Citation: Bromfield, N. F. (2016). “Surrogacy Has Been One of the Most Rewarding Experiences in My Life”: A Content Analysis of Blogs by U.S. Commercial Gestational Surrogates. *IJFAB: International Journal of Feminist Approaches to Bioethics* 9(1), 192-217. University of Toronto Press.

"SURROGACY HAS BEEN ONE OF THE MOST REWARDING EXPERIENCS IN MY LIFE":

A CONTENT ANALYSIS OF BLOGS BY U.S. COMMERCIAL GESTATIONAL SURROGATES

NICOLE F. BROMIELD

Abstract

Commercial gestational surrogacy has increased significantly over the past decade, and many people are speaking out against its dehumanization, commodification, baby selling, and exploitation. Surrogacy has been banned in much of the world, despite only a small number of empirical studies on surrogates' experiences and attitudes. The United States is a popular global surrogacy destination, where surrogacy remains legal. U.S. surrogates are not an invisible group but are active users of internet forums and blogs. This article describes the framing of the experiences by gestational surrogates who keep blogs, using those blogs as data.

Keywords: gestational surrogacy, content analysis, surrogate blogs, interpretive phenomenological analysis

1. Introduction

With advances in assisted reproductive technologies (ART), globalization, and the ease of contact via the internet, the use of gestational surrogates as a family building option has grown significantly over the past decade. In a gestational surrogacy arrangement, unlike a traditional surrogacy arrangement, the surrogate is not the genetic mother of the child she carries; the genetic mother is either an egg donor or the commissioning parent. There are only a handful of countries in which commercial surrogacy is permitted, with the United States and India

prominent among them. More surrogacy arrangements are carried out in the United States than in any other nation (Markens 2011; Pande 2014), and the number of gestational surrogates in the United States grew by 89 percent from 2004 to 2008 (Gugucheva 2010).

The United States is a popular global surrogacy destination for people not able to engage easily in surrogacy arrangements in their own countries. According to Tamar Lewin (2014), there were an estimated 2,000 commercial surrogacy arrangements in the United States in 2014 with a notable number of affluent Europeans, who felt that, despite the high costs, the United States was the safest nation for contracting a surrogacy arrangement, as the commissioning parents: "Indeed, many large surrogacy agencies in the United States say international clients—gay, straight, married or single — provide the bulk of their business" (1).

The United States is also a popular global surrogacy destination because any baby born in the United States, regardless of parentage, receives U.S. citizenship upon birth. For example, there has been a significant increase in wealthy Chinese couples seeking surrogacy arrangements in America in order for their babies to obtain citizenship, which would enable the entire family to relocate there eventually (Harney 2013; Hohman and Hagan 2001). Although official statistics are not available, India is thought to rival the United States in numbers of surrogacy arrangements taking place in that country every year, with the numbers growing (Pande 2014), and India receives the bulk of the media's attention. Many of the commissioning parents seeking surrogacy arrangements in India are transnational, with a large number of Indian origin "who combine a cheaper treatment with a family visit" (13). There were an estimated 1,500 surrogate births in India in 2010 (Magnier 2011). However, in 2012, India banned surrogacy for same-sex couples (Pande 2014), which forced them to look elsewhere for surrogacy arrangements.

Surrounded by widespread moral panic and cultural anxieties about the practice, surrogate pregnancies received much attention in the late 1980s, beginning with the well-known *Baby M* case in which a traditional surrogate mother fought for custody of the child, bringing surrogacy into the public discourse (Markens 2011). In 1987, the *New York Times* published 131 articles on surrogacy, and a plethora of scholarly attention followed, even though surrogacy pregnancies were then still a relatively rare occurrence (Markens 2011). With the rise of contract pregnancies, surrogacy has recently reemerged as an issue of concern, and contemporary gestational commercial surrogacy arrangements have increasingly received attention from the media, academics, and organizations such as bioethics and feminist groups. Most of the focus is on surrogacy arrangements in lower resource nations, such as India, although the United States is also a leading global surrogacy destination among the few countries that allow commercial surrogacy arrangements (Bromfield and Rotabi 2014; Markens 2011; Pande 2014). This study focused on U.S. surrogates, in part because media and academic critiques on the practice leads attention away from commercial surrogacy arrangements in Western nations, such as the United States.

Despite an estimated 2,000 babies born to surrogates in the United States in 2014, with most of them through commercial arrangements (Lewin 2014), the experiences of U.S. surrogates remains mostly absent from the surrogacy discourse (Markens 2011). This may be because U.S. women, unlike Indian women, are not seen as vulnerable to exploitation and abuse; however, given the large and increasing numbers of surrogate births occurring in the United States each year, coupled with the recent proposed Hague convention to regulate surrogacy internationally (McLeod and Botterell 2014), voices of U.S. surrogates are critical to surrogacy discourse and debates.

Many people are opposed to surrogacy as a family building option, and there has been a resurgence of the general moral panic concerning surrogacy, as noted by Markens (2011) and (Teman 2008), that began in the late 1980s. Numerous articles and reports have been published recently on surrogacy, with a number of activists calling for a worldwide ban on the practice (Damelio and Sorensen 2008), the primary motivation being the protection of women who work as surrogates.

Dehumanization, the commodification of women and children, lack of surrogates' ability to give truly informed consent, baby selling, the invasion of the marketplace into the family realm, human rights violations, and the exploitation of surrogates are cited as common arguments against surrogacy (Corea 1985; Damelio and Sorensen 2008; Dworkin 1983; Gugucheva 2010). Teman (2008) suggests that part of the uneasiness with the practice is because of the its "subersive nature. . .which disrupts two traditional conceptions that have long been comforting to the western world: *family* and *motherhood*" (1105; emphasis in the original) Surrogacy and especially positive surrogacy experiences challenge the notion that the family unit and the mother-infant bond is a natural one and not socially mediated (Teman 2008). Fears of producing "designer" babies have also been voiced by critics of surrogacy.

2. Brief overview of feminist perspectives on surrogacy

Unlikely allies, both Christian conservatives and some feminists speak out against contract pregnancies (Parker 2013; Parks 2010), and some feminists, as noted by Joseph Sullivan (1987), liken surrogacy to prostitution, slavery, and/or human trafficking. Radical feminists decry the use of reproductive technologies in general, based on the premise that ART represents institutionalized patriarchal domination of women (Corea 1985; Dworkin 1983; Kessler 2009;

Raymond 1990) and turns women into reproductive objects or sterile uteri (Chesler 2011; Raymond 1990). Others question the ethics or morality of surrogacy arrangements (Anderson 1990; Bailey 2011; Berkhout 2008; Brennan and Noggle 1997; Oliver 1989; Overall 1987), and social justice concerns and fears regarding the children born of surrogacy arrangements are also raised (Bailey 2011; Donchin 2010; Parks 2010; Gupta 2012).

