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Love and truth: What really matters for children in new family forms

Abstract

Our understanding of what makes a family has changed dramatically in recent decades due to advances in reproductive technologies accompanied by changing social attitudes. But what has the impact been on children? This lecture will present a summary of research on families with lesbian mothers, gay fathers, single mothers by choice and transgender parents, as well as families created by egg donation, sperm donation, embryo donation and surrogacy. The findings show that these new family forms are just as likely to flourish as traditional families, and sometimes more so, although the children sometimes face prejudiced attitudes from others. It is concluded that warm and supportive relationships between parents and their children, openness about the children's origins, and acceptance of their family in the wider social environment matter more for children's psychological wellbeing than the number, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, or biological relatedness of their parents.