

# IMPACTS OF M.A.R ON 2S/LGBTQIA+ COUPLES

Limited research has been done on psychological impacts on 2S/LGBTQIA+ couples undergoing medically assisted reproduction (M.A.R). This study aimed to analyze the experiences of 2S/LGBTQIA+ couples M.A.R treatment for social infertility compared to mixed-sex/gender couples treatment for medical infertility.

Research Article

## Reproductive Journeys: A Comparative Analysis of Patient-Centered Care and Well-Being in 2S/LGBTQIA+ and Mixed-Sex/Gender Couples Undergoing Medically Assisted Reproduction

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# SOCIAL INFERTILITY VS MEDICAL INFERTILITY

A primary component of this study is infertility, as it is a common reason for couples seeking M.A.R treatment. Infertility is traditionally defined in medical terms as the inability to achieve pregnancy after 12 months of regular unprotected intercourse. However, this definition primarily applies to mixed-sex/gender couples — known as “medical infertility”.

The modern definition encompasses “**social infertility**”, which acknowledges that infertility is not limited to physiological causes but may also include social and/or relational circumstances (e.g., gender identity)



The growing social acceptance of 2S/LGBTQIA+ couples in western countries has expanded opportunities for same-sex and transgender couples to pursue parenthood, including greater access to M.A.R. It is estimated that about 30% of couples in fertility clinics identify as 2S/LGBTQIA+.

However, little is known about how 2S/LGBTQIA+ couples' relational and psychological wellbeing during the M.A.R process differs from mix-sex/gender couples experiencing medical infertility, or how patient-centered care is given and received in fertility clinics.



# WE WANTED TO KNOW:

1

Do impacts of M.A.R on psychological, relational, and sexual well-being differ between 2S/LGBTQIA+ couples and mix-sex/gender couples?

2

Does the patient-centered care received by 2S/LGBTQIA+ couples during M.A.R differ from mix-sex/gender couples?



**N = 345**  
**Couples**  
**undergoing**  
**M.A.R**

80 2S/LGBTQIA+  
and 265 mixed-  
sex/gender couples

Participants completed 5 questionnaires every 6 months over 2 years. Surveys asked participants about anxiety, depression, coping strategies, and relational dynamics.



# WE FOUND THAT...

Results revealed **no significant differences** in perceptions of respect for values and communication in patient-centered care, as well as no difference in anxiety symptoms between groups. This highlights the **shared experiences** across mixed-sex/gender couples and 2S/LGBTQIA+ couples.



However, mixed-sex/gender couples showed **higher depression symptoms**. These findings may be linked to the specific stressors these couples face, such as the **grief and loss** associated with **medical infertility** before initiating MAR treatment.

# WE FOUND THAT...

2S/LGBTQIA+ couples reported significantly **higher relationship satisfaction** and a greater use of common **coping strategies** compared to mixed-sex/gender couples. This may be influenced by the **intentional** nature of their family-building process.

Among mixed-sex/gender couples, medical infertility is often accompanied by **stigma and blaming** one partner for the inability to conceive; however this is absent from 2S/LGBTQIA+ couples. Absence of traditional gender roles in many 2S/LGBTQIA+ relationships may contribute to a **higher sense of teamwork**, further influencing greater use of common coping strategies and higher relationship satisfaction.



# SO, WHAT DOES ALL THIS MEAN?

These findings demonstrate that there are some **similarities, however some differences** between 2S/LGBTQIA+ couples and mix-sex/gender couples undergoing M.A.R treatment. Furthermore, highlighting the **importance of inclusive research** that avoids treating 2S/LGBTQIA+ couples and mixed sex/gender couples as entirely separate. Future research should explore these dynamics further, focusing on **both similarities and unique strengths** to better support each group.



# THIS IS A SUMMARY OF OUR PUBLISHED ARTICLE:

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**Infographic by Liah Simpson**