

# Review of: "Biological Parenthood and Reproductive Technologies"

Mirela David<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> University of Saskatchewan

**Potential competing interests:** No potential competing interests to declare.

The last thing women who struggle with infertility need is yet another male author telling them their only chance of having a baby reinforces patriarchy. Infertility is a disease and I find the argument that ARTs reinforce patriarchy weak. The author should reconsider his argument. In fact it is well known that infertile women living in patriarchal societies suffer great ostracism, social and family pressures to produce offspring especially male offspring.

What is wrong with Assisted reproductive technologies in terms of democratizing access to them is the prohibitive cost for many people in countries or provinces or states where insurances do not cover costs and even in countries where 1 IVF cycle is funded more cycles are needed for successful live birth. In some cases people can spend thousands of dollars or tens of thousands of dollars until they achieve a live birth because these technologies do not guarantee anything and it takes several tries to be successful.

The author argues that preference for biological parenthood is problematic. That is for each individual to decide what type of parenthood they prefer. If an LGBT couple wants biological ties with their offspring why is that problematic? In certain countries LGBT people cannot legally adopt, in other countries adoption is difficult because not enough people are in the system, for example in the province where I live Saskatchewan a law was passed for indigenous children in the system to rightfully be placed with indigenous communities first. This however has created a vacuum in the local adoption system and there are currently no children to adopt (with wait lists of many years), therefore the only way to adopt for non-indigenous couples is international adoption which also carries costs. For these couples maybe IVF is an answer especially if they suffer from infertility, but such treatments can help them.

The author also argues that biological parenthood reinforces patriarchy. For millions of mothers who are having children these days and for fathers that help out with baby care this is a problematic argument. According to the author one should no longer have biological children because it reinforces patriarchy. If fathers would help out with baby care, bottle feeding and other household tasks that would not be the case, and many fathers these days do step up. If the author thinks breastfeeding reinforces patriarchy probably the author has not heard of pumping which allows the mother to extract the milk so that other household members for instance the father can feed the baby. It's most used to keep up milk supply for instance in the US by women who go back to work after 2-3 months because of short maternity leave but who want to continue feeding the baby breastmilk. Also, formula feeding is quite acceptable these days and many women do not breastfeed. Less and less women stay at home. This argument is also outdated. In many countries for instance former socialist countries in Eastern Europe mothers have always gone back to work after giving birth. They now have access to

paid maternity leave but still they go back to work afterwards. In Canada the government passed new funding so that daycare can be affordable and so that women could go back to work sooner. Of course, the US lags behind with many stay at home moms but that is also a choice at least for some not just a tangent of patriarchy. In fact, if you look worldwide stay at home moms is more popular with people who can afford this not in very poor countries but is encountered more in rich western countries.

With the argument patriarchy uses reproduction to keep women and girls down I ask the question: what about those women who want to have children regardless of what a man says about it, for example single mothers, lesbians or women who use donor sperm who resort to ARTS? Do they also reinforce patriarchy? If anything, IVF and donor sperm allows single women and lesbian couples to bypass the figure of the father in their families altogether. Not to mention some IVF clinics are run by female reproductive specialists and female doctors. Take for example the clinic in the town where I live Saskatoon is called Aurora Reproductive care and it is a clinic run almost entirely by female doctors. That empowers women who struggle with infertility to be treated by a female doctor who understands. Of course, worldwide IVF clinics have female and male doctors, but it is not always an entirely male dominated field. The literature on ARTS has been critical of some ethical implications for example Rayna Rapp worries about the implications of ARTS for disability, other authors worry about the costs, feminists worry that the embryo may acquire rights outside of a woman's body etc ...all of these arguments have their strong points, but this is the first time I encounter the unconvincing argument that ARTs reinforce patriarchy. Again, I ask the author to reconsider his argument or at least try to answer some of my questions.