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**FROM REFLEXIVITY TO NORMALIZATION: PARENTS AND CHILDREN
CONFRONTING DISCLOSURE IN FAMILIES FORMED THROUGH ASSISTED
REPRODUCTION INVOLVING GAMETE DONATION**

Abstract

This paper puts into dialogue how parents and children in families formed through assisted reproductive technologies involving gamete donation (ART-D) experience disclosure of children's genetic origins. We draw our data from a large study centered on attitudes and strategies towards disclosure in ART-D families in Spain and focus on a sub-sample of 18 families (24 children) in which parents and children were interviewed and, often, observed in other organizational settings. This sample is primarily formed by female-led families (single mothers by choice and lesbian couples) and helps reveal how maternal/parental reflexive work and socialization strategies around their family project is re-constructed and appropriated by their children. We focus on three socialization strategies and contexts that are singled-out and discussed by adults and children: narratives about children's origins, family organizations and teachable moments in daily interaction. The results show how children treat as unproblematic and ordinary aspects of their family experience and genetic origins that are at the center of maternal reflexive work and concerns. We close the paper discussing ways in which research and researchers can support the work that families are already leading around disclosure.

Keywords: Assisted Reproduction Technology - Disclosure of Genetic Origins - Socialization Strategies - Non-conventional families - Reflexivity

This paper examines how parents (mostly mothers) and children in families formed through assisted reproductive technologies involving gamete donation (ART-D) in Spain confront and construe disclosure of the conception process. We draw from a larger and extensive ethnographic dataset of research conducted in Spain first into single parenthood by choice (Jociles and Medina 2013) and then ART-D families more generally (Jociles 2016). By juxtaposing how parents and children understand and experience disclosure we seek to contribute to two bodies of research on (a) the socialization strategies and socialization work of contemporary non-conventional and modern families (cf. Golombok 2015) and (b) disclosure in ART-D families, which we augment through data collected in the Spanish context which has socio-demographic and legal particularities not often discussed in the English-speaking literature. Our research findings also suggest concrete strategies for supporting the disclosure and socialization strategies of ART-D and non-conventional families.

Socialization and reflexivity in modern families

Contemporary family formation through assisted reproductive technologies (ART), particularly when it involves donated gametes (ART-D), is an interesting field to examine the socio-cultural conditions under which reflexivity becomes an imperative (Archer 2012). Margaret Archer (2007, 2010, 2012) developed a conceptual framework to explain how reflexivity, in a nutshell the regular exercise of the mental ability to consider oneself in relation to social contexts (Archer 2007: 4) and to build life projects and trajectories through reflexive work, becomes a categorical necessity in conditions in which there is a fracture between institutions and social structures and available socialization trajectories in the wider cultural context.

From our perspective, this distance exists when we think of family projects and family formation through ART-D. On one hand, bio-technological developments in the field of assisted reproduction and legislative changes across national contexts, among other factors, have transformed how families are formed (Golombok 2015; Rivas 2009). For example, ART-D allows women and men to ‘experience’ child-bearing and biological reproduction (i.e. fertilization, pregnancy) and filiation, in the absence of sexual-intercourse or even the transmission of genetic material. It has also allowed a wider variety of individuals and couples (such as single mothers by choice, lesbian couples, single men or gay couples) to build child-rearing family projects. Yet, on the other hand, dominant Western cultural models of family and kinship are far from 'keeping up' with the possibilities, options, and transformations that ART-D (among other factors) opens. Consequently, the family institution (Lenoir 2005) into which most Western individuals have been socialized does not provide a vocabulary to describe or talk unproblematically about all the social, biological, and kin relations that emerge in these modern family projects (Golombok 2015).

Our contention, which we explore empirically in this paper, is that this disconnection is confronted by adults (mostly women) involved in ART-D family projects through intense reflexive work (Archer 2012). Yet, unlike Archer's (2007, 2012) general account of contemporary reflexivity, reflexivity in family projects formed through assisted reproductive technologies -and probably in many other non-conventional family projects- operates under conditions that differ from her general framework in, at least, two significant ways. First, building a path into parenthood through ART-D in Spain and responding to the multiple dilemmas and emotional challenges that are part of this trajectory is not primarily an individual or internal process (cf. Pérez-Milans and Soto 2016). It is a profoundly

socio-culturally constructed and supported process mediated by close friends and family, other families embarked in similar projects, professional advice and collective debate in a variety of social settings such as online spaces, family organizations, or professional counselling (Jociles and Rivas 2009; Lores and Cubillos 2016; Jociles, Rivas and Poveda 2012; Poveda et al. 2015).

Second, this reflexive activity describes the psychological and discursive work of adults (couples, women, and men engaged in ART-D projects). However, when this family experience is projected onto children and diverse socialization strategies are put into motion to construct children's family experiences, the terms are transformed substantially. Parents persistently talk about "normalization" as the broad socialization goal for their children (Author 2015, cf. Wyverkens, van Parys and Buysse 2015): children are encouraged to see their family experience as non-extraordinary, equivalent, and as legitimate as any of the family models they come into contact with in their daily lives. The goal is to equip children with the cultural and discursive tools to talk about and live their family project in ways that potentially solve some of the conditions and anxieties that parents confront at present, and also confronted in earlier moments of their parental project. In other words, to help children align their daily family experiences with a wider alternative discourse and cultural model of family and kinship.

