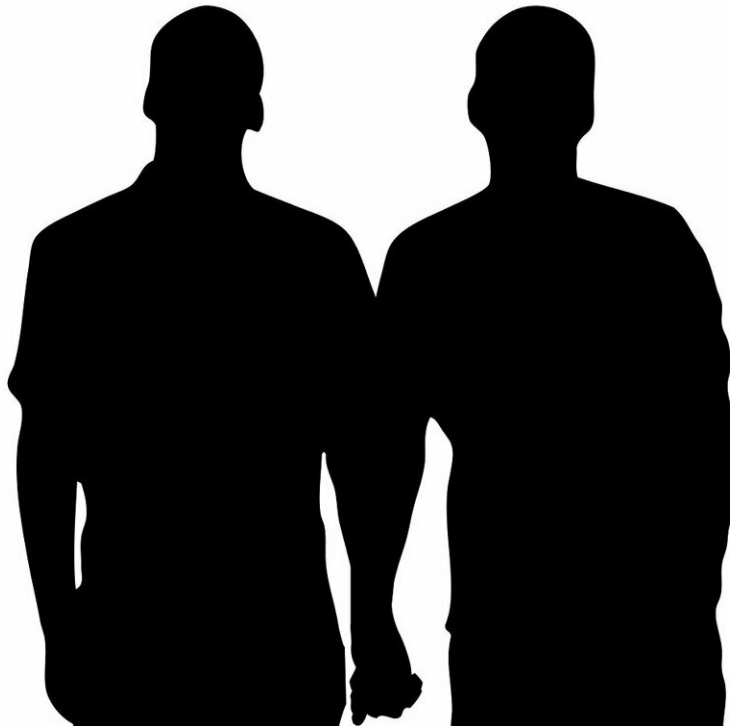


# The media shape public opinion about surrogacy and homosexuality

March 14 2019

---



Credit: CC0 Public Domain

The media play a key role in informing society and in shaping perceptions and judgments about social issues, particularly concerning issues on which there is insufficient knowledge or a lack of experience. For example, one issue that is beginning to arouse public debate is the matter of surrogacy on the part of homosexual couples, a subject most

people have not considered.

The main goal of the research was to explore how public opinion on [surrogacy](#) and gay parenthood is shaped. It was carried out by Rafael Ventura and Carles Roca-Cuberes, researchers with the Department of Communication at UPF, together with Xosé Ramón Rodríguez-Polo, a researcher at Rey Juan Carlos de Madrid University, published in *Journal of Homosexuality*.

## **Focus groups regarding information on television**

According to the Sociological Research Centre, 86.8 percent of the Spanish population claims to get its news via television. Although in principle, television news programmes aim to produce the most objective content possible, it is also true that they construct discourses about reality that may promote certain behaviours and attitudes by their audiences.

"In our study, we focus on the formation of attitudes about surrogacy and gay parenthood analysing the audience's interpretation of a news item broadcast on Spanish television," says Rafael Ventura, first author of the paper. To test this, the authors set up four discussion groups consisting of six to 10 people each, two adults (40 to 60 years) and two younger people (20 to 30 years), a total of 17 women and 16 men from Barcelona and Madrid. We analysed each person's interpretation of a television news item broadcast in Spain to perform a qualitative content analysis of the discourse produced by the participants.

The researchers focused on three main issues: the values transmitted by the media about surrogacy; what relationship media attributed to surrogacy and gay parenthood, and finally, if the interpretation of a news item differed according to the age of the audience. "To study the formation of participants' attitudes, we used a Spanish news item about

surrogacy that included all of these key issues. The selected item was broadcast at prime time on TV1, the news programme with the largest audience in Spain," explain the authors of the study.

The news item dealt with the fact that surrogacy is illegal in Spain, and therefore, there are increasing numbers of Spanish couples, including homosexual couples, traveling to other countries, such as India, to have a child. The story was illustrated with a real case and the argument revolved around the desire of homosexual couples to become parents and the consequences for the women involved.

## **Surrogacy, gay couples and the commodification of the female body**

Initially, the two groups of participants (adults and youths) stated that they had limited data and a lack of contextual information that prevented them from forming an opinion based on the evidence explained in the news. Nevertheless, both groups agreed in that they rejected surrogacy after watching the news programme, mainly due to the way the news had presented the Indian women—as victims of exploitation and in a situation of poverty. The authors found that as the debate progressed, there was greater rejection of homosexuals due to the fact that they were taking advantage of the poverty of women in countries like India to achieve their goal of having a baby.

The results show that the focus of the content of the news put to debate contributed to defending an attitude of the repudiation of surrogacy, with a feeling of aversion that also extended to [gay couples](#) wishing to become parents.

"As we saw in the results of our study, attributing responsibilities, placing the debate on surrogacy on the conflict of homosexual couples

who want to become parents, on the one hand, and the feminist rejection of the commodification of the woman's body, on the other, may have very negative consequences for the traditional link between the feminist movement and the LGBT community," the authors write. "It may feed discriminatory attitudes towards gay couples and create a clash between the feminist and the LGBT causes, forcing the public to adopt a position in favour of one of the two sides, as it is interpreted as a controversy," they add.

**More information:** Rafael Ventura et al, "Wealthy Gay Couples Buying Babies Produced in India by Poor Womb-Women: Audience Interpretations of Transnational Surrogacy in TV News, *Journal of Homosexuality* (2018). [DOI: 10.1080/00918369.2017.1422947](https://doi.org/10.1080/00918369.2017.1422947)

Provided by Universitat Pompeu Fabra - Barcelona

Citation: The media shape public opinion about surrogacy and homosexuality (2019, March 14) retrieved 23 June 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2019-03-media-opinion-surrogacy-homosexuality.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.