

Men not included

Lesbian and single
mothers in DI practice

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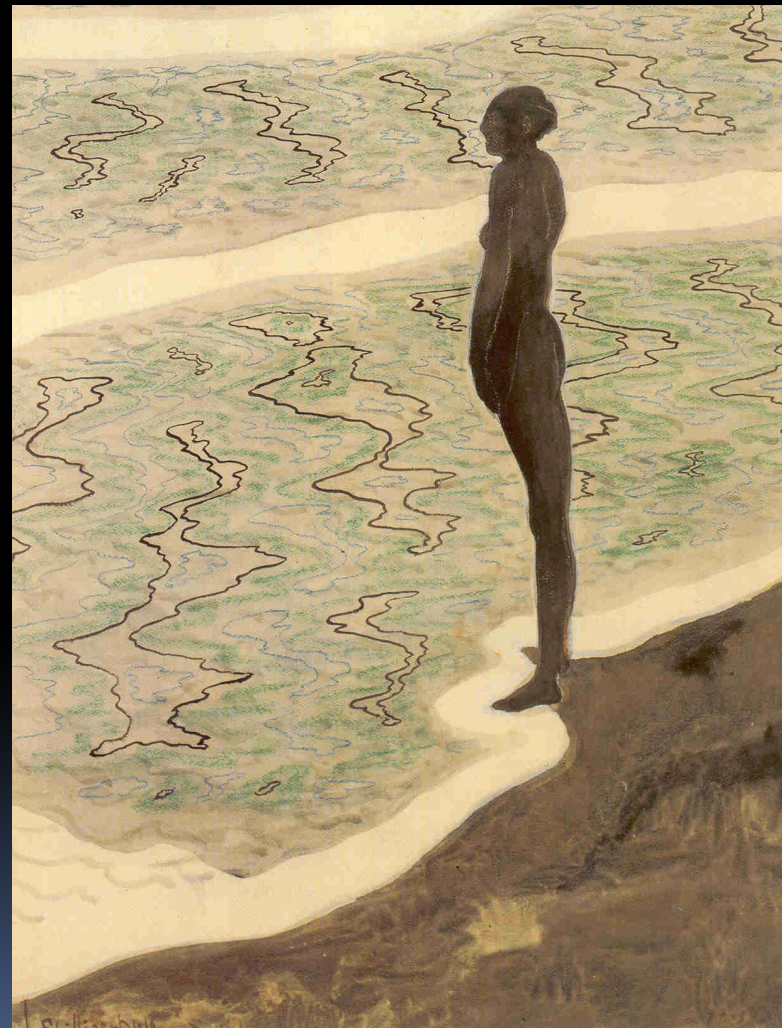


DI treatment not because of infertility
male partner

But because of lack of such a partner

DI not a medical treatment but just an
alternative road to parenthood

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DIFFERENCES AND SIMILARITIES BETWEEN LESBIAN MOTHERS SINGLE MOTHERS

Father absence
The use of a sperm donor
Children aware of donor origin



Two parents	<->	one parent
homosexual	<->	heterosexual

FOLLOW UP STUDIES OF SINGLE MOTHERS (1)

Mothers

more parental stress
more psychological and physical health problems

Children

more psychological and physical health problems
more school problems
more addiction problems

- Children experienced parental conflict
- Low socio economic status

a.o.

Ringbäck WG et al. 'Mortality, severe morbidity and injury in children living with a single parent in Sweden: a population bases study. The Lancet, 2003, vol 361,289-295.

Follow up studies of single mothers families (2)

single mothers by choice using a sperm donor

- Studies are sparse
- Samples are small and not always representative
- Children are young

THUS FINDINGS ARE PRELIMINARY

a.o.

Murray et al. (2005) "Single mothers and their donor insemination infants" *Human Reprod*, 20, 1655-60

MacCallum & Golombok (2004) "children raised in fatherless families from infancy" *J. Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 45, 1407-19

Follow up studies of single mothers families (3)

single DI mothers by choice

- Motives and demographics
 - Time is running out
 - mean age : > 35 y
 - being single mother is second choice
 - highly educated
 - small families (one child mostly)
- Social, relational and psychological characteristics
 - psychologically healthy*
 - supportive social network
 - heterosexual relationships in the past

Follow up studies of single mothers families (4)

single DI mothers by choice compared with heterosexual (DI) families

- Parent-child relationships
 - No difference in quality of parent-child relationships
 - More satisfied with being a mother
 - More interaction between mother and child
 - More disputes in disciplinary interactions
- Child development
 - No difference in emotional, social behavioural development
 - No difference in school adjustment
 - One study: lower self esteem

LESBIAN MOTHER FAMILIES: A GROWING BODY OF EMPIRICAL KNOWLEDGE DURING THE PAST 30 YEARS

1. Studies of *children* born in a heterosexual family and raised by post divorce (single) lesbian mothers

a.o.

