – early introductions framed as social rather than genetic often led to stronger ties later (Goldberg &

Scheib, 2015), while those meeting in adulthood sometimes regretted the delay and missed opportunities (Blyth, 2012a; 2012b).

Geographic proximity was another important factor. DCPs, parents and donors who desired more contact could find physical distance to be a barrier (Frith et al., 2017; Hertz et al., 2017; Hertz & Mattes, 2011; Koh et al., 2020) although for some parents, geographical distance was seen positively as minimising the possibility of inadvertent contact, and was an initial factor in the donor selection process (Jadva et al., 2018). While donor-DCP relationships were particularly affected by distance, same-donor siblings were more likely to maintain relationships despite living far apart – often using digital platforms and arranging visits to stay connected (Andreassen, 2023; Hertz et al., 2017). Both same-donor families and siblings often expressed a desire for more in-person contact, highlighting the value of physical proximity in strengthening familial bonds (Andreassen, 2023; Blyth, 2012a; Hertz et al., 2017).

Number of individuals connected

The number of donor-linked individuals also shaped contact experiences. A high number could provoke excitement for DCPs but also anxiety and overwhelm (Blyth, 2012a; 2012b; Bolt et al., 2024; Indekeu et al., 2022; Rothblum et al., 2025). Donors sometimes felt daunted at the prospect of connecting with multiple DCPs (Daniels et al., 2012), and parents could be unsettled by the prospect of and/or discovery of large sibling groups and the number of individuals needing to be identified and tracked (Hertz & Mattes, 2011). DCPs frequently reported mixed emotions as new same-donor siblings continued to emerge, often through matching platforms (Blyth, 2012b; Rothblum et al., 2025). Some DCPs felt obligation or pressure to connect with each newly discovered sibling (Blyth, 2012b; Rothblum et al., 2025), and the pace and scale of new discoveries could be challenging to manage (Bolt et al., 2024; Indekeu et al., 2022; Rothblum et al., 2025). Disparities in levels of contact among same-donor siblings and same-donor families, or between same-donor siblings and the donor, were sometimes challenging and/or led to feelings of exclusion or resentment (Hertz & Mattes, 2011; Indekeu et al., 2022). Group dynamics, including jealousy or perceived imbalance, occasionally led to disengagement from further contact (Blyth, 2012a; 2012b; Bolt et al., 2024; Hertz & Mattes, 2011).

Mechanisms for contact

Although identity-release legislation theoretically enables access to donor information through registries, clinics, or sperm banks, DCPs sometimes found the process difficult, time-consuming, or inaccessible (Best et al., 2023; Lampic et al., 2022). Even when access was possible, it often required persistent effort and/or yielded minimal or inaccurate information (Beeson et al., 2011; Bolt et al., 2024; Lampic et al., 2022; Zadeh et al., 2024). Online platforms, such as donor-conceived Facebook groups, were commonly used by DCPs to connect with donors (and same-donor siblings), or for parents and donors to connect. These provided essential spaces for identity-building and navigating inaccessible or poorly supported systems like clinics and registries, especially when trust in clinics or government agencies was low (Gilman et al., 2024; Volks et al., 2025), and were also used to maintain low intensity interactions (Koh, Rothblum, et al., 2023).

While DC online spaces were regarded as a positive support system, for some these groups could cause DCPs to feel ‘disappointed’ or ‘distressed’ when others shared negative contact experiences or pictures of their multiple connections when they were struggling in their search for donor connections (Best et al., 2023; Zadeh et al., 2024). Informal mechanisms were also reported to lack the safety mechanisms provided by statutory services (Kelly & Dempsey, 2016a).

In-person same-donor sibling group meetings, while generally positively experienced, could also present challenges related to how to define group membership (such as who to include), how to manage closeness and distance with each other, and how to manage group dynamics – especially in large sibling groups (Bolt et al., 2024; Indekeu et al., 2022). Participants in such large sibling groups noted a need for tailored support to navigate emotional and logistical challenges, especially in the absence of shared history (Andreassen, 2017; Bolt et al., 2024; Indekeu et al., 2022).

Contact occurring because of DNA matching and social media use could at times be characterised by what Nordqvist et al. (2025) describe as ‘accelerated kinship’, with connections being established rapidly and experienced with intensity due to the accelerated speed made possible through online connections.

Discussion

This paper provides a systematic review of contact experiences among the various stakeholders involved in DC: donors, DCPs, same-donor siblings, parents and families. Across varied contexts, the findings indicate diverse, but many positive contact experiences.

The review across stakeholder groups also reveals the broader relational systems that can emerge among those connected through DC and challenges the assumption that interest in contact is limited to DCP: donor contact. Rather, DCPs may connect or even prefer to establish relationships with same-donor siblings (Hertz, 2022; Indekeu et al., 2022; Jadvá et al., 2010; Koh, Bos, et al., 2023; Persaud et al., 2017; Scheib et al., 2020), and parents, contrary to the narrative that they prefer to keep DC a secret, may establish contact with donors, their families and same-donor siblings, both in the context of embryo donation (where the donors may share a full genetic link with the DCP, and DCPs may have full genetic siblings in the donors' family), and sperm and egg donation (where the child typically shares a genetic link with one parent) (Davis et al., 2020; Goldberg & Scheib, 2015; Kelly et al., 2019; Tasker et al., 2018). Contact with same-donor siblings was often highly valued, helping DCPs with identity issues, and at times establishing close relationships – although this could be challenging especially in the context of large sibling groups.