Similar to the feminist wars fought over a woman's right to exert control over her sexual and reproductive behavior, feminists and feminist bioethicists are not unified in their positions on the practice of surrogacy (Tong 1996). The contemporary history of feminist involvement in the surrogacy debate dates back to the infamous *Baby M* case. In 1987, several prominent feminists including Betty Friedan, Gena Corea, Janice Raymond, and Barbara Katz Rothman filed an amicus brief during the case in which they argued that commercial surrogacy violates the dignity of women, leads to the exploitation of women by men, dehumanizes them by making them commodities, and is a form of trafficking in women and babies (Sullivan 1987).

Some second- and third-wave feminists were opposed to these assertions, citing women's reproductive freedom and right to self-determination, and maintained that women should be able to control their own bodies (Andrews 1988; Markens 2011; Matson 2014). Other feminists believe that surrogacy should be viewed as a form of labor and that fair wage/fair trade polices need to be established to prevent the exploitation of surrogates (Crozier, et al. 2014). Currently, feminists are prominent in the public discourse and debate on surrogacy and take a range of positions. However, there is a dearth of critical feminist literature challenging claims regarding exploitation and commodification of surrogates.

3. Surrogacy in the United States

In most European nations and in other countries worldwide, commercial surrogacy, altruistic (noncommercial) surrogacy, or both have been banned and/or criminalized, largely on the grounds that the practice is exploitive, commodifies women, and violates their human rights (Storrow 2013). These assertions unfortunately are not well-grounded in empirical data (Storrow 2013) and rely mostly on feminist and other critiques about the practice (Fixmer-Oraiz 2013) in which surrogates were neither consulted nor given a voice.

A major voice that is involved in surrogacy critiques is that of the powerful and well-funded antihuman trafficking movement, which has roots in a conservative Christian moral agenda (Berend 2012; Stark 2012) and has labeled commercial surrogacy as a form of human trafficking (Center for Bioethics and Culture 2015). Both surrogates and babies born of surrogacy arrangements have been considered human trafficking victims. Some scholars involved in adoption research have voiced concerns related to the commodification of children, child rights, and the best interests of the child (Fronek and Crawshaw 2014).

In the United States, surrogacy regulations vary from state to state, with California considered the most surrogacy friendly. Although sociodemographic dimensions such as ethnicity and income levels of U.S. surrogates are largely unknown (Gugucheva 2010), it is often assumed that young, impoverished women of color work as surrogates, and surrogacy is portrayed as a form of severe reproductive injustice with the surrogacy market preying on vulnerable women (Fixmer-Oraiz 2013; Parker 2013). Magdaline Gugecheva (2010) and Jennifer Damelio and Kelly Sorensen (2008) maintain that U.S. women who serve as surrogates are from the lowest income brackets and are not likely to have financial or educational resources, which opens them to exploitation and abuse and thrusts them into a scenario of the rich taking advantage of the poor. Despite this assertion, researchers found that most U.S. surrogates are

lower middle class or middle class women (Berend 2012, Stark 2012), in their twenties or thirties, and tend to be white, Christian, and married with families (Ciccarelli and Beckman 2005; Kleinpeter and Hohman 2000; Stark 2012). Indeed, women of color appear to be underrepresented among U.S. surrogates (Ciccarelli and Beckman 2005).

4. Research on surrogates

Although there have been numerous articles written on the practice of surrogacy, including discussions of moral, psychological, legal, policy, and ethical issues, the number of empirical studies on the experiences of the surrogates themselves are limited, and there is clearly a need for further contemporary research in this area (Ciccarelli and Beckman 2005, Gugucheva 2010). Much of the academic surrogate research that does exist has been significantly influenced by adoption research, particularly studies, as noted by Elly Teman (2008), that focus on birthmothers' feelings after child relinquishment, and likens commissioning parents with intended adoptive parents (Ciccarelli and Beckman, 2005). Using adoption research to inform surrogacy studies is problematic since the similarities are severely limited. There is usually a genetic link between the commissioning parents and the child born of a surrogacy arrangement (Bromfield and Rotabi 2014). Furthermore, surrogates do not give up the babies under duress, as a contract is created between the adults before the pregnancy occurs. As Teman (2008) notes:

> The confusion between surrogates and birthmothers is deceiving: surrogates enter into a contracted agreement with the intent to become pregnant and relinquish, while birthmothers make the decision to relinquish under the pressures of an existent confirmed pregnancy . . . . [S]till the conflation of these two roles influences surrogacy studies right down to the questions that researchers ask. (1108)

Similarly, children born from contract pregnancies are expected, based on adoption research, to struggle with loss, grief, or issues of abandonment, while in a ten-year longitudinal study that examined families created using surrogacy in the United Kingdom, the children felt positive about their surrogacy conception and birth origins and the women who gave birth to them (Jadva et al. 2012).

In Teman's extensive review of surrogacy studies, she found that, in the majority of those on surrogates' experiences, researchers frame the surrogate's choice as deviant from "normal" motherhood and view it as "one of economic desperation, a psychological need for reparation, or as a function of abnormal personality characteristics" (2008, 1109). The questions that researchers ask are influenced by these negative assumptions, and Teman argues that "the centrality of motherhood and family as basic touchstones of society make it difficult to accept the repeat finding [in the research] that surrogates are non-psychopathological women" (1105)

Even when surrogates express "nondeviant" and straightforward motivations for being surrogates, this reasoning is dismissed by some researchers (Teman 2008). For example, in the 2012 Sama-Resource Group for Women and Health study of Indian surrogates, some respondents suggested that, in addition to the monetary benefit, they became surrogates to help other families have children and because they would receive their good wishes for helping them to become parents. Sama rejected this motivation, referring it to a "rationalization" on the part of the surrogates and "as a way of justifying their decision to take on surrogacy" (57). Teman (2008) found that "whatever reason is proffered for [the surrogate's] choice, the surrogate is constructed as deviant: her altruism ranges beyond normative boundaries; her desire for money is constituted as greed or as a function of extreme poverty; or her reparative motive is indicative of past sins for which she must punish herself" (1108)

Despite surrogates often being portrayed as deviant and/or victims in both the media and by scholars, the empirical studies that exist on surrogates suggest that they are neither deviant nor duped victims, but that instead they enjoy challenging the traditional notions of family and motherhood and want to help create families (Markens 2011; Kessler 2009; van den Akker 2003). In addition, the sentiment of having a "sense of purpose" has also been prevalent in narratives by surrogates (Blyth 1994; Kessler 2009; Teman 2008).