Gamete donation and disclosure

In the case of families formed through ART-D, one of the central concerns of the family project is disclosure of children's genetic origins. Again, disclosure is a rich area for examining social changes and family strategies. Over the last couple of decades, expert and professional discourses and practices have shifted nearly 180° in relation to the decision to

inform donor-conceived children about their genetic origins: while past practice promoted secrecy around bio-medical procedures, current thinking advocates disclosure and talking openly in ways that are adapted to the child about children's genetic origins (e.g. American Fertility Association 2010; McGee, Brakman and Gurmankin 2001)¹. In addition, a wider diversity of family models are now formed through assisted reproduction technologies, including single women and men or same-sex couples, which very often make non-disclosure an "unfeasible" option and turn the issue into "how" -rather than "whether"- to communicate children's origins. Consequently, one line of research in this area has examined the multiple procedures used by parents to communicate and work through children's genetic origins, as well as many other aspects of their family project (e.g. MacDougall et al. 2007; Rumbal and Adair 1999; Daniels and Thorn 2001; Blake et al. 2010; Isaksson et al. 2016; van Parys et al. 2016; Zadeh, Freeman, and Golombok 2016; Hertz 2002; Freedman et al. 2016). In addition, a smaller portion of studies have focused on the perspectives and experiences around disclosure of donor-conceived people, whether as children or adults (Blyth et al. 2012; Zadeh et al. 2017; Nelson, Hertz, and Kramer 2013; Jadvá et al. 2009)

Our research builds on the findings of this literature, but makes two distinct contributions. First, we report findings from Spain, a country not often discussed in the English language literature and that has important social and legal peculiarities in relation to ART-D families. The Spanish assisted reproduction legal framework protects donor anonymity and allows a wide variety of individuals access to assisted reproduction. These two features potentially shape in distinct ways the content and strategies for disclosure. Second, and more importantly from a conceptual perspective, we examine how parental/maternal and child discourses intertwine as part of the same family socialization strategies by examining a

sub-set of families in which both adults and children have shared their perspectives and experiences around disclosure.

Also, as we explain in the following section, our research approach, both by design and for reasons outside our control, presents some contrasts with the above literature. First, while the studies above rely on data from surveys, structured assessment tools, or "one-time" qualitative interviews, we extract our data from ethnographically-informed interviews and materials collected during a multi-year and multi-sited ethnographic research project. Second, given that we focus on both parental and child perspectives on disclosure, our sample for this paper is composed exclusively of parents with open attitudes towards disclosure (but see Poveda, Jociles and Moscoso 2016) and children who have been exposed to information about their origins from an early age. Third, the broader research project this paper stems from actively attempted to recruit families that reflect both different types of family structures (single mothers, heterosexual couples, gay and lesbian couples, single men) and types of donation, but even so the sample was never balanced for all possible categories and is particularly skewed when we focus on the sub-sample examined in this paper. The data does not allow for systematic comparisons between family models, yet we did not want to "sanitize" further our analysis by excluding relevant data from some families to concentrate on a specific family model (eg. single motherhood by choice). Therefore, in our analysis of three different disclosure strategies we engage with variables such as age of disclosure or differences in family structures as they emerge as relevant issues for participants, rather than claim that we are capable of discussing them as independent variables. In addition, given that our sample primarily includes non-conventional, female-led families, we have to be prudent in relation to how the findings can be extended to other families such as gay parents or a

broader range of heterosexual couples.

Methodology

Participants

This paper draws from a larger research project focused on disclosure of children's origins in a variety of family models formed through ART-D in Spain. The study was designed as a multi-sited ethnography in three Spanish regions (Madrid, Valencia, and Catalonia), although interested families were recruited for interviews across Spain. Data collection spread over three years (2013-2015) and included numerous semi-structured interviews with parents and children (most often separately), observations, and participation in online spaces (e.g. association and ART-D thematic forums, blogs posts from parent bloggers, an online story contest) and activities (e.g. association meetings, family gatherings in the association, activities organized by associations with guest expert speakers) in family organizations, visits to family homes, visits and participation in events organized by clinics and professionals involved in assisted reproduction, as well as numerous interviews with these professionals. In addition, through the project we organized a literary contest (Poveda, Jociles and González-Patiño 2015) focused on disclosure narratives and workshops with children and parents focused on disclosure and family life formed through ART-D. The paper is part of a national publicly funded project that underwent screening for ethical issues during the application process and followed the University and departmental ethical guidelines of the principal investigator of the project. At time of the application of the project the host institution did not have a Research Ethics Review Board.

Interviews are the main data source for the analysis presented in this paper, although some sections draw more clearly on observations in organizational settings and structured

events. In total, we interviewed seventy-two parents (mothers and fathers), forming different family models, at different stages of their family project, and with a variety of attitudes toward disclosure. We also interviewed twenty-four children (ranging between 5 and 16 years of age) from these participating families and arranged workshops for children and families in which several of these same participants were involved. The workshops for this project were organized simultaneously for children and mothers (all participants in the event were female) during one morning at University facilities. The activity with adults was structured as a focus group on disclosure and ART-D families. The activity with children involved professional storytellers presenting fictional stories originally written by families about disclosure and a series of group activities around these stories with the participating children.

