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Surrogacy does not have a negative effect on the surrogate's own children

New research presented at the British Fertility Society Annual Meeting suggests that surrogacy does not have a negative impact on the surrogate's own children. This study is the first in the world to examine the experiences and psychological health of children whose mothers have been surrogates to a couple with infertility.

In the past, there have been concerns raised over the practice of surrogacy, including how surrogacy might affect the children of surrogates. Researchers at the Centre for Family Research at the University of Cambridge interviewed 16 children in total (seven boys and nine girls, aged 12-22), whose mothers had acted as a surrogate in the past. Seven were children of genetic surrogates (also known as straight surrogates), where the surrogate had donated an egg, and nine were children of gestational surrogates (or host surrogates), where the surrogate carried the intended couple's embryo. All were visited at home and questioned using semi-structured interviews, including psychological well-being questionnaires.

All of the children interviewed have a positive view of their mother's involvement in surrogacy. The majority (6/9 gestational and 4/7 genetic) were in contact with the surrogacy child and reported a good relationship with him/her. Most of the children (12/16) openly discussed surrogacy with their friends, commonly with a positive reaction (11/12). Most of the children scored within the normal range for self-esteem and there was no difference on the psychological health questionnaires between children of genetic and gestational surrogates.

This is the first study in the world to examine the attitudes of children of surrogate mothers towards surrogacy. These are preliminary results taken from a larger ongoing study looking at the long-term effects of surrogacy on surrogates and their families.

Researcher Susan Imrie, Centre for Family Research at the University of Cambridge, said:

"The results we present here are only preliminary findings and form part of a larger ongoing study into the experiences and psychological health of surrogate mothers and their families. There have been concerns raised in the past about the effect of surrogacy on a surrogate's own children. Surrogacy is a relatively rare procedure and there are very few scientific studies on the long-term effects of this, particularly on the surrogate and her family.

"Our initial results indicate that the children of mothers who have carried a surrogate baby for another couple do not face negative consequences as a result of this. So far, all children interviewed have a positive view of surrogacy and their mother's involvement."

Although these are just preliminary results, they should provide women who have acted as surrogates or are considering doing so with some reassurance on the long-term effects on their

family of deciding to become a surrogate. Data are still being collected on other aspects of surrogacy and the findings will be published in due course.

This research will be presented as an oral presentation (OC8) at the British Fertility Society Annual Meeting on Friday 6 January 2012 at 13:40. The proceedings from the meeting will be published in a supplement in the next edition of [Human Fertility](#).

The British Fertility Society Annual Meeting is taking place on 6-7 January 2012 in Leeds, UK. Please see the [full programme](#).

For more information: contact the [British Fertility Society press office](#)

The full paper this statement is in response to can be found at: van Leeuwen et al. *Human Reproduction* (2011), doi: [10.1093/humrep/der322](https://doi.org/10.1093/humrep/der322)

The British Fertility Society is a national multidisciplinary organisation representing professionals practising in the field of reproductive medicine. The British Fertility Society is committed to promoting good clinical practice and working with patients to provide safe and effective fertility treatment.

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Abstract

Children of surrogate mothers: an investigation into their experiences and psychological health

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Aim: This study examined the experiences and psychological health of children whose mothers had been surrogates for infertile couples, and is part of an on-going investigation into the long-term effects of surrogacy on surrogates and their families. Preliminary findings are presented.

Method: 7 children of genetic surrogates (where the surrogate had donated an egg) and 9 children of gestational surrogates (where the surrogate carried the intended couple's embryo) were visited at home. Data were collected using in-depth semi-structured interviews. Questionnaires assessing psychological well-being were administered (Goldberg's General Health Questionnaire and Rosenberg's Self-Esteem Scale). Children were aged 12-22 years: 7 were male and 9 were female. The study received ethical approval and written consent was obtained from all participants. Where participants were aged 12-17 years, parental consent was also obtained.

Results: All children had a positive view of their mother's involvement in surrogacy. Ten children (6/9 gestational and 4/7 genetic) were in contact with the surrogacy child and reported good relationships with him/her. A similar proportion of children of gestational carriers (4/9) referred to the surrogacy child as a sibling compared to children of genetic carriers (3/7), despite not having a genetic link to the child. The majority of children (12/16) discussed surrogacy with their friends, most of whom (11/12) reacted positively. Children of genetic and gestational surrogates did not differ on questionnaire assessments of psychological health and most children scored within the normal range for self-esteem.

Conclusion: Contrary to concerns raised over the impact of surrogacy for the surrogates' own children, these findings suggest that children do not experience negative consequences as a result of their mother's decision to be a surrogate.