Then too, some gestational surrogates report that they enjoy being pregnant, are proud of the accomplishment, and again that they take pleasure from the fact that they can help another family (Stark 2012). Indeed, the most popular motivations reported by surrogates in studies were enjoyment of being pregnant, sympathy for childless couples, financial considerations, and the desire to do something "special" (Blyth 1994; Teman 2008). In the United States, surrogates often downplay the financial incentives and focus on altruistic motivations for their surrogacies (Ciccarelli and Beckman 2005; Hohman and Hagan 2001; Markens 2011).

Surrogates involved in studies reported being satisfied with their surrogacy experiences over time and felt that those experiences benefitted them and their families (Ciccarelli and Beckman 2005; Jadva et al. 2012; Jadva and Imrie 2014). Ann Fisher (2013) interviewed eight Canadian gestational surrogates and found that positive themes of faith and spirituality emerged when surrogates discussed their experiences. Jadva, et al. (2003) studied thirty-four U.K. surrogates' motivations, experiences, and the psychological consequences of surrogacy approximately one year after their deliveries and reported that "surrogate mothers do not appear to experience psychological problems as a result of the surrogacy arrangement" (2196).

Some studies in Eastern nations have found that surrogates have had positive overall experiences, such as Teman's (2010) study of Israeli surrogates. In addition, researchers in Iran

conducted a study of fifteen Iranian surrogates and found that they experienced a general sense of satisfaction with their contract pregnancies (Pashmi et al. 2010). Amrita Pande, well-known for her ethnographic work with Indian surrogates (Pande 2008; Pande 2009a; Pande 2009b; Pande 2010; Pande 2014) noted that Indian "surrogates equate surrogacy to the 'divine,' reassert control over their 'productive bodies,' construct moral boundaries between themselves and prostitutes and baby-sellers, and forge kinship ties with the fetus, intended mothers, or other surrogates" (2014, 11).

Interestingly, Teman (2008) has found that surrogate researchers have repeated studies on the same subjects because the researchers are surprised with the findings and expect to find that the surrogates are not "normal," well-adjusted people who are satisfied with their life choices and that

> the need to repeat these studies time after time only to obtain the same results may be influenced by the skepticism, surprise and suspicion with which these results are often relayed . . . . Moreover, although [researchers] find that surrogates do not grieve over parting with the baby, each study is quick to emphasize the one or two cases in each sample in which a surrogate reports depression after relinquishment . . . [even though] those women who do display grief do so as the result of the loss of the surrogate role and of the couple's attention, or because of a "falling out" with the couple. (1109)

Most of the negative experiences reported by surrogates are related to their relationships with the commissioning couples or because they no longer feel important to the couples after the surrogate pregnancies (Berend 2012; Blyth 1994; Ciccarelli and Beckman 2005; Jadva et al. 2003; Ragone 1994). In one study that supports this assertion, Zsuzsa Berend (2012) examined online communication among surrogates on a support website and found that they "often

describe their surrogacy as a 'journey' of shared love" with the commissioning couple and that surrogates "hope for a long-term friendship with their couple" and often feel betrayed and disappointed when the couple reduces or ceases contact after the birth (913). Studies such as those by Berend (2012), Eric Blyth (1994), Janice Cicarelli and Linda Beckman (2005), Jadva et al. (2003), and Helena Ragone (1994) suggest that a meaningful social exchange between the surrogate and the commissioning parents is an important feature of the surrogate experience and has both positive and negative aspects.

5. Research project

In the large body of literature on surrogacy, only a handful of studies has been completed on U.S. surrogates (Markens 2011). U.S. surrogates are not invisible, silent, or even a quiet; they have voices easily accessible online through both forums (Berend 2012) and their own blogs in which they publicly share their journeys as surrogates. Given that surrogates have generally not been heard in the debates and dominant discourse on surrogacy, I sought to challenge that discourse and investigate U.S. commercial surrogates' public accounts of their lived experiences through their written blog texts. I was particularly interested in expressions of agency and empowerment because they have been neglected by other surrogacy researchers. I focus on U.S. surrogates because Americans make up a large percentage of the world's surrogates, there have not been many empirical studies published on the experiences of U.S. surrogates, and also because there are a number of publicly available blogs written by them.

a. Aims of the study

The aims of the study were to explore how U.S. commercial gestational surrogate bloggers publicly framed and represented their lived experiences of being gestational surrogates

and to gain an understanding of the meaning and experience of surrogacy for these women. The need for further research on gestational surrogates' experiences has been established, especially research that is not guided by previous adoption studies. The findings of this study are not intended to be generalizable to a wider group of U.S. gestational surrogates or even to other U.S. gestational surrogate bloggers, nor is the study meant to be compared with the experiences of surrogates in non-Western nations that have markedly different social and cultural contexts.

b. Blogs as data

Weblogs or "blogs," as they are commonly called, can provide a rich source of data to social scientists who want to study the self-interpretation of experiences; blogs have the advantage of offering naturalistic and unsolicited sources of data that are publicly available and provide the researcher with access to populations that otherwise might be hidden or unavailable (Hookway 2008; Mann and Stewart 2000). Importantly, blogs are not "contaminated" by the researcher, as interviews can be, but are written by the research subjects in their own voices and contain reflections for an explicit or implicit audience (Hookway 2008). Not contaminating the data by asking questions rooted in preconceived notions was especially important in this project, because surrogacy researchers and the questions that guide their research have often been influenced by negative assumptions about the surrogacy experience (Teman 2008).

c. Methodological approach

I used interpretive phenomenological analysis [IPA] for my methodological approach to the research. The purpose of IPA is to offer insight into how a particular person or group of people makes meaning of specific phenomena, which usually relate to a major life event. IPA also maintains an idiographic focus in which individual accounts of experience over time remain at the forefront of analysis. This approach was especially fitting for this project; in

phenomenological studies, as Thomas Groenewald (2004) notes, “The aim of the researcher is to describe as accurately as possible the phenomenon, refraining from any pre-given framework, but remaining true to the facts” (5), Phenomenology is a useful methodology for attempting to understand how a person or people experience major life events or phenomena through analysis of qualitative data.

IPA studies rely on the use of thick, descriptive, and rich qualitative datasets for the analysis, in which the researcher can work with a highly detailed and verbatim transcript. These data are usually in the form of transcribed in-depth interviews conducted by the researcher or collected from personal diaries kept by the participants. In this study, public blogs written by the gestational surrogates were used as the transcripts. The blogs were online and included large amounts of rich and descriptive text data on the production of which I, as the researcher, had no influence. However, reflexivity in this qualitative study (Creswell 2012) cannot be dismissed; my own experiences as a woman and personal views from which I cannot separate myself affect my interpretations as a researcher.

