

Assisted Reproduction Contemporary Psychoanalytic Perspectives

Heidelberg, Germany. June 12-14, 2026.







COWAP CONFERENCE

First announcement -Save the date-

The desire to have children, i.e. the idea of procreating and passing on something essential from oneself to future generations, is as old as humanity itself. What is new, however, is that parenthood is regarded by many as a special, unique value, and some see the right to have one's own child as a 'universal human right'. In recent decades, reproductive medicine has developed technical possibilities to help many people with infertility as well as many homosexual couples who wish to have children of their own.

According to the WHO, in 2023 it was estimated that 1 in 6 people worldwide are affected by infertility at some point in their lives. Assisted Reproduction (AR), a term that designates a series of methods and techniques that make it possible to carry out pregnancies that would not happen spontaneously, has been shown to be a contemporary and widely disseminated approach to address infertility. More and more, these issues emerge in the consulting room and the psychoanalyst is confronted with all the questions they bring.

People struggling with infertility face different challenges. There are various scenarios, all of which coming with consequences for the emotional well-being of everyone involved: Undiagnosed problems with procreation force couples to live with uncertainty. Unsuccessful treatments and pregnancy losses demand the difficult work of mourning. Gamete donation or embryo adoption come with the need to process the presence of another party and all the fantasies that it entails. Surrogacy brings to the scene another body (and another mind). All these situations that AR brings to the lives of contemporary patients demand deep reflection and empathy from the clinician. In fact, the use of AR is part of new scenarios that patients bring to their sessions and is, therefore, a very timely topic for consideration (1).

We are concerned with questions such as "what does genetics have to do with kinship?" Or "what might procreation have to do with parental coitus?" Moreover, "how do we fantasize about oedipal configurations in same-sex and in heterosexual parenting families who use AR?"(2). In how far is the situation for homoparenting couples different from heterosexual couples? There is the need to resort to another party bringing in what is "lacking" in the same-sex couple in terms of reproduction. How will this "lack" be represented? And what place will this third party have in the unconscious fantasies? Which impact has the other visibility for same-sex parenting families concerning their use of AR in comparison with heterosexual couples?

We would like to discuss these and many other topics together with you in the Heidelberg Institute for Psychoanalysis, Germany, on June 12–14, 2026. Attendance will be possible both in person and online. The conference will be held in English.

Looking forward to welcoming many of you!

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