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# Exploring the 'lived' experiences of egg share donors using a voice- centered relational ontology.

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# Aims & objectives

- This paper will provide a brief account of my research into egg sharing from the donor's perspective.
- It will briefly demonstrate the application of the voice-centered relational method (VCRM) of data analysis.
- It will illustrate how this approach enabled the relational nature of egg sharing to become evident.

# Defining egg sharing

- Egg sharing was developed in the United Kingdom (UK) in the early 1990s by Simons & Ahuja (2005).
- Developed as a self-help scheme, an egg share donor can get discounted *in vitro* fertilisation (IVF) treatment if she agrees to share “her eggs with up to two recipients. Her treatment is subsidised by the recipient(s) of her eggs” (Blyth & Golding, 2008, p. 466).

# Existing debates

- Since their inception the schemes have been subject to debate on moral, psychosocial and ethical grounds.
- Specifically, that women cannot consent to share their eggs as the financial incentive acts as an inducement to donate. Thus consent is fettered (Johnson, 1997; 1999; Blyth, 2002; 2004; Rapport, 2003; 2005; English, 2005; Lieberman, 2005).
- Conversely, advocates of egg sharing perceive the schemes to be based upon altruism. That is, women enter the schemes because they want to help someone they perceive to be in a similar situation to themselves (Ahuja and Simons, 1996; Ahuja et al 1996; 1997; 1998; Simons and Ahuja, 2005).

# The study

- The study used hermeneutical phenomenology to explore the 'lived experiences' of egg share donors.
- It focused on egg share donor motivations and their ability to provide informed consent within the context of an egg sharing arrangement.
- Asynchronous e-mail interviews were conducted with four informants. A further 13 informants responded to an online survey.
- Data were analysed using the voice-centred relational method (VCRM) (Brown & Gilligan, 1990; Mauthner & Doucet, 1998; Gilligan et al, 2003).

# Using the voice-centered relational method

- An approach to data analysis that uses four specific readings (*listening*) to the text. This enables 'voice' to become audible.
  - *Reading one* – researcher locates the self within the context of the reading.
  - *Reading two* – locating the self, the use of 'I' ('we' and 'you').
  - *Reading three* – locating wider interpersonal relationships.
  - *Reading four* – Data is thematically broken down into themes and sub-themes.

# Reading one: *Locating the researcher in the research*

- In the analysis of the data the researcher notes their personal reactions to the data.
- *We were advised by my husbands surgeon that we needed treatment, ... so we started to look around at which hospital's near us. We attended an opening evening, and they explained the cost of IVF and also told me about Egg Share. Up until this I didn't really know about it. We we're given information to take home and read, and that's when we decided to Egg Share. When we were ready to start treatment, I explained that we wanted to egg share... made sure I was mentally ready for it, had to have counselling...*



# Reading two: *Locating the self and revealing the 'I' poem*

- “...fact that I would be helping another couple, which I did feel proud of ...I do believe that any couple going through egg share needs to have... I thought about... who need donated eggs, and so I had an idea of how the recipients must feel and knowing that I could possibly help them to get their family, it felt like I was doing something 'good'...”. (Jayne)

*I would be helping,  
I did feel proud of,  
I do believe,  
I thought about,  
I had an idea of how,  
I could possibly help,  
I was doing something 'good'*