The blogs were particularly appropriate to interpretive phenomenological analysis because of the focus on idiographic data in IPA. Each blog, written by a single individual and spanning at least one year (although most were often longer), maintained an idiographic focus on one person over a significant span of time. In contrast, a single in-depth interview would capture a participant’s experience and interpretation of a phenomenon only at one particular point in time.

d. Research questions

In IPA studies, analysis is inductive, and the researcher generates codes from the data and does not rely on preexisting hypotheses or theories; therefore, this study was not grounded in a

preexisting hypothesis. As I mentioned, its aims were to explore how U.S. gestational surrogate bloggers publicly framed and represented their lived experiences of being gestational surrogates and to gain an understanding of the meanings and experiences of surrogacy for these women. The research questions considered the gestational surrogate bloggers' public expressions of their lived experiences and the meanings they attached to their experiences as surrogates. I was interested in understanding their public expressions of their lived experiences as gestational surrogates.

e. Ethical considerations

The use of blogs as data is relatively new in the social sciences (Hookway 2008), and there are a number of active debates among academics regarding the ethics of blog research, including the necessity to acquire informed consent. Researchers have not yet come to an agreement about how to handle blog data, but, at this point, text data mining of publicly available internet data does not constitute research with human subjects. As Robert Kozinets (2011) notes, "It is also apparent that the archival research and download of existing posts does not strictly qualify as human subjects research. It is only where interaction or intervention occurs that consent is required" (151), Most researchers agree that if membership is required to access text data or the text data are retrieved from a closed group, then informed consent should be obtained since the content of the text was not meant for public consumption (Hookway 2008). In "private" spaces, users would expect their comments to be private; in "public" spaces, including the public blogosphere, however, content is posted with the expectation and understanding that it can and will be read by the public. Nicolas Hookway (2008) maintains that there is a case for "blog researchers to adopt the 'fair game-public domain' position. Blogs are firmly located in the

public domain and for this reason it can be argued that the necessity of consent should be waived . . . . [A]ccessible blogs may be personal but they are not private" (105),

I used publicly available blogs for my analysis and thus treated them as publicly available text documents; no group membership or passwords were required to access them as they were not on closed sites and were easily accessible by a Google search. The research I conducted was not intrusive but was a passive analysis of previous postings, similar to any text or document analysis. I did not comment on the bloggers' posts or solicit the bloggers' involvement. I located the blogs by a general Google search or linked from others' public blogs. I downloaded them in their entirety as static documents to be analyzed qualitatively. I adhered to my university's requirements for ethical research. While the surrogates' blogs are public, they did not write them as research participants, and thus I did not use direct quotes in my analysis or identify the blogs in this article. While I do not use direct quotes or name the blogs, a Google search for "surrogate blog" will allow the reader to become familiar with this blog genre and probably will include many of the blogs included in my analysis.

f. Blog identification

I identified publicly available blogs in which no membership or password was needed for access. A Google search for "surrogate blog" garnered more than thirteen blogs written by U.S. surrogates. Additionally, most of the blogs contained a "blog roll" in the right sidebar in which related blogs the blogger follows were listed, and I was able to find additional publicly available blogs by looking at each of the blogger's blog roll. I excluded any blogs affiliated with a surrogacy provider or group and analyzed only independent blogs; I also excluded as an outlier one blog kept by a surrogate involved in a well-known and controversial surrogacy case because her blog centered on the legal battle between her and the commissioning parents. I identified and

downloaded the blogs in spring 2014. The blogs may or may not be online and accessible at this time.

g. Analysis

I reviewed a total of twenty-two blogs that fit my criteria: the blog is written in English, the blogger was a U.S. commercial gestational surrogate who has followed through with at least one contract pregnancy from conception to birth, and the blog included at least one year of posts. On average, the blogs included 249 pages of text and photos, and I analyzed a total of 5,478 pages, an arduous process. I coded the blogs iteratively for themes and sifted through much content that is consistent with any pregnancy/birth blog to focus on my research questions.

6. Results

Five thematic expressions related to the expression of the lived experiences of the surrogate bloggers and the meaning making of these experiences were common across the blogs. They include: (1) pride in surrogacy work; (2) identification as a member of a special community; (3) commitment to surrogacy education and advocacy; (4) emphasis on the child not being the surrogate's baby; and (5) the importance of the relationship with the commissioning parents (also known as "intended parents"), including a sense of loss when the relationship with the commissioning parents diminished. These themes existed in each of the blogs coded for this project.

a. Pride in surrogacy work

The expression that surrogacy is incredibly important and life changing work in which the bloggers take a great amount of pride was a common theme throughout the blogs and was mentioned by all twenty-two bloggers. Some of the blogs had slogans on their sidebars, such as

"I make families, what's your super-power? Proud Surrogate." This particular slogan included an image of a pregnant Rosie the Riveter, an American cultural icon often used to represent female strength and economic power. One blogger described surrogacy as a part of her basic identity and noted that being a surrogate was like being a mother: she would always identify with being a surrogate just as she would always be a mother. She also said that she would look back with pride on her experience of helping to create families.

Some surrogate bloggers who had contracts with gay couples were particularly proud of being able to help them with family building. One surrogate expressed "gay pride" because she was carrying a baby for a gay couple. Another said she knew that she wanted to be a surrogate to help gay couples specifically with having a baby and also noted that she felt she was showing her unconditional support for equal rights, while also enjoying pregnancy and having a "cute baby bump." This same blogger expressed passionately that surrogacy had brought love and joy into her life and said that she was a better and prouder person because she had been a surrogate. She also described surrogacy as one of her most rewarding life experiences.

Another blogger noted that her surrogate experience had made her stronger in her Christian faith, and, on her blog, she actively encouraged other women to become surrogates because of the rewards. She described her experience as amazing and life changing, and asserted that being a surrogate made her a better wife and mother. Yet another blogger called surrogacy brilliant and wrote that it was the most meaningful thing she had ever done.

Primary constructions of the meaning of the surrogacy experiences for the surrogates were the importance of surrogacy work and the pride they took in it, with some bloggers referring to surrogacy as a calling or destiny. This is in stark contrast to the position taken by many critics who maintain that surrogacy should be abolished in order to protect women and that

it is a form of dehumanizing of them (Damelio and Sorensen 2008; Gugucheva 2010). These twenty-two surrogate bloggers did not see themselves as dehumanized; rather, in some cases, they saw themselves as superhuman because they had created not only their own families but helped to create families for others. Other studies of surrogates have also found that surrogates have constructed surrogacy as godly or divine (Ragone, 1994; Teman 2010; Pande 2014). Helena Ragone (1994) found that surrogacy gave women a sense of uniqueness, accomplishment, and a way to receive attention and praise through their surrogate pregnancies, and Teman (2010) found that Israeli surrogates described the process as "sacred" and a "heroic quest" (245).

b. Identification and membership as a surrogate

Bloggers strongly identified with being members of a surrogate community and viewed other surrogates as part of their support systems. Bloggers discussed their close relationships with other surrogates and shared stories of dinners out and weekends away with other women working as surrogates (or "surro-sisters," as a few bloggers called them), as well as membership in secret Facebook groups and forums for surrogates to share their experiences and exchange advice. There were also organized social and educational events on surrogacy in which surrogates discussed their participation. Several bloggers referred to their relationships with other surrogates as bonds and noted a special connection among surrogates. They discussed supporting each other online as well as in person, and some bloggers indicated that part of the reason they kept blogs was so that they could easily keep other surrogates abreast of their experiences.

