

PREFACE

This book is about how families are made and how bonds are created in the brave new world of reproductive technology, and it dramatically reveals the ongoing cultural change in the way we think about family. Anyone—and everyone—who has struggled with questions of how to define themselves in connection with their own biological, legal, or social families will recognize many of the issues explored in this book.

The New Kinship has two purposes. First, it is focused on families and emotional relationships created through donor eggs, sperm, and embryos, and it documents the newly developing connections within and between these families. Second, the book shows how donor families offer lessons for all families, challenging the way we define families by questioning what makes a family. As reproductive technology facilitates the creation of more families, this has, in turn, profoundly affected our expectations of how we experience family life.

Whenever I give a talk about donor conception, I am always asked three things: (1) parents ask me for the best way to disclose to their children that they are donor conceived; (2) both parents and offspring ask how they can find others who have used the same donor; and (3) people not involved in the donor world want to learn more. Sometimes, people talk to me openly with their questions; often, I receive somewhat furtive, sometimes whispered follow-up calls from people who have never disclosed their use of donor gametes.

In response, I tell them that it is never too early to let children know about their origins. I also tell them about studies of people who have connected through their use of the same donor, discussing how these connections have been made and describing the experiences people have had once contact is made. In the past, I have noted that I am writing a book about these issues; I can now refer people to this book!

Over the years, as I have worked on understanding donor-conceived families and their communities, I've explored these topics with numerous colleagues, friends, and family members throughout the world. Thank you to Sonia Allan, John Appleby, Susan Frelich Appleton, Elizabeth Bartholet, Gaia

Bernstein, June Carbone, Glenn Cohen, Maxine Eichner, Martha Ertman, David Fontana, Vivian Hamilton, Joan Hollinger, Clare Huntington, Nancy Levit, and Linda McClain. Thank you to Adam Pertman for supporting my work as a Senior Fellow at the Donaldson Adoption Institute. And Wendy Kramer continues to inspire me with her leadership of the Donor Sibling Registry. Without Nancy Dowd, the editor of New York University Press's Families, Law, and Society series, and Debbie Gershenowitz, my editor at NYU Press, this book would not exist. Debbie's amazing editing over the past five years has deeply influenced my writing. I would also like to thank my research assistants, Melinda Dudley, Lindsay Luken, Alissa Marque and Sarah Rosenbluth, as well as my library liaison, Mary Kate Hunter, who have patiently answered all of my questions and helped me ask more. And I appreciate the strong support of Dean Paul Berman.

Thank you, as always, to my family for giving me the space and support to write this book.