



## **EXPERIENCES OF WOMEN USING THIRD-PARTY REPRODUCTION**

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Infertility is a serious diagnosis experienced by women and men throughout the world. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), a woman is considered infertile if she is unable to become pregnant after one year of unprotected sexual intercourse. In fact, 6% of women aged 15 to 44 are considered infertile in the United States, and 12% are unable to carry a pregnancy to term (CDC, 2017). For those who wish to create a family despite these circumstances, third-party reproduction is an often-utilized resource. The Center for Reproductive Health defines third-party reproduction as “the use of eggs, sperm or embryos that have been donated by a third person (donor) to enable an infertile individual or couple to become parents” (UC Health, 2017). This research study sought to answer one research question: What are the lived experiences of women undergoing third-party reproduction in a relatively conservative region of the western United States? The Utah Infertility Resource Center assisted with recruitment, and a total of ten women were interviewed using a qualitative interview guide. Interviews tended to last for approximately 1 hour and were recorded with the participants’ consent. All interview recordings were transcribed verbatim, and data analysis consisted of reading the data line-by-line and developing themes. Women discussed the process of third-party reproduction as a whole. They alluded to the biological relationship they hoped to have with their future child, as well as the unsatisfactory treatment they received from medical staff once they began the process of third-party reproduction. Women expressed that due to the family-oriented culture in which they live, they often felt isolated and stigmatized because of their infertility. To counter this difficult experience, most women found support from significant others or family members. Many relied on technology such as Facebook support groups to gain information and feel accepted. The majority of women interviewed expressed a desire for counseling services before, during, and after the process of third-party reproduction. Study findings indicate that medical staff require increased empathy for infertility and should further explain diagnoses and procedures to patients. Women utilizing third-party reproduction would benefit from additional family and social media support as well as the availability of counseling services.