The identification as part of a surrogacy community in which surrogates support each other situated the surrogate such that the experience could be normalized for her and her family, and she could garner support from other surrogates during this normalization process. Identity formation is relational and social and requires bonding to others claiming a comparable identity.

Identities are not constructed in social isolation, and this connection to other surrogates was most likely necessary as they worked through the identification and meaning of being a surrogate. The connection and identification to other surrogates helped them maintain the shared meaning of surrogacy as important and selfless work done out of love.

The importance of a meaningful social exchange with other surrogates is not limited to U.S. surrogates. Interestingly, in Pande's extensive ethnographic work on Indian surrogates, she noted that surrogates often forged kinship ties with other surrogates (Pande 2014) and that those relationships were critically important to them.

c. Commitment to surrogacy education and advocacy

Much of the content in the majority of the blogs was related to education and advocacy on the process. The bloggers informed their readers about different types of surrogacy, the in vitro fertilization (IVF) process, details of the surrogacy contract (including what to include and how to negotiate with commissioning parents), and other aspects of the process. For example, one blogger included a video of her administration of a progesterone shot and encouraged potential surrogates not to let their fear of the shots dissuade them from being surrogates. Several bloggers noted that they planned on serving as educators and advocates of surrogacy for surrogacy related organizations, and one blogger mentioned that she was planning on working as a mentor and consultant for a surrogacy agency.

The surrogates portrayed themselves as empowered, knowledgeable, and in control of their experiences as surrogates and not as exploited, uneducated, or deceived women incapable of giving true informed consent, which is often the portrayal of surrogates in the United States. The lived experience for these surrogates was not only that they were knowledgeable about their own surrogacy experiences, including the IVF process, but that they felt sufficiently empowered

by this knowledge to provide advice and guidance to others either going through IVF procedures or considering becoming surrogates.

d. Emphasis on the child not being the surrogate's baby

All twenty-two of the bloggers mentioned that the surrogate children were not their babies and framed the children as not being theirs from the day of conception. When researchers ask surrogates about relinquishing the babies after birth, they often draw on adoption research and frame the questions around loss or grief (Teman 2008). The bloggers confronted the conflation of these two roles by insisting that the baby was not theirs to feel distraught about giving up. Perhaps due to the significant media coverage of the *Baby M* case, surrogate bloggers made it a point to express that they did not feel as if their surrogate babies were their children. They possibly wanted to alleviate fears of the commissioning parents that they would one day claim the children as their own. While surrogates expressed that the children were not their own, most portray on their blogs that they had ongoing relationships with the children, which ranged from occasional phone calls and updates to shared family vacations.

The surrogate bloggers' statements that the children did not feel like their own may or may not reveal their true feelings on the matter. In this study, I sought to determine the expressed feelings of surrogate bloggers who are writing for a public audience. "Audiencing" involves complexities in communication with a wide range of understood audiences; voices and messages vary depending on the audience (Ateljevic et al. 2007, 42). The surrogate bloggers' audiences can include a wide range of people: other surrogates, the commissioning parents, the surrogates' families and friends, women thinking about becoming surrogates, people thinking about becoming commissioning parents, and so on. In addition, these surrogate bloggers are writing for unknown audiences, which may include skeptics and critics of surrogacy. However, the

expressed feeling that the child born of surrogacy is not the surrogate's offspring to mourn is a collective narrative among the surrogate bloggers.

e. Importance of the relationship with the commissioning parents

The importance of the relationship between the surrogates and the commissioning parents, also commonly called intended parents or IPs, was prevalent throughout the blogs. There was a sense in most blogs that there was more than a contract between the commissioning parents and the surrogates: there was a relationship that often continued after the birth of the babies. Berend's 2012 study of forum discussions found that the surrogates' relationships with the commissioning parents were incredibly important, and there were expectations of friendships. Surrogate bloggers often expressed strong feelings about their relationship with the commissioning parents. One surrogate saw her relationship with the contracting couple as something planned by God.

Another blogger discussed how her commissioning parents were now part of her family, and described the intended mother as a new sister; a different surrogate described falling in love with her commissioning parents. There were also descriptions of sadness and loss if or when the relationship with the commissioning parents diminished. One surrogate, who had prospective commissioning parents not pursue a contract pregnancy with her, described herself as having a broken heart. Another surrogate said that she felt as if she lost a friendship after completion of the surrogacy contract.

In her analysis of an online surrogacy forum, Berend (2012) found that surrogates often use romantic language to describe their relationships or desired relationships with commissioning parents and that surrogates felt "let down" when the relationships didn't continue to meet the expectations they had for them or when there was a falling out with the couple. The

collective meaning that these surrogate bloggers have made of surrogacy is that they are doing an important and selfless service out of love in order to help another family. The relationships with the commissioning parents are viewed by the surrogates as special, loving, and important, which is part of the surrogacy experience, and that they are making a sacrifice out of love or compassion for the commissioning parents. The surrogate/commissioning parent relationship appears to be complex: a commercial relationship that includes important social currency as part of the overall surrogacy arrangement.

Teman (2010) in her study of Israeli surrogates also found that the surrogate and the commission mother established a close bond. Melinda Hohman and Christine Hagan (2001) found that the surrogates wanted to be valued by the commissioning couples and that satisfaction of the surrogacy experience was closely linked to the development of a closer relationship with the female commissioning parent. Pande (2014) noted that many Indian surrogates consider their ties to commissioning parents to be special ones.

7. Discussion

Through my study, I set out to challenge the normative discourse on the surrogacy experience, which is often portrayed as disempowering and exploitive for women (Gugucheva 2010, Parker 2013). I have been following surrogacy blogs for several years and have found them to be an intriguing medium to understand some surrogates' public accounts of experiences and relationships with surrogacy; the blogosphere is a relatively new addition to the qualitative researcher's toolkit (Hookway 2008) and has been underutilized as a rich, readily accessible data source.

My project involved a content analysis of twenty-two publicly available blogs kept by U.S. citizens, and I used IPA to guide my methodology. My research questioned the gestational surrogate bloggers' public expressions of their lived experiences and the meanings they attached to their experiences as surrogates.