Given that the goal of this paper is to compare parental and offspring discourses, the particular sub-set has two important characteristics. First, we focus on families who are openly in favor of disclosing most aspects of their children's genetic origins (61 out of the 72; Rivas, Jociles and Álvarez 2016), but of these families, we focus specifically on families that: (a) have put disclosure 'into action' (i.e. adults have successfully conceived a child, and the child is old enough to engage with this disclosure, and talk about it in a research interview supported by drawings or a group workshop), and (b) are willing to address these issues openly in a research project and also allow their children to do so. Table 1 summarizes the characteristics of the sub-sample of eighteen participating families which have disclosed aspects of children's genetic origins and in which we interviewed parents and children (and as we interviewed several siblings in some families, the total sample of children is 24):

Table 1: Sample of families where parental and child discourses are available

Family Structure	Number	Child age-range when	Number
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		interviewed	
Single mother by choice	12	5-10 years	12
Lesbian couple	5	10-15	10
Heterosexual couple	1	15-20	2
Total	18		24

The most frequent type of gamete donation in these families was sperm donation (21 out of 24 donor-conceived children) and, to our knowledge, only three children in this sample did not have any genetic relationship to her mother (a single mother who conceived twins through egg donation and a child from a heterosexual couple conceived through egg donation).

Analytical approach

Analysis of the interview materials and data extracts was conducted following a largely inductive and grounded theory approach (e.g. Corbin and Strauss 1990) and, as part of the general approach of the research team, draws on extensive group discussion and analysis of the empirical materials by members of the research team. A first level of analysis identified categories and recurrent items in the data and these were progressively structured around broader themes or structures (e.g. Braun and Clarke 2006; LeCompte 2000). The extracts we present below are selected as good exemplars for discussion of the strategies we identified both in the larger sample and the particular set of families examined in more detail in this paper.

Narratives and disclosure

One disclosure strategy often discussed by parents is the use of narratives. Parents who consider using stories or fiction narratives may draw from available children's literature that has family diversity and ART-D as a theme. They also create their own fictional narratives if they are more inclined to do so or cannot locate a suitable published book in Spanish or Catalan (hence our interest in the project in promoting a literary contest). Additionally, narratives may be limited to often-told oral recapitulations of family experiences or also include multimodal and audio-visual artifacts to construct the narrative (i.e. photo albums, scrapbooks, video-collages, etc.) (Poveda et al. 2015). Narratives are not the only mechanism or strategy through which parents manage disclosure (Jociles et al. 2016), but they do emerge as a resource that: (a) are often discussed and identified by parents as a possible way of managing disclosure, and (b) have a "materiality" that is easily recognized and talked about by children from a relatively young age.

Under these circumstances, parental discursive work on narratives gravitates around different themes. First, the logistics of the narrative event (Bauman 1986; Wortham and Reyes 2015), the moment in which narratives are actually shared with children. Here, *how* and *when* narratives can be presented and introduced to their children are the first issues parents consider when they discuss using stories as a disclosure strategy. One of the main advantages of stories and narratives is that they are seen as resource that can be introduced from a relatively early age alongside many other family emergent literacy events such as joint book reading (Teale and Sulzby 1986; Bus, van Ijzendoorn and Pellegrini 1995). In fact, some mothers report telling these stories to their children as preverbal infants while well aware that their children did not understand most of the material in the story. These mothers saw this as a

way to introduce stories as a family resource and for them to start "practicing" telling these stories to their children. Thus, the second set of issues that are openly debated are *what* to include in these stories (in terms of information, settings, narrative figures) and, especially, *why* these elements are incorporated (or not) into the narrative. Within these concerns, the 'donor' figure emerges as one of the most contentious narrative themes (Kirkman 2004; Grace and Daniels 2007) and is also an issue where reflexive discourse among mothers is more visible. The examination of discussions about the place of the donor in family origin narratives shows two relevant aspects of mothers' reflexive work. First, it is a process that is often collectively supported by and carried out with other mothers. Second, mothers' discursive constructions must take into account both the potential meanings of the donor figure for their own maternal project and for their children and their specific concerns. The following extract encapsulates how these two issues are approached in the Spanish context. In the explanation below, we see how a single mother by choice reflects on how her own discourses regarding the place of the donor changed as a result of her conversations and discussion with other single mothers. Further, as the final part of the extract highlights, conversations with other mothers helped incorporate the perspective of the child into the argument and this change in focus facilitated paying more attention to the donor figure in disclosure conversations with her own child.

**Extract 1: Single mother talking about the donor in her disclosure narratives
(Maripaz, Madrid, 35-40 years of age, single mother by choice, two children
through sperm donation)**

(...) We talk quite a lot about this among ourselves [mothers in the same single mothers by choice organization]. It's a key theme: how to talk about it and how

important the donor should be, if “it” is important or not important. There are many things, you listen, think about it and then say "well, they are right, we need to talk about, for example, the donor." I did not talk about him much because for me the donor was not important! “It” was necessary but not important for me. But then other moms would say "Yes, well for us he’s not important but what about for the child?" So, I then decided to give more importance to the donor, so he [her son] could talk about him later on (...)

Given this parental work, two issues are worth exploring in relation to the role stories play in how children construct their discourses around their genetic origins. First, how narratives (especially stories and artifacts created by mothers) are construed by children, if they are recalled and singled-out in their family experiences and are described with the same intensely affective vocabulary used by mothers. Second, whether it is possible to trace the performative effects of parental reflexive work related to different aspects of the construction of these narratives in how children describe and discuss stories and what they derived from them.

