Reframing Assisted Human Reproduction: Experiences of LGBTQ people in Ontario

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* Research Team: Lori E. Ross, datejie green, Scott Anderson, Rachel Epstein, Stu Marvel, Leah S. Steele
* Advisory committee, study participants, and staff and students of the Re:searching for LGBTQ Health team
* Many lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, transsexual, two-spirit and queer (LGBTQ) people choose to parent.

* The majority of LGBTQ people must rely on outside assistance to create their families, including adoption and assisted human reproduction (AHR) services.

* It is against the law to discriminate on the basis of sexual orientation or marital status (Assisted Human Reproduction Act) and gender identity (Human Rights legislation of NWT, Manitoba and Ontario).
Research Questions

- Are AHR services meeting the family creation needs of LGBTQ people in Ontario?

- What are the barriers and facilitators to AHR service access for LGBTQ people in Ontario?
Methods

- Community-based study
- Advisory Committee of service users and service providers
- Recruitment: +110 LGBTQ people across Ontario
- Sampling: Purposeful
- Data Collection: Semi-structured interviews
- Analysis: Thematic content analysis
 Results – Participant Demographics

* 66 individuals interviewed (40 interviews in total)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender Identification</th>
<th>N (%)</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female (cisgender)</td>
<td>48 (72.7%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male (cisgender)</td>
<td>9 (13.6%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trans man/FTM spectrum</td>
<td>7 (10.6%)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Trans woman/MTF spectrum</td>
<td>2 (3.0%)</td>
<td></td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sexual Orientation</th>
<th>N (%)</th>
<th>Notes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lesbian</td>
<td>21 (31.8%)</td>
<td>-1 also identified as queer</td>
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<tr>
<td>Queer</td>
<td>18 (27.3%)</td>
<td>-2 also identified as queer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gay</td>
<td>11 (16.7%)</td>
<td>-1 also identified as queer/pansexual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bisexual</td>
<td>11 (16.7%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two-Spirit</td>
<td>1 (1.5%)</td>
<td>- also identified as bisexual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Straight</td>
<td>2 (3.0%)</td>
<td>- both identified as trans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>2 (3.0%)</td>
<td>- included: homoandrophilic, fluid/no label</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Results – Participant Demographics

Cultural/Racial Background: 48 (72.7%) identified as white

Relationship Status: 57 (86.4%) identified as legally married or common-law

Highest Level of Education: 31 (47%) indicated post-graduate

Annual Household Income: 27 (40.9%) indicated over $100,000

Number of Children: 28 (43.8%) had 1 child

Age: 43 (65.1%) indicated 31-40 years old

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region in Ontario</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>(%)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Toronto</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>51.5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Southwest</td>
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<td>15.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastern</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>13.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Eastern</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hamilton/Niagara</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central East</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central West</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northwest</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.0%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Are AHR services meeting the family creation needs of LGBTQ people in Ontario? **Sometimes.**

The needs of some are better met than others:

- Trans people, individuals wishing to use surrogacy, and individuals wishing to use a known sperm donor experience the greatest barriers to accessing AHR services in Ontario.
You have to break away from this idea that women have babies and men provide sperm. Because that’s just not true actually a lot of the time. And, despite so much evidence to the contrary, we are clinging to that belief. And the entire clinic system and the assisted reproductive technology industry is based on that premise.

– Trans man who accessed AHR with his trans man partner in order to conceive
Results – Recommendations

* Access to information about AHR services

There’s not a lot [of LGBTQ family planning information] out there. I maybe didn’t know where to look, but even books, like I was searching for books and I’m like, “Come on. There’s got to be books there aside from lesbian sex books.” [laughs]

– Lesbian whose partner conceived their child through anonymous donor insemination with the assistance of AHR services

* AHR service provider practices

* Education and training of AHR service providers

* Clinic staffing and environment

* Service gaps
Conclusions

* LGBTQ service users defy assumptions commonly held within the AHR system, that is, the notion that those who access AHR services are heterosexual, cisgender (non-trans), partnered, and experiencing infertility.

* Our study is the first of its kind to explore the experiences of the broader community of LGBTQ people, rather than focusing exclusively on sexual minority women.

* The persistence of barriers to AHR services for LGBTQ people indicates the need for additional education and training of service providers in order to provide them with the tools necessary to deliver non-discriminatory and culturally appropriate care to LGBTQ clients.
Knowledge Translation

- Forum Theatre workshops
  - CME-accredited for fertility doctors
- Fact sheet for AHR service providers
- Guidebook for LGBTQ parents-to-be
- Conference presentations
- Academic papers
  - University of Toronto Press book chapter
- Magazine articles
  - Creating Families
  - Infertility Awareness Association of Canada