Five consistent themes expressed by surrogates emerged from the blogs, including their pride in surrogacy work, their identification as members of a special surrogacy community, their commitment to surrogacy education and advocacy, their emphasis on the babies not being theirs, and the importance of their relationships with the commissioning parents. Through my content analysis of the blogs, I found overall that women were empowered by their surrogacy experiences and that they, as surrogates, felt important and maybe even divine and had superpowers because of their ability to create families for others.

These surrogate bloggers also emphasized an important social exchange with the commissioning parents, which often involved an ongoing relationship. They also had a social exchange with other surrogates, their surro-sisters with whom they built kinship ties through their mutual experiences. The surrogacy arrangements of the bloggers in my study were commercial ones in which there were significant financial exchanges in addition to the social exchanges between the surrogates and the commissioning parents. Notably, the bloggers seldom mentioned financial incentives in their blogs, and, in fact, the majority of bloggers avoided mention of financial compensation entirely. Other researchers have noted that it is common for U.S. citizens to separate themselves from the financial exchanges involved in surrogacy, although it is significant, usually a payment of $30,000 USD or more to the surrogate per surrogacy arrangement.

Susan Markens (2011) noted that a surrogate distancing herself from the financial benefit of working as a surrogate also distances her from charges of exploitation, commodification, and questions about baby selling. My sense is that that financial compensation was generally a taboo topic for these public bloggers, as is, for Americans, the subject of money in general. Again, audiencing was considered by the bloggers since they were writing for public audiences, and thus they avoided discussion of the financial aspect of being a commercial surrogate.

One blogger did reveal that, during her mandatory meeting with her surrogacy agency's psychologist, she acknowledged money as one of the motivating factors for her pursuing surrogacy. She noted that the psychologist seemed concerned and told her that most other surrogates do not mention money as a motivation for being a surrogate. The blogger, in defense of pursuing surrogacy for financial gain, wrote on her blog that it was important that she would be able to contribute financially to her family through the surrogacy arrangement.

On the other hand, in her 2010 study of Israeli surrogates, Teman reports that the surrogates did not detach themselves from the financial relationship, as the U.S. bloggers did. Likewise, Pande (2014) found that the financial benefit of surrogacy was a primary motivation freely discussed by Indian surrogates. However, Ragone's (1994) qualitative study of U.S. surrogates found that payment was not an important motivating factor for pursuing surrogacy; rather, Americans reported more altruistic reasons.

My study has some limitations. First, it is based only on U.S. citizen surrogates who have the time, resources, ability, insight, talent, and education to write eloquent and engaging blogs on their experiences. Thus, these bloggers are not a representative sample of surrogates in the United States or of surrogates in other nations.

Another limitation is the nature of self-presentation and audiencing in blogs in general; the bloggers were writing for public audiences that included the commissioning parents, other surrogates, the surrogates' families and friends, and unknown others (including probable critics and "trolls") curious about surrogacy. As one reader of an earlier draft of this article mentioned, blogs are most likely not a "royal road to truth" of experiences, and more insight may be gained through an in-depth interview process.

Because this was strictly a content analysis, I was not able to exercise critical scrutiny of surrogates' own narratives through in-depth interviews. For example, with these twenty-two commercial surrogates, as I discussed, there is little mention of the financial transactions between themselves and the commissioning parents. While I can infer why this is, it would be enlightening to be able simply to ask the surrogates why they do not discuss in their blogs the financial transactions involved in surrogacy arrangements. This inability to provide a more exhaustive analysis is a study limitation.

In considering reflexivity, I cannot dismiss my own personal experiences and assumptions in shaping this research, especially as a woman, as someone who has experienced childbirth, and in regard to my own pragmatic stance on global surrogacy arrangements (Bromfield and Rotabi 2014). Just as negative researcher bias may influence the questions that some researchers explore in surrogacy research, my own beliefs and assumptions no doubt contributed to my approach to this study.

8. Conclusion

At this time, feminists have a prominent role in the public discourse and debate on surrogacy, but there is little critical feminist discourse challenging the dominant position that

surrogacy necessarily involves the commodification and exploitation of women. Much of this debate is centered on surrogacy in India and other low resource nations in which surrogacy is practiced or emerging and is framed as a severe human rights violation against vulnerable and impoverished women, who, in general, are clearly at risk of facing exploitation through surrogacy. There is a range of bargaining power in all surrogate relationships, which can be based on geography, local public policies, education, race, class, caste, the use (or not) of a surrogacy agency, relationship with commissioning parents, and so on.

Although the context for surrogates in low resource and higher income nations is dissimilar, surrogates in the United States are often conveniently excluded from the debates and discussions on surrogacy, despite the fact that the United States is also a popular global surrogacy destination (Bromfield and Rotabi, 2014; Markens, 2011; Pande, 2014).

As discussed in this article, some existing studies on surrogate experiences have found that surrogates want to help create families, feel that surrogacy gives them a sense of purpose, are proud to work as surrogates, and have a high satisfaction with the surrogacy process (Blyth 1994; Teman 2010; Ragone 1994; Jadva et al. 2003). U.S. surrogates were found to downplay the financial incentive of surrogacy (Ciccarelli and Beckman 2005; Hohman and Hagan 2001), and most of the surrogate's disappointment in the arrangements is because of the diminished relationship with the commissioning parents after the birth of the child (Berend 2012). The social exchange between the surrogates and the commissioning parents appears to be a critically important piece in the surrogacy arrangement for many surrogates.

My analysis of the public expressions of lived experiences and meaning of surrogacy for surrogate bloggers confirms some previous findings, which correspond to the thematic areas found in the blogs and the lack of discussion of the financial transaction that occurs in the

surrogacy arrangement. Additionally, I found that surrogate bloggers are part of an important supportive community made up of other surrogates and that bloggers are committed to surrogacy education and advocacy.

This study was not intended to draw any conclusions about U.S. surrogates in general but was to provide a glimpse of some surrogates' public expressions of the meaning of their own experiences. Surrogate bloggers are a small group and are particularly articulate, introspective, witty, and reflective about their journeys as surrogates.

In some nations, surrogacy has been banned or criminalized, based on feminist and/or child-rights-based critiques of the practice and concerns over human trafficking, which do not necessarily include U.S. surrogates' experiences. By framing all surrogates as either being deviant and/or tricked or victims of human trafficking, critics of the practice can dismiss the voices and experiences of surrogates as those of women who are so desperate they are incapable of making sound decisions for themselves and are complicit in their own exploitation. By ignoring the voices, experiences, and meaning making of surrogacy for U.S. surrogates, surrogacy abolitionists can continue to frame surrogacy in this manner, without having to confront the stark contrast of their claims with the experiences of some U.S. surrogates as illustrated through this content analysis. This study of commercial surrogates' blogs demonstrates that their experiences and identities that contradict conventional wisdom and mainstream discourse on the practice can be seen, if researchers look for them.

