

## Chapter 4 Families and households

### Topic 3 Theories of the family

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Activity: Media

Donor-conceived children

#### Learning objectives

At the end of this activity you should be able to:

- Identify some of the problems associated with considering having a donor-conceived child.
- Identify some of the legal aspects that might impact on donor-conceived families.
- Evaluate the notion of family being based on genetic links.
- Apply the case of donor-conceived children to the personal life perspective of the family.

A. Having a child through egg or sperm donation can raise questions about what we mean by a family. There are also legal considerations concerning donor-conceived children.

Dr Petra Nordqvist discusses some of the challenges facing lesbian couples who decide to start a family. These challenges include deciding:

- whether to go through a fertility clinic or
- whether to arrange sperm donation through a friend or via the internet
- legal considerations of both options
- potential challenges arising from the lack of recognition in society for two-mother families.

Watch the following clip and then answer the questions below:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TjK0dbr7ReM>

1. What problems does Norqvist identify for lesbian couples wanting to start a family?
2. Which of these problems are associated with donation at a clinic and which with self-arranged donation?
3. Why are lesbian couples still likely to have a self-arranged donation rather than a clinic arranged donation?
4. Why does donor conception for lesbians challenge the notion of what a family is?

B. Professor Carol Smart discusses recent court cases involving lesbian couples who have conceived using sperm from known donors.

Watch the following clip and then answer the questions below:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cru6QtQu6nk>

1. What different roles might be considered for a donor? Why might this change?
2. Why might people, other than the lesbian couple and the donor, become involved with a child? What does this tell us about the meaning of family?
3. What is the legal position of the donor?
4. What is the main consideration of the judge in a case where there may be conflict over relationships? What does that tell us about the position of children in society (look back at topic 2)?
5. What do the case studies tell us about how the creation of meaning can change?
6. What judgements are being made and what can we learn from social science research into the experiences of families of donor-conceived children?

C. Write a summary paragraph on how donor-conceived children highlight the personal life view of the family.