- Golombok et al. (1983) "children in lesbian and single parents households". J Child Psychol Psychiatr, 38, 783-791

2. Studies of *children* (and adolescents) born in lesbian Donor Insemination families

a.o.

Brewaeys et al. (1997). "DI, Child development and family functioning in lesbian mother families". Human Reprod, 12, 1349-1359.

a.o.

Vanfraussen K., et al. (2003). "What does it mean for youngsters to grow up in a lesbian family created by means of donor insemination?". J. Reproductive and Infant Psychology, 20, 4, 237-252.

**Follow up studies of lesbian mother families:
unanimous findings**
Main Conclusions (1)

Family relationships (childhood an adolescence)

- no difference in quality of parenting between Le and He parents:
 - Equally emotionally involved
 - Equally disciplining the child
 - Grandparents equally involved with children

Follow up studies of lesbian mother families

Main Conclusions (2)

The role of the co-mother

- Co-mother more involved in child rearing than father
- Educational tasks more equally divided between both mothers than between mothers and fathers
- *The Child's perspective :*
Children equally attached to both mothers in the lesbian family

Follow up studies of lesbian mother families

Main Conclusions (3)

Child Development

(compared with children raised in heterosexual families: no differences)

- Good psychological adjustment
- Normal gender role behaviour
- No elevated rates of homosexuality among adolescents and adults
- Normal social development and good quality of peer relationships

Follow up studies of lesbian mother families

Main conclusions (4)

Vanfraussen et al (2003) & Gartrell et al (2005)

Social stigmatisation

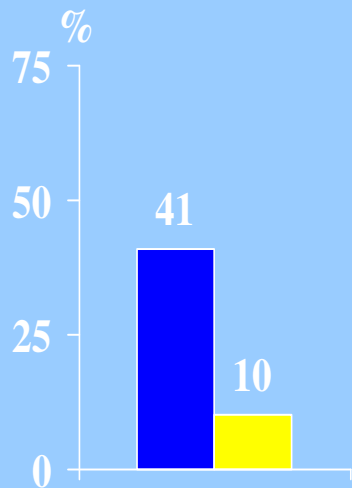
- Once reached adolescence, children become selective to whom they disclose their two mother family unit
- Peer teasing does not occur more often, but if they are teased it's about homosexual issues
- More than 40% confronted with homophobic reactions

"children's wish for donor information"

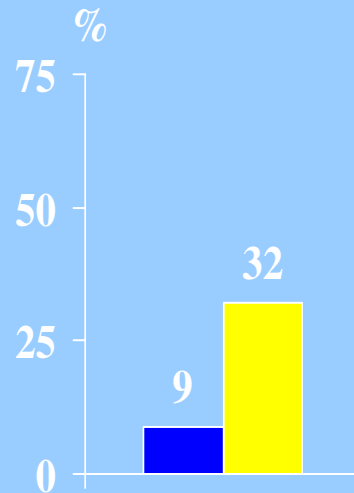
8-18 years

Vanfraussen et al. 2003, . HumanReprod.

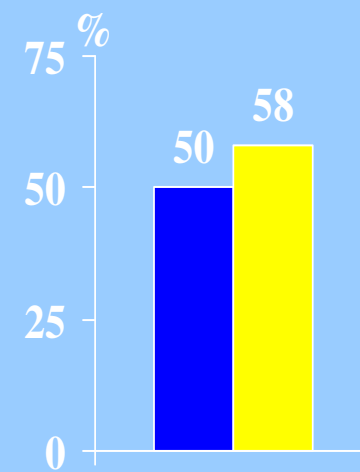
want to meet the donor



want non identifying information



want no information at all



■ boys

■ girls

Children's wish for donor information

- *Gartrell et al. 2005, Am J Orthopsychiatry*
 - Anonymous donor: 30% wished to meet him
 - Identifiable donor: 40% wished to meet him
- *Scheib et al. 2003, Human Reprod*
 - Identifiable donor: > 70% wished to meet him

So Far....

- Findings preliminary for single mothers
- more evidence for lesbian mothers
- No adverse effect on Quality of Family relationships / Psychological Development child
- Most offspring wishes identifying donor information
- Open identity donors should be available