Regarding stories, if narratives played a role in the socialization strategies put into action by their mothers, children may remember and identify these stories well into their teenage years. They tend to be recalled as stories that were repeatedly told and are construed as a taken-for-granted element of their earlier childhood and family experience.

Extract 2: Stories as a disclosure tool from the child's perspective (Jorge, Andalusia, 15-20 years of age, child in a two-parent heterosexual family, egg donation)

(...)

I: What is the first thing you remember about how your parents told you, about how you were conceived?

J: To help me understand this more or less they got me a story that we still have at home upstairs. It's called "My Little Miracle," right? (the mother is in the room and responds "yes") and basically there the whole thing about egg donation and all that was explained. I understood it fine, I don't think anything strange happened

I: You were five or six, and later did they give you another explanation? Did you want to...?

J: I don't recall, I understood everything and that was it! We dropped the issue.

I: I mean, maybe in school, when they talk about human reproduction, maybe questions come up... I mean, you understood everything from the beginning? What an egg donation involved?

J: Well, a woman gives her eggs to another woman who can't produce them on her own. I never had any questions in terms of biological reproduction, I never thought that receiving an egg was going to have any influence (...)

This extract shows a teenager, conceived through egg donation into a two-parent heterosexual couple, recalling how a storybook was used in his early childhood as a tool to discuss his conception. His recapitulation also reveals aspects of how disclosure and genetic origins have been managed in the family and in Jorge's experience. This participant is an interesting example because he is a member of a family model that, based both on our data and on other research, is less inclined to reveal aspects of the conception process (e.g. Lycett, Daniels, Curson and Golombok 2005; Rivas, Jociles and Álvarez 2016). Exploring the possible reasons for this reluctance to disclose is beyond the scope of this paper. It will suffice

to state two common explanations as to why non-disclosure is a viable option in heterosexual couples: (a) they can conceal the genetic origins of their children without much difficulty in daily life; and (b) using ART-D is not tied to the formation of a non-conventional family project (claims that will probably need to be revised in the case of heterosexual couples who form their families through surrogacy [e.g. Álvarez, Rivas and Jociles 2016; Blyth 1995; MacCallum et al. 2003; Javda 2012]). Yet, Jorge's report on how the story incorporated into family conversations about his genetic origins also illustrates well the tendency to "minimize the role of the donor," identified as a common strategy for heterosexual couples (Wyverkens, van Parys and Buysse 2015). The account in Extract 1 stresses an early closure of genetic origins as a topic or issue in family life ("and that was it! We dropped the issue"). It also underscores that genetic origins do not have any impact on Jorge's family experience and even projects this minimal impact on his mother as the recipient of a donated egg ("I never thought that receiving an egg was going to have any influence").

In contrast, for non-conventional families, disclosure and the use of narratives is much more intertwined with the construction of a socially alternative family experience (Poveda et al. 2015), which becomes a continuous family developmental task (cf. Havighurst 1953, 1956) that also changes as children develop and grow older. Further, children incorporate into their discourses aspects of the two maternal concerns outlined above. First, how stories as disclosure devices in themselves are construed by children:

Extract 3: Stories through time from a child's perspective (Aitor, 10-15 years of age, Madrid, single mother through sperm donation)

(...)

I: So your mother, when she told you the story, how did she do it? Did she tell you the

story or, did she write a story and then give it to you to read or tell you the story?

A: She didn't tell it like this, she did not have a story or anything, so in the association they said they had to tell a story and I heard that a group of mothers (...) started telling stories to their babies so they would stop being afraid and that the children could ask questions

I: How, how, how does this work?

A: They told a story, that's what I heard, that they started telling a story to babies, they did not understand anything but they told stories to stop being afraid.

I: Who stopped being afraid, parents?

A: Yes

(...)

I: And is there a story for all the children or how does it work?

A: More or less the same for all, there is a base, the thing with the "seed" and then they can change it a little and that's it. They can change it a little depending on their situation.

(...)

I: Do you remember the story told by your mother? Tell me

A: As if I could remember (...) Ok, I think it was like, later she told me the more scientific version, but the child version is something like "Mom did not find a partner so she went to a clinic, they put a seed in her and nine months later you came out," something like that I don't remember

I: Is that the version for infants?

A: Yes, more or less

I: And later for older children?

A: They start telling this one, the real one (...)

I: Something like "Mom went to the clinic..."

A: And they put in her, I don't know, they put her the spermatozoa in her and...

I: and the egg was your mother's your mother put the egg, right?

A: Yes.

I: ...and the donor, the spermatozoon.

(...)

Extract 3 shows parts of the interview in which Aitor and the interviewers co-construct the place of stories in the disclosure process in single parent by choice families. A way to examine the explanation is by focusing on some of the contrasts between this extract and Extract 2; which makes visible the different strategies put into motion by families and how these differences are potentially tied to contrasting family configurations and experiences. First, Aitor claims that the story he was told was co-constructed and recycled from a story format developed collectively by mothers in the single mothers by choice association to which they belong. From his perspective, mothers in the association see disclosure as an imperative and construe stories as a tool that can be used to introduce the topic and reduce the anxieties associated with the process, in contrast to Jorge's account in Extract 2 that minimizes the emotional significance of disclosure and terminates early any discussion of the matter. Second, stories are told and repeated over time and change. Yet, what changes is not the structure or logic of the story, but rather the terminology: "seeds" are replaced by "spermatozoon" and "eggs," and the "donor" figure is introduced (in the above extract it is introduced by the interviewer, but the donor is openly discussed by Aitor in other parts of the

interview). This contrasts with Jorge's account in Extract 2 where the use of stories is located in a particular moment of the past.

