



An Introduction to Social Psychology

The traditional Family?

Narrator (vo):

Phenomenological research sets out to describe the particularity of people's experiences.

Darren:

My own research has been mostly concerned with understanding the lived experience of sexual identities. A particularly interesting study that I conducted was concerned with understanding the expectations of young gay men for parenthood. As a gay man coming out some years ago, I recall automatically assuming that I'd not be able to have children of my own or give my parents grandchildren. I was interested in exploring whether there was a new story about parenthood and the possibility of this for young gay men. This led me to conduct a study designed to investigate the hopes and fears of young gay men about becoming parents themselves.

We set out basically to conduct kind of fairly in depth interviews with sort of 20 young gay men, who didn't have children but had something to say about the topic.

Dramatisation

Darren:

Hi, James. I'm Darren.

Darren:

We recruited from a number of different sources with flyers that we put around various venues, directly approached youth groups in the area, university groups and other people that we knew. We basically were trying to find kind of as many young gay men as we could who were willing to volunteer that didn't already have children through whatever means, and that had some wish to take part and talk about the topic. Men that sometimes we were interviewing them in my office, at the university, or we'd go to their homes, whatever was most appropriate for them, and they felt most comfortable with.

Dramatisation

Darren:

Through here?

James:

Yep. Would you like a drink or anything?

Darren:

Yeah, a cup of tea would be great, thanks.

James:

No problem.

Darren:

I wonder if we could begin by just talking a little bit about your expectations for parenthood. And in particular I'm interested in whether you've ever imagined becoming a parent at some point in the future?

James:

I have certainly. Five years ago, before I came out as a gay man, I was in a relationship with a woman and I got her pregnant. I realised I think at that point that I wasn't in the relationship I wanted to be in to actually bring the child up. It was a mutual decision, but we decided to get rid of the baby in the end and ... it was the right decision, I don't think we could have supported it as I would have wanted to and I think she had the same opinion as me really. I would like children in the future but obviously now, being a gay man, it would be with a different partner, and it would definitely be I think in a relationship that I would want to have that child.

Darren:

What we heard from these people were a variety of themes around the way in which having a child was a way of connecting them in with their own families, their own biological families in particular; a way of continuing the generation, the family name through providing parents with grandchildren, linking themselves into the family structure in a way that often heterosexual siblings did.

Dramatisation

Darren:

And have you thought about the implications of your decision for the child themselves?

James:

My generation's a lot more accepting of gay marriage, gay people having babies. And I would hope that in the future, perhaps ten years down the ... ten years down the line, sorry, that it's developed even more, so that it's become less of an issue.

Darren:

And I wonder if you thought about how your friends or family might respond to you in this decision?

James:

I think my friends would be very accepting. My parents would like grandchildren, definitely, and wanting children myself, I think, I think it would be, it would be a good thing for them and it would be a good thing for me.

Darren:

There was often an emphasis on quite traditional notions of families, of needing to be in a couple before having children was actually quite a common theme, and wanting to be a kind of fairly traditional family, where the child had lots of love and affection and support. And these things were kind of clearly identified as common themes for the men involved.