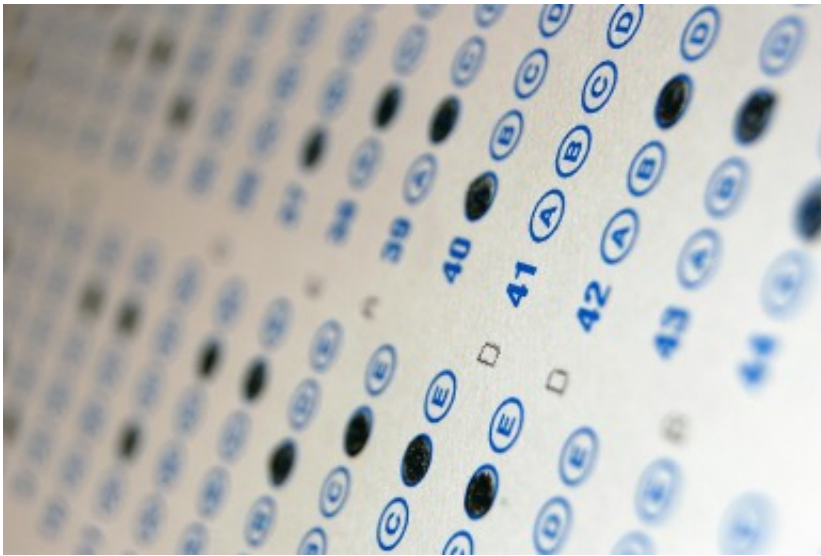


# Is there a link between infertility and child educational outcomes?

June 6 2017, by Brian Flood

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How does resolved parental infertility relate to children's performance in school?

A University of Illinois at Chicago sociologist considers this question in a sample of all Swedish births between 1988 and 1995.

Findings from the co-authored study suggest that involuntary childlessness prior to either a first or a second birth is associated with lower academic achievement— both [test scores](#) and grade point

average— at age 16, even if the period of [infertility](#) was prior to a sibling's birth rather than the child's own.

The authors also find that infertility among parents who already have a first child, known as "secondary infertility," has negative effects on how first- and second-born children perform in school only when the family did not already experience infertility before a first birth.

"Our results suggest that we need to be thinking of infertility as a cumulative physical and social experience, with effects extending well beyond the point at which a child is ultimately born," said Amelia Branigan, the study's lead author and UIC visiting assistant professor of sociology.

Branigan and co-author Jonas Helgertz of Lund University used data from the Swedish Interdisciplinary Panel, which links multiple Swedish government registers.

Infertility is measured as the number of years that parents spent trying to conceive, reported by the mother after a baby is delivered. Grades and test scores were measured at grade 9, when children are about 16 years old.

"To our knowledge, no large U.S. data source currently includes measures of both years of infertility, as well as long-term outcomes in parents and in children ultimately born," Branigan said.

As no previous study has considered the long-term socioeconomic consequences of resolved infertility for the children ultimately conceived, Branigan emphasizes that further research is needed to determine specific mechanisms driving this relationship.

She notes that the direction of the finding is consistent with previous

studies on younger [children](#), which point to parents' experience of infertility as one likely factor connecting resolved infertility to child outcomes.

"Researchers have suggested that infertility may be a more traumatic experience for parents than is often recognized, with potential consequences on parenting even after infertility is 'resolved' by the [birth](#) of a child," Branigan said.

The study, "Resolved Parental Infertility and Children's Educational Achievement," was published online by the journal *Demography* and supported by Lund University's Centre for Economic Demography and the Cornell Population Center.

**More information:** Amelia R. Branigan et al. Resolved Parental Infertility and Children's Educational Achievement, *Demography* (2017). [DOI: 10.1007/s13524-017-0573-3](https://doi.org/10.1007/s13524-017-0573-3)

Provided by University of Illinois at Chicago

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