Family, ancestry and self: What is the moral significance of biological ties

In a series of recent papers David Velleman has argued that it is morally wrong to bring a child into existence with the intention that the child will not have contact with one or both biological parents. (Velleman, 2005, 2008) Put another way, “other things being equal, children should be raised by their biological parents.” (Velleman, 2005 362fn 3) The primary targets of his argument are those who use anonymous donor egg or sperm to conceive a child. On his view, there is a significant value in being parented by and having ongoing contact with one’s biological relatives. “What is most troubling about gamete donation is that it purposely severs a connection of the sort that normally informs a person’s sense of identity, which is composed of elements that must bear emotional meaning, as only symbols and stories can.” (Velleman, 2005 363) Let’s be clear. He is not just interested in the possibility of having information about one’s biological progenitors, but actual knowledge by acquaintance. So the kind of profile that is typically made available by gamete donors or in closed adoptions is insufficient, and even information that is revealed through open records is not enough. A face-to-face relationship with both biological progenitors is, unless there are substantial overriding considerations, morally required.

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Family, Ancestry and Self: What is the Moral Significance of Biological Ties? By Sally Haslanger. 1. Introduction In a series of recent papers, David Velleman has argued that it is morally wrong to bring a child into existence with the intention that the child will not have contact with one or both biological parents. 1 Put another way, “other things being equal, children should be raised by their biological parents” (“Family” 362fn 3). The primary targets of his argument are those who use anonymous donor egg or sperm to conceive a child. Self-knowledge is the broadest notion: I know lots of things about myself, some of which are rather trivial and peripheral to my identity. For example, I know that I broke my left index fingernail earlier today. 

Family, Ancestry and Self: What Is the Moral Significance of Biological Ties? June 2011. In a series of recent papers David Velleman has argued that it is morally wrong to bring a child into existence with the intention that the child will not have contact with one or both biological parents. (Velleman, 2005, 2008) Put another way, “other things being equal, children should be raised by their biological parents.” (Velleman, 2005 362fn 3) The primary targets of his argument are [Show full abstract].