Second, children in single parent families incorporate the donor into their discourses and accounts of family daily life. Child discourses highlight the importance of the donor in their experiences, corroborating the concerns raised by mothers in Extract 1, but do so in a way in which anxieties about this figure are minimized. Also, given the Spanish legal context in which donor anonymity is protected and enforced, the fact that the donor's identity is and will be anonymous is accepted unproblematically in children's discourses.

Extract 4: The donor figure in children's discourse (Asun, 10-15 years of age, Madrid, daughter of a single mother by choice through sperm donation)

(...) I think the donor is very important (...) even if you will not know who he is. Like when you go to the endocrinologist or any other doctor and they, for example, ask "how tall is the father?" and you don't know. So, your children are going to ask "Mom, where is my dad?", so I think they have a right to know. This happened to my mother, and since I knew, then she just said "Wait a moment! Let me call the clinic", and in one moment they told her and also his weight. I am short, my mother too, so the endocrinologist was surprised that the donor was 180 cm tall (...)

In this small story (Bamberg and Georgakopoulou 2008) Asun presents, first, a general scenario and, second, a personal experience that manages to disentangle different aspects of disclosure and children's knowledge of their genetic origins. She establishes disclosure as a "very important" right of the child. Yet, having knowledge of the ART-D procedure through which one was conceived is set apart from access to the identity of the donor. As the story suggests, as long as access to basic physical and medical information is quick and available

other aspects of the identity of the donor are not presented as necessary or part of the rights of an ART-D child.

As mothers and children talked about the place of narratives in the disclosure process, family organizations and associative spaces emerged as an important sub-theme. This suggests that organizations and associations play an important role in the socialization work of non-conventional families. In the following section, we examine this context in more detail, paying particular attention to the strategies that are mobilized in these contexts and the opportunities they provide to children.

Family organizations and disclosure

Research in Spain on single parenthood by choice, adoptive families, and/or homoparental families demonstrates the importance of family organizations, associative spaces, or, at the very least, family gatherings (Poveda et al. 2015). These studies highlight the political and advocacy role family organizations play in the Spanish context; but, the organizations are also seen as socialization spaces for parents and children. Based on our reading of the international literature, the importance of associative spaces for a diversity of family projects seems to be particular to Spain (cf. Hertz, Rivas and Jociles 2016). Organizational spaces bring together women, children, and families at different stages of their family projects, and involvement in these associations and the meanings attached to them change over time. Yet, as a socialization space, there are general dynamics that are specific to parents and to children. In this section, we discuss a pattern in which, schematically, organizational spaces simultaneously provide opportunities for mothers to work-out "indirect / mediated" disclosure socialization strategies for their children while providing more "direct" socialization spaces for children.

For mothers, organizations are a space where they can meet other mothers who may be at very similar stages of their family project (e.g. pregnant, with infants or young children) or may be in later stages of their family projects (e.g. have older or teenage children). This facilitates different peer-support dynamics which allow considering associations as informal educational spaces (Lave and Wenger 1990; Lave 2011). For mothers at similar stages of their maternal projects, it is an opportunity to share day-to-day experiences and resources. Yet, mothers with older children, which most often means that they have been actively involved in the association for several years, are seen as "veteran" mothers to whom "novice" mothers turn. This asymmetrical epistemic status (Heritage 2012) is especially relevant for issues related to disclosure, as novice mothers directly interrogate veteran mothers about how they disclosed their children's origins and, especially, how this was taken up by the child and what issues came up among older children. More generally, a running concern among mothers, as reflected in their conversations and discussions in the association, are the strategies they can put into action to guarantee that their children's origins are disclosed and handled appropriately by the multiple socialization agents (i.e. other adults and children, teachers, neighbors, etc.) that play a part in children's lives and act outside parental co-presence. This is what we define as a mediated socialization strategy: maternal work around disclosure done with socialization agents who, in turn, interact directly with the child. Collective work in associations plays a key role both in articulating this as a concern for mothers and in developing strategies mothers can put to work in their daily contexts. Extract 5 shows an active mother in the association discussing how she has put her mediated socialization strategies in action. Her explanation outlines in detail the unfolding of the strategy, which she explicitly labels as "the indirect technique", in each of her child's relevant socialization

contexts: school and neighborhood. The extract addresses: (a) how "indirectness" works as a strategy for the single mothers by choice in our study and; (b) the discourses about single-motherhood and other explanations about children's origins the strategy attempt to halt.

Extract 5: Mediated socialization strategies developed by single mothers by choice (Encarna, Madrid, 40-45, single mother by choice with a 0-5 child conceived through in vitro sperm donation)

(...) When I went to preschool I was like "I am single mother; the child was conceived through in vitro sperm donation".

I: So, you also explained the technique?

E: Yes, yes, without a problem

I: Do you think the technique needs to be made explicit?