Acknowledgments

I am grateful to the women who blog publicly about their lives as surrogates and allow us a glimpse into their lived experiences. I am also grateful to the anonymous *IJFAB* reviewers who

took time to provide thoughtful insights and feedback; their contributions strengthened this article considerably.

References

Anderson, Elizabeth S. 1990. “Is Women’s Labor a Commodity?” *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 19 (1): 71–92.

Andrews, Lori B. 1988. “Surrogate Motherhood: The Challenge for Feminists.” *The Journal of Law, Medicine & Ethics* 16 (1-2): 72–80. doi:10.1111/j.1748-720X.1988.tb01053.x.

Ateljevic, Irena, Annette Pritchard, and Nigel Morgan. 2007. *The Critical Turn in Tourism Studies*. New York: Routledge.

Bailey, Alison. 2011. “Reconceiving Surrogacy: Toward a Reproductive Justice Account of Indian Surrogacy.” *Hypatia* 26 (4): 715–41. doi:10.1111/j.1527-2001.2011.01168.x.

Berend, Zsuzsa. 2012. “The Romance of Surrogacy.” *Sociological Forum* 27 (4): 913–36. doi:10.1111/j.1573-7861.2012.01362.x.

Berkhout, Suze G. 2008. “Buns in the Oven: Objectification, Surrogacy, and Women’s Autonomy.” *Social Theory and Practice* 34 (1): 95–117.

Blyth, Eric. 1994. “I Wanted to Be Interesting. I Wanted to Be Able to Say ‘I’ve Done Something Interesting with My Life’: Interviews with Surrogate Mothers in Britain.” *Journal of Reproductive and Infant Psychology* 12 (3): 189–98. doi:10.1080/02646839408408885.

Brennan, Samantha, and Robert Noggle. 1997. “The Moral Status of Children: Children’s Rights, Parents’ Rights, and Family Justice.” *Social Theory and Practice* 23 (1): 1–26.

Bromfield, Nicole F., and Karen Smith Rotabi. 2014. “Global Surrogacy, Exploitation, Human Rights and International Private Law: A Pragmatic Stance and Policy

Recommendations." *Global Social Welfare* 1 (3): 123–35. doi:10.1007/s40609-014-0019-4.

Center for Bioethics and Culture. 2015. "Commercial Surrogacy Is Human Trafficking: Biological Parents to Birth Mother — Abort Down Fetus!" http://www.cbc-network.org/2010/10/commercial-surrogacy-is-human-trafficking-biological-parents-to-birth-mother-abort-down-fetus/.

Chesler, Phyllis. 2011. *Mothers on Trial: The Battle for Children and Custody*, 2nd ed. Chicago, IL: Chicago Review Press.

Ciccarelli, Janice C., and Linda J. Beckman. 2005. "Navigating Rough Waters: An Overview of Psychological Aspects of Surrogacy." *The Journal of Social Issues* 61 (1): 21–43.

Corea, Gena. 1985. *The Mother Machine: Reproductive Technologies from Artificial Insemination to Artificial Wombs*, 1st ed.. New York: HarperCollins.

Creswell, John W. 2012. *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing among Five Approaches*. Los Angeles, CA: Sage.

Crozier, G. K. D., Jennifer L. Johnson, and Christopher Hajzler. 2014. "At the Intersections of Emotional and Biological Labor: Understanding Transnational Commercial Surrogacy as Social Reproduction." *IJFAB: International Journal of Feminist Approaches to Bioethics* 7 (2): 45–74.

Damelio, Jennifer, and Kelly Sorensen. 2008. "Enhancing Autonomy in Paid Surrogacy." *Bioethics* 22 (5): 269–77. doi:10.1111/j.1467-8519.2008.00629.x.

Donchin, Anne. 2010. "Reproductive Tourism and the Quest for Global Gender Justice." *Bioethics* 24 (7): 323–32. doi:10.1111/j.1467-8519.2010.01833.x.

Dworkin, Andrea. 1983. *Right-Wing Women*. New York: Perigee Trade.

Fisher, Ann M. 2013. “The Journey of Gestational Surrogacy: Religion, Spirituality and Assisted Reproductive Technologies.” *International Journal of Children’s Spirituality* 18 (3): 235-46. doi:10.1080/1364436X.2013.801831.

Fixmer-Oraiz, Natalie. 2013. “Speaking of Solidarity: Transnational Gestational Surrogacy and the Rhetorics of Reproductive (In)Justice.” *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies* 34 (3): 126–63.

Fronek, Patricia, and Marilyn Crawshaw. 2014. “The ‘New Family’ as an Emerging Norm: A Commentary on the Position of Social Work in Assisted Reproduction.” *British Journal of Social Work*, January. doi:10.1093/bjsw/bct198.

Groenewald, Thomas. 2004. “A Phenomenological Research Design Illustrated.” *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* 3 (1): 1-26. http://uir.unisa.ac.za/handle/10500/2573.

Gugucheva, Magdalina. 2010. “Surrogacy in America.”. www.councilforresponsiblegentics.com/pagedocuments/kaevej0a1m.pdf.

Gupta, Jyotsna Agnihotri. 2012. “Reproductive Biocrossings: Indian Egg Donors and Surrogates in the Globalized Fertility Market.” *IJFAB: International Journal of Feminist Approaches to Bioethics* 5 (1): 25–51.

Harney, Alexandra. 2013. “Wealthy Chinese Seek U.S. Surrogates for Second Child, Green Card.” *Reuters,* September 22. http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/09/22/us-china-surrogates-idUSBRE98L0JD20130922.

Hohman, Melinda, and Christine Hagan. 2001. “Satisfaction with Surrogate Mothering.” *Journal of Human Behavior in the Social Environment* 4 (1): 61–84. doi:10.1300/J137v04n01_05.

Hookway, Nicolas. 2008. “`Entering the Blogosphere’: Some Strategies for Using Blogs in Social Research.” *Qualitative Research* 8 (1): 91–113. doi:10.1177/1468794107085298.

Jadva, Vasanti, Clare Murray, Emma Lycett, Fiona MacCallum, and Susan Golombok. 2003. "Surrogacy: The Experiences of Surrogate Mothers." *Human Reproduction* 18 (10): 2196–204. doi:10.1093/humrep/deg397.

Jadva, V., Lucy Blake, Polly Casey, and S. Golombok. 2012. "Surrogacy Families 10 Years On: Relationship with the Surrogate, Decisions over Disclosure and Children's Understanding of Their Surrogacy Origins." *Human Reproduction,* July. doi:10.1093/humrep/des273.

Jadva, V., and S. Imrie. 2014. "Children of Surrogate Mothers: Psychological Well-Being, Family Relationships and Experiences of Surrogacy." *Human Reproduction* 29 (1): 90–96. doi:10.1093/humrep/det410.

