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# A double-edged sword: women's affective experiences of successful assisted reproduction

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**2019**

https://hdl.handle.net/10539/28327

Campbell, Tatiana Carlot (2019) A double-edged sword :women's affective experiences of successful assisted reproduction, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, <http://hdl.handle.net/10539/28327>

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**Abstract**

*Primary objective:* This study's primary objective was to investigate the lived experiences of women who undergo successful assisted reproduction in the context of infertility. This qualitative study endeavoured to explore women's stories of becoming a mother in these circumstances, and to describe the internal, emotional experiences of women who undergo a successful IVF treatment. *Research design:* An interpretive qualitative research design used psychoanalytically informed one-on-one, face-to-face semi-structured interviews. This approach focused on exploring the affective, internal experiences of a sample of five women who underwent successful assisted reproduction. *Methods and procedures:* Mothers who had undergone a successful IVF treatment were asked to voluntarily participate in one-on-one, face-to-face semi-structured interviews. Transcribed data was analysed and informed by psychoanalytic methodological principles. *Main findings:* This research illustrated how infertility necessitates a coming to terms with a new psychic reality. The desire, wish and hope for a baby; deciding to undergo assisted reproduction; and going through the enormity and the painfulness of the IVF experience, while reaching a point of success leaves an impression of a double-edged sword. A part of one's self is taken and the hope of creation is achieved. However, choosing to undergo assisted reproduction brings with it unconscious consequences of the medicalisation of infertility and experiencing the mind as culpable and deservingly punishable. Themes emerged around experiencing the body transformed into an object and the viscerality of the bodily invasion of IVF treatment. Themes also included the interrogation of one's own mind and the mind of the other. Finally, themes around loss, the fear of loss and impending death were hauntingly present.

Keywords: assisted reproduction; infertility; IVF; psychoanalysis; motherhood