E: Of course. If you say "I am a single mother and the child does not have a father", it looks like you've been abandoned, like something bad, and not just for me but for the child because they will say things like "Poor kid! Poor kid, he's been abandoned, his father does not love him!". "No, excuse me! It's that he does not have a father". So, it's not about me, they can think about me whatever they want, I could care less. I care about the kid, that he is not exposed to stories that are not right. So better to tell it as it is. For example, I have to admit that here, where I live, it's where I've had the hardest time

I: Here, in the apartment complex?

E: Yes, in my building complex, because here, in the end, like when you go to the pool... it doesn't mean that I have intimate friends there but we all know each other, it's a small community. So, you go to the pool, you talk and so when they saw me

pregnant I noticed that many (women) were gossiping and talking among themselves.

So, I just went "Look, I finally decided to just do it and become a single mother through an in vitro procedure". So, what I have done is the indirect technique, I've told other moms who I know are going to tell (their children), because in the end all the kids will be in the park playing, he will be with his neighbors and I thought "It's even more important that his neighbors know than in his school!" (...)

For children, family associations and family gatherings provide an opportunity to see many other families formed in similar ways and to share their experiences with other children who might be similar to them. This is what adult participants label as “normalization” when discussing associations as a socialization context for their children: as a setting that fosters opportunities for contact with similar family projects. Noticeably, this notion of "normalization" seems to differ from how "normalizing" is construed by two-parent heterosexual families in Wyverkens, van Parys, and Buysse's (2015) review. While normalization in the studies they discuss seems to build on maximizing structural resemblance with more conventional families (ie. a heterosexual couple with biological offspring), for the families we worked with normalization operates differently. First, structural differences are not minimized; rather the goal of family gatherings is precisely to help children see that there are many other families and children in the same (non-conventional) circumstances. Second, resemblance is discussed more at a functional level, as their capacity to support their children's full development and well-being while navigating the additional challenges and expectations placed on, for example, single motherhood by choice or families formed by lesbian couples (cf. Pylypa 2011)

Our interviews with children allow us to uncover some of the meanings they ascribe

to family organizational spaces and track how these meanings might change over time for children by examining either retrospective accounts of older children's participation in organizations or by comparing the discourses and experiences of children at different ages. Schematically, our analysis suggests the following pattern. Children are aware of the political, social, and advocacy role family associations play for their parents. This role can be expressed and understood even if the child in question is not too actively involved in organization activities. In addition, generally, the involvement of children in organizational spaces tends to diminish as they grow older or is transformed into a much more instrumental relationship in which associate space play a support role for much more specific purposes or in particular moments. Extract 6 shows how the adolescent daughter of a lesbian couple narrates the origins of the associative movement her mothers and herself have been involved in for many years.

Extract 6: Family organizations as socialization site (Aroa, 15-20 years of age, Catalonia, daughter of a lesbian couple, sperm donation)

Aroa: When I was born, when my mothers came to Barcelona they saw there was no equality for the children in these families. They grew up in an environment that, well... so, they started this organization of lesbian mothers and gay fathers. I have always been in this environment with lots of children who have two mothers or two fathers or one mother or father, and it has always been very natural.

I: And why do you think these children were not treated fairly in schools, as you said?

Aroa: Because it's not the traditional model, simply because of this. (...)

The extract illustrates some of the themes introduced above. Organizations can play a major part in adults' lives: parents may get involved in the organizational structure, lead

activities within the association, become a spokesperson for the media, etc. For children, this involvement turns into a socialization space in which they have the opportunity to spend time with similar children and, to paraphrase Aroa, "naturalize" these experiences ("normalize" in parental discourse). However, this involvement tends to change over time. Associations mainly organize activities geared toward younger children and younger children's leisure is tied to family activities. Consequently, for younger children, organizations are leisure spaces, where they meet and play with other children whom they often only see at these organization events. Some of these activities might be structured around simple leisure (e.g. going to the zoo, the amusement park, a field-trip to the countryside, etc.), while other programmed events might be themed around issues relevant to their particular family experience.

As children grow older, their participation in organizational spaces changes. Unless they develop more intense friendships in the organization and use associative events as another opportunity to meet friends, older children tend to be less involved in the regular activities of the organization. However, enticed by their mother(s), older children might participate in particular workshops or sessions focused on specific topics. These workshops are often led by a professional recruited for this occasion and/or a member of the organization who prepares to lead the workshop

Extract 7: Association events for older children (Cristina and her mother, 10-15 years of age, Madrid, child of a single mother by choice, sperm donation)

Mother: (...) the association has organized workshops and I have taken her, because some issues I don't really know how to bring them up or I was not sure I was doing it right. So, for example, by coincidence, questions about identity, about physical traits, and all these things I had never talked about, were proposed for a workshop, about a

year and half ago. So, I decided to take her, and was very happy because it helped me a lot. There were other children, right? (addressing her daughter), people we knew in the association, a psychologist, and we enjoyed it a lot.

Cristina: Yes.

Interviewer: The workshop was for them?

Mother: It was for them, for the kids

Interviewer: So, you like the activities in the association, do you think they are important?

Cristina: Yes (...)