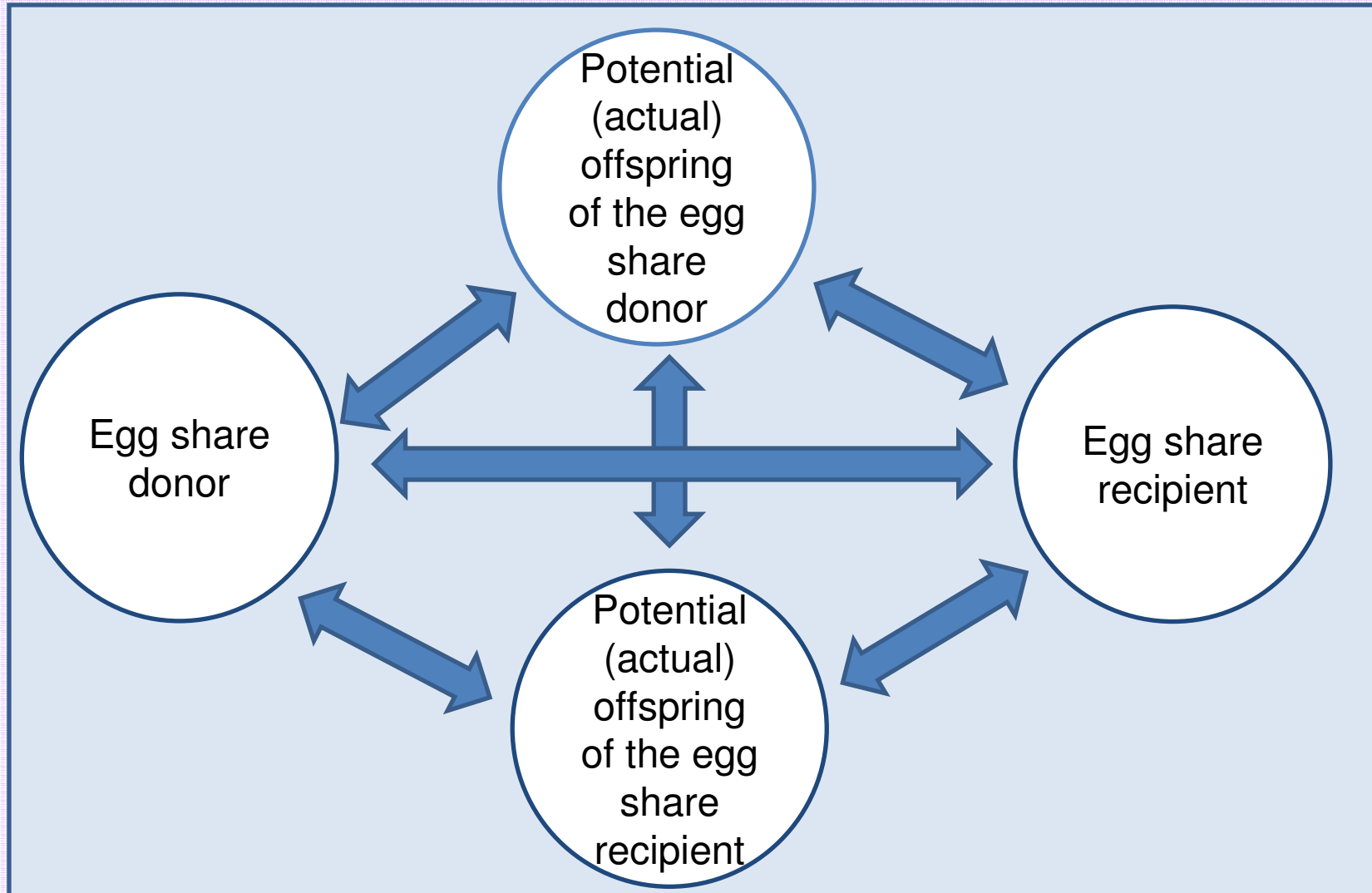
## **Reading three: *Revealing relationships, the emergence of the 'invisible' other(s)***

- *“... 'a million thoughts about the recipient' and would they look after my eggs?! - as I would do if I were to keep them!, 'concern' for any child born of the result, 'wonder' about what would happen if they turned up in years to come, on my doorstep!, 'confusion' that I was doing the right thing...” (Florence)*

## Reading four: *revealing themes*

- The analysis of data revealed five major themes:
  - (1) the motivation to egg share,
  - (2) a helping relationship,
  - (3) egg sharing as a complex, psychosocial treatment option,
  - (4) egg sharing as control and being controlled,
  - (5) egg sharing as motherhood.

# Cont'd...



# Conclusion

- The use of the VCRM approach to analysis enabled the 'lived' relational experiences of egg share donors to be revealed.
- The emphasis upon multiple readings and coding of the data helps the researcher stay close to informants accounts.
- This meant that I was able to assess whether women can consent to share their eggs.
- It also meant that I could locate their experiences within the context of their wider interrelationships.

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