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*"The industry knew that this would happen sooner or later. They've just been rolling the dice and it fell on your daughter. It was worth the money to them."*

Calla, *Eggsploitation*

## Egg Donation

Advances in reproductive science and medicine have raised troubling questions over the past 40 years—What is the meaning and definition of parenthood? What is the significance of biological connection between a child and her parents? What is the definition of infertility, and to whom may it apply? And how far may we go to secure “children of our own”? Couples declared to be infertile now have a range of reproductive options. Techniques such as *in vitro* fertilization (IVF) and artificial insemination may be combined with the use of donor gametes and/or gestational surrogates in a variety of ways. Infertility websites advertise many methods by which couples can have children; one fertility clinic claims over 18 different [options](#) that couples can consider. Countless legal and cultural issues have arisen with these technological and scientific advances, but as the technology progresses, the legal world is only beginning to address practices that will have significant consequences for generations.

The combination of the lack of law in this area and the desire of the industry to obtain eggs leads to the exploitation of women and many other [ethical issues](#). The payment given for selling eggs must be removed, because it unfairly motivates the poor and the [desperate](#) to give up their gametes. Legal parameters on egg donation are absent in the law, so much so that women from other countries travel to the United States to explore other [fertility options](#). Additionally, both the fertility industry and researchers in the area of [cloning](#) have strong interests in obtaining eggs from willing women. Egg donors are disproportionately young women given extraordinary amounts of monetary compensation for a “donation.” Sometimes, they are not even paid the compensation that motivated them to donate, if insufficient numbers of eggs were harvested. Not only are donors often taking upon themselves risks they wouldn’t otherwise, but those risks have a strong possibility of materializing into health issues later in life.



Egg brokers and donation agencies are not well-regulated by either state or federal bodies, which has led to a dearth of data. Women who donate their eggs self-administer hormones, causing them to superovulate, after which they are put under anesthesia to undergo an invasive surgical procedure. Egg donors are not typically tracked, nor are they given routine follow-up medical care, despite the fact that many of them develop health complications later, ranging from [hypertension](#) to reproductive [cancers](#). This inadequate medical record tracking has made it impossible to prove or disprove a significant relationship between egg donation and subsequent health [complications](#). Without data, there is no way to provide true informed consent to prospective donors. Though suggested [guidelines](#) and [criterion](#) have been released, the practice of egg donation is as of yet unregulated and questionable.

Egg donation exploits women. The lack of regulation and follow-up tracking of donors and of their eggs is alarming. Not only does the procedure jeopardize the health of women in the United States, but the compensation offered also provides undue incentive to women to donate their eggs, subjecting themselves to medical risk. Three crucial changes must happen in the law:

- A. The incentive created through compensation needs to be eliminated, because it provides undue incentive for the poor and the desperate to give up their gametes.
- B. Anonymity around the egg donors must be removed to protect the medical and psychological interests of the donors.
- C. A database tracking of the use of gametes must be established, in order to collect the data necessary for the medical and psychological studies that need to take place.

Young women are not commodities to be sold. The time has come for the law to catch up to the existent technology and practices in order to protect women and reduce exploitation.

**For your consideration, additional resources on human rights:**

[Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#)

[International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights](#)

[Inter-American Commission on Human Rights: American Convention on Human Rights](#)

[International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights](#)