Extract 7 is part of a joint interview with Cristina and her mother where talk is taken over by the mother and Cristina limits herself to supporting her mother's commentaries and providing one-word answers. It also illustrates the point made above. This family claims not to be particularly involved in the association and does not tend to attend the monthly activities and outings the association organizes. However, they participate in specific activities relevant to them, which they enjoy and find valuable. In other words, family organizations might continue to play a role in working out aspects of disclosure and their particular family experience for families with older children, even if overall involvement diminishes. Significantly, for families with older children organizations may emerge as a relevant resource to work through issues and topics which parents (or children) find difficult to address informally in daily life (see Extract 5), but that could be successfully approached in a structured activity. In short, to return to the outline proposed in the introduction of this section, associations provide socialization spaces to work directly with children in which mothers can design and plan activities and socialization opportunities for their children.

More generally, this section showcased the reflexive work of mothers (and children) invested in the creation of organized socialization spaces. Yet, mothers do feel that unplanned moments can also be taken up as opportunities to work on disclosure and these moments are also recognized and talked about by children.

Teachable moments and disclosure

The two spaces discussed above describe relatively planned activities and contexts for disclosure. To a certain degree, the conditions under which questions about children's genetic origins are raised are pre-designed and controlled by mothers. However, there are unplanned occasions in daily life in which explanations about children's origins and their family experience have to be provided. The interactional framework for these situations (cf. Goffman 1983) typically involves an adult parent providing an explanation of her family experience and the origin of the child to a third party, while the child is present and listening to the conversation. This scenario has already been discussed as a socialization space in conventional families (Hochschild 2008) and is mentioned explicitly as a relevant socialization moment by parents across a variety of non-conventional families (Poveda et al. 2015). From our perspective, these episodes can be understood as teachable moments (Havighurst 1953, Slembrouck and Hall 2017): unplanned interactions which are opportunistically turned by mothers into occasions where they can model for their children how family experience is disclosed. More importantly, both adults and children can recall such situations in interviews and provide what, again, amounts to small stories (Bamberg and Georgakopoulou 2008) of these episodes. However, the experience of these story-telling episodes can be quite different: while mothers may recall these episodes as moments of anxiety or concern, children narrate them as humorous episodes.

Extract 8: Talking to other children about children's origins (Paloma, 40-45 years of age, Madrid, single mother by choice, sperm donation)

(...) this year I think it was, the kids at school who know our story pretty well, especially his closest friends, right? The group of kids that go together to the pool, the park, right? Well, they went through a phase in which when they came out of school, they would come to me saying that Marco's (her son) father had died, right? Marco would look at me and I worried that he would not have the resources to counter this, right? So, I would say "Marco, what do you tell them?" and he said "I already told them that my father did not die, that I don't have a father" (...) But still I would tell the kids "No, no, we already told you the story, remember? Marco does not have a father. I went to a doctor and that..."

Paloma's account provides one example of the conversational scenario under discussion. She has to provide an explanation of her son's origins to his friends that simultaneously: (a) corrects their mistake, which, as presented in this story, seemed to be more an instance of peer teasing, and (b) provides a model for Marco regarding how to provide similar explanations. The point we want to highlight is that, in the story produced by the mother, the emotional focus is on her maternal anxieties ("I worried") about her son's capacity to resolve on his own these types of issues. In fact, probably, it is this emotional reaction that makes these episodes memorable material for subsequent reflection (either individually or collectively with other mothers) and singles them out as distinct socialization moments requiring distinct strategies.

Children are also able to identify these types of episodes and the interactional structures that turn them into an opportunity to disclose their family project in particular ways.

Yet, in contrast to adults, children assign a different emotional value to these encounters.

Extract 9 below shows Asun (see Extract 4) recalling how a similar situation as the one described above was resolved by her mother when she was a child. The story opens with a framing that explicitly labels it as "funny" and then recounts how she witnessed her mother's explanation of her origins and their family project to other children. Further, the story closes with a coda (Labov 1972) that is again framed as humorous in which, as a result of the explanation provided by the mother, other children contemplate single parenthood as a possible path to parenthood when they become adults.

Extract 9: Recalling my mother talking about her family (Asun, 10-15 years of age, Madrid, daughter of a single mother by choice, sperm donation)

(...)

Asun: I am a very normal girl and what was funny is that one day I was at an after-school activity in my school and then a friend of my mother came over and said "María, five or six kids are coming over because they keep asking me how your daughter Asun was born and I don't know how to explain it" and she said "Yeah, send them over! And I'll tell them"

Interviewer: There you go.

Asun: And she started to explain and then one goes, a very funny kid, he says "Hey (...) that's great, that way when I grow up I don't have to get married to be a father." I think they picked on me more because of my glasses and appearance than because of anything that had to do with how I was born, so, no, it's never been a problem.

Interviewer: And how old were you when this thing happened with other children asking questions?

Asun: When I was around six or seven, more or less (...)