For parents, establishing contact with donors and same-donor siblings/families was often in response to the perceived needs of their children; at times, as little more than a mechanism to obtain relevant medical and genetic information, but in other instances, to develop support systems and extended family networks for themselves and their children (Andreassen, 2023; Goldberg & Scheib, 2015; Hertz, 2022). However, some parents, especially initially, felt discomfort with the potential role of the donor and the perceived threat to their parental autonomy, especially where they did not share a genetic link to the child (e.g. Widbom et al., 2021). This perceived threat to parental autonomy for the non-genetic parent can be felt even with the contact only happening between same-donor siblings and DCPs (Andreassen, 2017).

Many of the donors in the included studies also appeared to view donation not as a one-time act, but as the beginning of an ongoing connection – expressing interest in connection not only with DCPs but also with their parents (Frith et al., 2017; Goedeke et al., 2023a; Hertz et al., 2015; Kirkman et al., 2014). This was the case for embryo donors, who arguably may have a greater interest in the wellbeing of the child, both because their donations are made subsequent to having embryos remain after their own *in vitro* fertilization (IVF) treatment (rather than donations made expressly for the purpose of helping others have children), and because the DCPs may be their full genetic offspring and full genetic siblings to their raised children (Goedeke et al., 2015), and for sperm and egg donors (Gilman & Davis, 2026; Goedeke et al., 2023b; Hertz et al., 2015; Kirkman et al., 2014). While most donors more typically seemed to defer relational authority to the parents or DCPs themselves (Daniels et al., 2012; Goedeke et al., 2023b), more recent research by Volks et al. (2025), on egg donors recruited mainly through online platforms, reports more proactive and assertive efforts by (egg) donors to foster connection with parents and DCPs.

Further, this review has signalled how the effects of DC may be felt beyond the donor 'triad' of DCP, donor and parents, and may extend to donors' parents, donors' children, same-donor families and even other genetically related individuals, although this remains an area where more research is needed. This highlights how DC may be better understood not merely as a treatment for infertility, but as a process that can generate complex networks of relationships, shaped by diverse motivations and experiences, and occurring within the context of each person's embeddedness in existing family networks. Nordqvist and Gilman (2024) observe that current policy, even in most identity-release contexts, remains primarily oriented toward meeting the needs and interests of the DCPs in accessing information and establishing contact, while failing to consider the needs and interests of the other parties involved in DC. Notably, recent legislative changes in Queensland (Australia) and South Australia now make provision for parents to access identifying details about the donor (with consent) and same-donor siblings (with consent); and donors to access identifying details about adult DCPs (with consent) (Queensland Government, 2025; South Australia Health – Government of South Australia, 2025). The impact of identifying and connecting

with those genetically related may be felt across family and relational networks (Nordqvist et al., 2025), underscoring the need not only for access to information but support for the responses to such access.

Differences in contact experiences across country and donation context (identity-release, anonymity, open identity) could not be identified; however, many of the studies included participants from across these contexts, without separating out data, so it is impossible to draw conclusions on the impact of different contexts on contact experiences. Further, most of the studies referenced sperm donation, and there was limited research (4 studies only) that focused exclusively on egg donation, and 4 including embryo donation. While egg and embryo donation are less common and have a shorter history than sperm donation, further research into experiences in these contexts is needed to better assess similarities with and differences from sperm donation. Contact experiences were frequently facilitated through voluntary registers (such as the DSR), or informal means (such as DTC DNA testing and social media), rather than through formal registers and donor linking services. Again, this is an area for future research, especially in the context of identity-release provisions coming into effect in many countries. Further research is also warranted on how contact following discovery of donor conception through DNA matching in conjunction with social media unfolds, especially given Nordqvist and colleagues' (2025) reflection on the accelerated kinship that may be facilitated by the speed at which it is possible to connect online.

Contact outcomes were found to be associated with a range of intersecting factors, including expectations of contact, existing family relationships, family structure, support for contact, age at first contact, geographical proximity, and the number of individuals involved. Of note, sibling relationships, parental attitudes or mismatched partner expectations may affect both the interest in, and quality of contact with donors or same-donor siblings (Beeson et al., 2011; Best et al., 2023; Bolt et al., 2024; Frith et al., 2018; Goldberg & Scheib, 2015; Nordqvist et al., 2025; Widbom et al., 2021). Moreover, DC linking can introduce complexities, particularly as networks expand, and where there are differing expectations and experiences among parties. Along with unrealistic expectations and idealised notions of the donor, these findings point to the need for access to psychosocial support throughout the linking process, a recommendation echoed by studies such as Bolt et al. (2023), Goldberg and Scheib (2015) and Indekeu et al. (2022). However, this is challenging in practice, given the lack of available post-donation and donor-linking support (Bolt et al., 2024; Goedeke et al., 2026).