Kessler, Bree. 2009. "Recruiting Wombs: Surrogates as the New Security Moms." *WSQ: Women's Studies Quarterly* 37 (1-2): 167–82. doi:10.1353/wsq.0.0139.

Kleinpeter, Christine Hagan, and Melinda M. Hohman. 2000. "Surrogate Motherhood: Personality Traits and Satisfaction with Service Providers." *Psychological Reports* 87 (3): 957–70. doi:10.2466/pr0.2000.87.3.957.

Kozinets, Robert V. 2011. *Netnography: Doing Ethnographic Research Online*. Los Angeles, CA: Sage.

Lewin, Tamar. 2014. "Foreign Couples Heading to America for Surrogate Pregnancies." *New York Times,* July 5. http://www.nytimes.com/2014/07/06/us/foreign-couples-heading-to-america-for-surrogate-pregnancies.html.

Magnier, Mark. 2011. "A Bundle of Joy with Baggage." *Los Angeles Times*, April 18. http://articles.latimes.com/2011/apr/18/world/la-fg-india-surrogacy-20110418.

Mann, Chris, and Fiona Stewart. 2000. *Internet Communication and Qualitative Research: A Handbook for Researching Online*. Los Angeles, CA: Sage.

Markens, Susan. 2011. “Interrogating Narratives about the Global Surrogacy Market.” *The Scholar and Feminist Online* 9 (1+2). sfonline.barnard.edu/reprotech/markens_01.htm.

Matson, Erin. 2014. “Is Preventing Surrogacy Feminist? No, It’s Anti-Choice.” *RH Reality Check*. April 11. http://rhrealitycheck.org/article/2014/04/11/preventing-surrogacy-feminist-anti-choice/.

McLeod, Carolyn, and Andrew Botterell. 2014. “A Hague Convention on Contract Pregnancy (or ‘Surrogacy’): Avoiding Ethical Inconsistencies with the Convention on Adoption.” *IJFAB: International Journal of Feminist Approaches to Bioethics* 7 (2): 219–35.

Oliver, Kelly. 1989. “Marxism and Surrogacy.” *Hypatia* 4 (3): 95–115. doi:10.1111/j.1527-2001.1989.tb00594.x.

Overall, Christine. 1987. “Surrogate Motherhood.” *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 17 (S1): 285–305. doi:10.1080/00455091.1987.10715939.

Pande, Amrita. 2008. “Commercial Surrogate Mothering in India: Nine Months of Labor?” In *A Quest for Alternative Sociology,* ed. Kenji Kosaka and Masahiro Ogino, 71-87. Melbourne: Trans Pacific.

Pande, Amrita. 2009a. “Not an ‘Angel,’ Not a ‘Whore’: Surrogates as ‘Dirty’ Workers in India.” *Indian Journal of Gender Studies* 16 (2): 141–73. doi:10.1177/097152150901600201.

Pande, Amrita. 2009b. “‘It May Be Her Eggs But It’s My Blood’: Surrogates and Everyday Forms of Kinship in India.” *Qualitative Sociology* 32 (4): 379–97. doi:10.1007/s11133-009-9138-0.

Pande, Amrita. 2010. “‘At Least I Am Not Sleeping with Anyone’: Resisting the Stigma of Commercial Surrogacy in India.” *Feminist Studies* 36 (2): 292–312.

Pande, Amrita. 2014. *Wombs in Labor: Transnational Commercial Surrogacy in India*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Parker, Kathleen. 2013. “Kathleen Parker: The Exploitation of Surrogate Mothers.” *Washington Post*, May 24. http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/kathleen-parker-the-exploitation-of-surrogate-mothers/2013/05/24/90bc159e-c4b0-11e2-8c3b-0b5e9247e8ca_story.html.

Parks, Jennifer A. 2010. “Care Ethics and the Global Practice of Commercial Surrogacy.” *Bioethics* 24 (7): 333–40. doi:10.1111/j.1467-8519.2010.01831.x.

Pashmi, Monir, Seyed Mohammad Sadegh Tabatabaie, and Seyed Ahmad Ahmadi. 2010. “Evaluating the Experiences of Surrogate and Intended Mothers in Terms of Surrogacy in Isfahan.” *Iranian Journal of Reproductive Medicine* 8 (1): 33–40.

Ragone, Helena. 1994. *Surrogate Motherhood: Conception in the Heart*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Raymond, Janice G. 1990. “Reproductive Gifts and Gift Giving: The Altruistic Woman.” *Hastings Center Report* 20 (6): 7–11. doi:10.2307/3563416.

Sama-Resource Group for Women and Heath. 2012. “Birthing a Market: A Study on Commercial Surrogacy.” www.academia.edu/7885788/Birthing_A_Market_A *Study* on_Commercial_Surrogacy_Sama_Resource_Group_for_Women_and_Health.

Stark, Barbara. 2012. “Transnational Surrogacy and International Human Rights.” SSRN Scholarly Paper ID 2118077. Rochester, NY: Social Science Research Network. http://papers.ssrn.com/abstract=2118077.

Storrow, Richard F. 2013. “New Thinking on Commercial Surrogacy.” SSRN Scholarly Paper ID 2308641. Rochester, NY: Social Science Research Network. http://papers.ssrn.com/abstract=2308641.

Sullivan, Joseph F. 1987. “Brief by Feminists Opposes Surrogate Parenthood.” *New York Times*, July 31, sec. N.Y. / Region. http://www.nytimes.com/1987/07/31/nyregion/brief-by-feminists-opposes-surrogate-parenthood.html.

Teman, Elly. 2008. “The Social Construction of Surrogacy Research: An Anthropological Critique of the Psychosocial Scholarship on Surrogate Motherhood.” *Social Science & Medicine* 67 (7): 1104–12. doi:10.1016/j.socscimed.2008.05.026.

Teman, Elly. 2010. *Birthing a Mother: The Surrogate Body and the Pregnant Self*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Tong, Rosemarie. 1996. “Feminist Bioethics: Toward Developing a ‘Feminist’ Answer to the Surrogate Motherhood Question.” *Kennedy Institute of Ethics Journal* 6 (1): 37–52.

van den Akker, Olga. 2003. “Genetic and Gestational Surrogate Mothers’ Experience of Surrogacy.” *Journal of Reproductive and Infant Psychology* 21 (2): 145–61. doi:10.1080/0264683031000124091.

CONTRIBUTOR INFORMATION

Nicole Footen Bromfield has been at United Arab Emirates University, in the Arabian Gulf, since 2010, where she is currently an assistant professor in the Department of Social Work. She earned her PhD in public policy from Virginia Commonwealth University and Master of Social Work (MSW) from West Virginia University. Bromfield’s research interests focus on women

and children's health and social well-being, with most projects driven by community needs and a goal of affecting social policy.