Conclusions

To recapitulate, we have presented three socialization spaces or strategies for disclosure and socialization into an ART-D family project that parents (that is, mostly mothers) have created or appropriated opportunistically. All strategies enact parental reflexive work aimed at responding to the emergent -and relatively novel in historical terms- challenges of their family project. On the one hand, of forming a family through assisted reproductive technologies involving gamete donation in which a number of biomedical and legal questions needs to be disclosed to children. On the other hand, building a family project that can only draw in limited ways from the available vocabulary and ideologies of culturally dominant kinship models. By introducing the perspectives of children and comparing maternal and child discourses regarding these issues we demonstrate how children reinterpret and appropriate in their own terms the issues mothers worked to introduce into their family experience through conversations with their children. That children reinterpret and reconstruct what is presented to them by their mothers is not surprising, given what we know about children's active role in their socialization processes and development (e.g. Corsaro 1992; Gaskins, Miller and Corsaro 1992; Grusec 2011). What is worth underlining is how this reconstruction stands in relation to the opening problems of the article: adolescents and older children discuss these issues in interviews and retrospectively comment on their childhood in ways that suggest they have deproblematized and naturalized the various central issues that adults identified as relevant for their family project. In other words, parental reflexive work regarding their family project and the tools they have carefully crafted collectively “pays off” by allowing children to experience their origins and family model as a quotidian aspect of their lives.

However, this dynamic is only one part of the whole picture. It largely reflects parental socialization agendas: what mothers define as relevant issues and the strategies they use to address them. In turn, children take up and rework these concerns. It does not reflect very well the concerns or issues that children might be articulating themselves independently from their parental concerns, or even outside the awareness of parents. Indeed, tapping into this part of children's and adolescents' experiences poses substantial methodological difficulties and our approach might not be well suited to this challenge. As outlined in the methodological section, we basically draw from interview data and only access children through parents and their disposition to allow their children to participate. Yet, even this approach provides some glimpses of these other aspects of children's experience. For example, as studied elsewhere (Moscoso et al. 2016), some adolescent participants revealed in their interviews that they have questions and are interested in meeting the donor (currently an impossibility under Spanish legislation), something that they do not share with their parents out of concern for their feelings. Further, recent discussions in single mother by choice online spaces or at association meetings suggest that some mothers might be rethinking anonymity and have opened a discussion about the possibility that their children might contact donors or genetic siblings. This, in fact, illustrates very nicely how socialization is a bi-directional process and how the reflexive activity of different family members intertwines to create new developmental tasks and socialization work for families (Kuczynski and Parkin 2007). These are emergent issues for future research.

Turning to much more practical issues, our research with ART-D families in Spain reveals very specific strategies, concerns, and spaces that play a role in managing disclosure, as well as many other family matters. Further, overall our data suggests that these strategies

are effective, that the mothers and families we interviewed have empowered themselves, are very pro-active about their family choice, and have relied on (and contributed to shape) collective and organizational spaces to build their family life. So, how can this work be supported?

First, collective spaces seem to play a very important role in the life of the families we worked with. These spaces range from formally defined associative and organizational spaces, to informal friendship and support networks between parents / mothers with shared concerns and agendas to, for example, participation in virtual communities and online forums. Therefore, efforts to make these organizational spaces more visible, facilitate their accessibility, and provide them as a resource for adults and children at any stage of their family project could have positive outcomes. Researchers may also be more actively involved in these organizational spaces and work from their own areas of expertise and expert discourses: for example, applied anthropologists can serve as facilitators, or agent who can provide material for further discussion among mothers, between mothers and children, or among children.

Second, as discussed above, a part of the socialization work of mothers is indirect and attempts to operate over the discourses of the multiple socialization agents who play a role in their children's lives. Anthropology could play a role in this larger effort by having a much more engaged role in transforming public discourses about family diversity and kinship formation, including highlighting some of the tensions and contradictions within emergent family models. In the short term, this work could provide discursive and conceptual tools to ART-D parents / mothers (and probably many other non-conventional parents) to support the "indirect socialization techniques" discussed above. In the long term, the anthropologists

could help reshape societal discourses about family and kinship and, thus, eventually make these mediated strategies less necessary. Again, the Spanish context might present some peculiarities in this respect. On the one hand, despite governmental changes, Spanish legislation seems to be comparatively "progressive" in relation to family diversity, as it allows same-sex marriage and the formation of homoparental family projects and, in contrast to other European countries, allows single women and lesbian couples access to assisted reproduction procedures (both in the public and private health systems). Yet, Spanish society is periodically exposed to campaigns and engages in public debates (indeed, amplified by a media-saturated environment) in which much more "conservative" and restrictive views of family and kinship are advanced. Current disciplinary knowledge and research could be used to constructively participate in these debates.

Finally, we want to close by pointing out the impact that involvement in the research process may have on participants' own reflexive work. Some of our participants described how their continuous participation in the research project over several years (through intense semi-structured interviews and participation in conversations within the association, online forums, workshops, and public discussions of research findings) presented new opportunities to develop and reflect on their discourses and practices regarding their family projects. Our study was by no means designed or construed as intervention research but we would like to think that this impact is tied to the particular commitments that long-term ethnographic fieldwork, in contrast to other social science methods, demands.

Notes

1. It should be noted that this shift in professional recommendations has occurred despite on-going debates in relation to how the empirical evidence supports disclosure or what ethical

frameworks should be considered in relation to disclosure/non-disclosure (e.g. Pennings 2017; Golombok 2017; Nuffield Council on Bioethics 2013; Blyth, Crawshaw, Frith and Jones 2012). We would like to thank one of the reviewers of this article for pointing out this literature.

1. In our case, in particular we (especially the third author) have been gathering data in the same communities of single mothers by choice since 2008, as part of different research projects in which some mothers have successively participated. More generally, we have developed a good working relationship with single mother by choice associations and have gained access to a number of associative spaces.

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