This review also raises ethical and policy implications, particularly regarding donor limits. The discovery of at times large sibling networks can present psychosocial challenges for DCPs, donors and their families (Blyth, 2012a; 2012b; Bolt et al., 2024; Daniels et al., 2012; Hertz & Mattes, 2011; Indekeu et al., 2022; Rothblum et al., 2025) reinforcing the need for clear, enforceable international donor limits, a concern raised by several studies (Bolt et al., 2023). Addressing this issue is further complicated by the absence of global donor registers and the inability to monitor 'serial' donors who contribute across clinics and jurisdictions (Janssens et al., 2015).

Some of the research across the review was conducted in contexts where contact occurred without the support of formal information exchange and contact facilitation services, with donor-conceived communities turning to alternative systems to facilitate linking. DNA matching in conjunction with private social media groups and online forums may offer support, guidance, and a sense of agency for DCPs and parents seeking information or connection (Best et al., 2023; Zadeh et al., 2024) but also present challenges such as negative contact experiences and a lack of safety mechanisms around contact (Kelly & Dempsey, 2016b). While these community-led efforts can help bridge systemic shortcomings, (Kelly & Dempsey, 2016b), linking that occurs through formal mechanisms typically draws on guidelines that suggest that contact be facilitated by trained, experienced counselling staff, at a pace with which each party is comfortable, and with appropriate counselling and support to manage the implications for all the parties involved and their networks (Australian and New Zealand Infertility Counsellors' Association, 2024; International Infertility Counsellors' Association, 2024). Research has also signalled the potential role of professional counselling in contributing to positive linking experiences by helping manage expectations prior to contact, facilitating contact when it occurs, and helping process feelings on an ongoing basis (van Rooij et al., 2026). Unfortunately, with a few exceptions, very limited professional psychosocial and institutionally required support appears to be available or required across jurisdictions, both before donation – to consider the longer-term implications – and after, in particular when it comes to contact among those connected through donor conception (Goedeke et al., 2026). Given the recent revelations

of incorrect record-keeping (e.g. in Melbourne, Australia – see Nunn, 2025, and in the UK – see Barnsley, 2025), the need for improved formal mechanisms to support DC linking is also underscored.

Finally, follow-up studies could examine how contact experiences evolve over time, and how contact experiences may differ according to the number of individuals connected through DC. Research could also explore experiences across diverse cultural settings and countries, particularly in regions where DC is more stigmatised. As DTC DNA testing becomes more prolific, and identity-release provisions come into effect, more contact among parties genetically related through DC can be expected, with a subsequent need for research on outcomes across these contexts. Further, as DC practices shift, for instance, with donation increasingly occurring through informal donor arrangements or in the context of jurisdictions (e.g. New Zealand) that allow for contact before donation (Goedeke et al., 2023; Volks, 2022), future studies could also assess the long-term implications of these early contact opportunities.

Limitations

Several limitations characterise the existing evidence base. The reviewed studies varied widely in design and sample size, with participant numbers ranging from 5 to 2636, and a median sample size of 42, making it difficult to integrate findings. Most studies relied on self-selected participants, introducing a potential bias toward individuals with potentially positive experiences of donor-related contact. In addition, the evidence is demographically skewed, with a concentration of studies in a restricted number of countries/contexts – primarily the USA and UK, and with participants largely of European descent, which restricts the applicability of findings in cultural settings where DC is less accepted or where secrecy predominates, or where prevailing cultural worldviews differ from Western frameworks. The research is also skewed towards the experiences of parties involved in sperm donation, with more limited research on egg and embryo donation. Finally, this review focuses on experiences of contact among donors and recipient/s previously unknown to each other prior to donation i.e. they could not be family members or friends, and their contact experiences following the birth of a child. This could include a range of different contexts such as anonymous/non-identified donation or identity-release donation, and clinic-recruited or recipient-recruited donation, e.g. donation occurring through online recruitment (where there may be some contact between donors and recipients prior to donation). The mechanisms of contact were diverse and included both formal and informal means of linking. Further research is needed to explore how these different contexts may have an impact on expectations and experiences of contact following the birth of the child.

Conclusion

This review demonstrates the range of connections among the different stakeholders in DC and contributes valuable insights into the factors contributing to these relationships. As opportunities for contact between individuals connected through DC continue to expand, either through the influence of DTC DNA testing or identity release provisions, consideration needs to be given to how best to support all stakeholders through appropriate and coherent legislative frameworks, policies and clinical practices.

Authors contributions

CRedit: **K. Hall**: Formal analysis, Investigation, Methodology, Project administration, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing; **S. Goedeke**: Conceptualisation, Formal analysis, Investigation, Methodology, Supervision, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing; **K. van Kessel**: Methodology, Supervision, Writing – review & editing.

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Data availability statement

The data that support the findings of this study are publicly available.

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