

Institution: University of Cambridge		
Unit of Assessment: 4		
Title of case study: Influencing policy and legislation on diverse family forms		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: Feb 2006 – Oct 2017		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s): Professor Susan Golombok	Role(s) (e.g. job title): Professor of Family Research and Director, Centre for Family Research	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI: 2006 - present
Period when the claimed impact occurred: 2015 - 2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? N		
<p>1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words) Advances in reproductive technologies and changing social attitudes are resulting in diverse family forms; lesbian mother families, gay father families, single mothers by choice, and families created by sperm donation, egg donation, embryo donation, and surrogacy. Cambridge research has shown that children from these families experience high quality parenting and show low levels of emotional and behavioural problems. Professor Golombok has actively engaged in policy discussions and contributed to policy and legislation changes in the UK, USA, France, Germany and the Netherlands- a step towards recognition and equality for diverse family forms.</p>		
<p>2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words) Professor Golombok has pioneered research on diverse family forms, including lesbian mother families, gay father families, single mothers by choice and families created by assisted reproductive technologies such as <i>in vitro</i> fertilisation (IVF), donor insemination, egg donation and surrogacy. Her research has challenged commonly held assumptions about these families as well as widely held theories of child development and has contributed internationally to policy and legislation on adoption, assisted reproduction and marriage equality.</p> <p>Effect of genetic relationship (or absence) on parent-child relationships It has often been suggested that the creation of families through assisted reproduction involving a third party may be detrimental to positive family functioning (Report of the Committee of Inquiry into Human Fertilisation and Embryology, 1984). In order to investigate this issue, an in-depth, multi-measure, multi-informant, longitudinal study of two-parent heterosexual families formed by egg donation, donor insemination and surrogacy was conducted, in which parenting and child development, as well as parents' disclosure to their children of their biological origins were explored, at six time points from infancy to adolescence [1-3]. Key findings from this study were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The absence of genetic and/or gestational connections between children and their parents in families formed through egg donation, sperm donation or surrogacy does not have an adverse effect on children's psychological adjustment or the quality of parent-child relationships. • Parents who tell children about their origins when they are young have better relationships with them in adolescence. <p>Positive outcomes for children are not affected by sexual orientation of the parent Regarding families with same-sex parents, there is a large body of research showing that children born to lesbian mothers are no more likely to show adjustment difficulties than children in traditional families [4]. However, gay fathers are often believed to be less suited to parenting than lesbian mothers because of their gender, and may be exposed to greater stigmatization as a result. In a study of adoptive gay father families, Golombok <i>et al</i> found more positive outcomes</p>		

for gay father families compared to adoptive lesbian mother families and adoptive heterosexual parent families [5]. Additionally, gay father families formed through surrogacy and egg donation did not differ from lesbian mother families created by sperm donation in terms of parenting quality and child adjustment. Both family types showed high levels of parenting quality and the children showed low levels of emotional and behavioural problems [6]. However, in an investigation of school experiences, children with same-sex parents were found to experience high levels of stigmatisation [7].

Single parenthood by choice does not affect parenting quality

An increasing number of single women are choosing to parent alone and have children through donor insemination. These women are often referred to as “single mothers by choice”. Their children grow up not only without a father but also without knowing the identity of their sperm donor. In a comparison between single mother by choice families and two-parent families, all with donor-conceived children, there were no differences in parenting quality apart from lower mother-child conflict in single mother families. However, parenting stress and financial difficulties were associated with children’s psychological difficulties in both family types [8].

This body of research has challenged widely-held assumptions about the psychological consequences for children of being raised in diverse family forms. The findings suggest that the quality of family relationships and the wider social environment are more influential in children’s psychological development and adjustment than are the number, gender, sexual orientation or biological relatedness of their parents.

3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

Evidence of 2* quality: Research is published in peer-review journals. Research was supported by competitively won grants

- *1. Golombok, S., Readings, J., Blake, L., Casey, P., Mellish, L., Marks, A. & Jadv, V. (2011) Children conceived by gamete donation: The impact of openness about donor conception on psychological adjustment and parent-child relationships at age 7. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 25, No. 2, 230-239. <https://content.apa.org/doi/10.1037/a0022769>
- *2. Golombok, S., Casey, P., Readings, J., Blake, L., Marks, A. & Jadv, V. (2011) Families created through surrogacy: Mother-child relationships and children’s psychological adjustment at age 7. *Developmental Psychology*, 47, No. 6, 1579-1578. DOI: 10.1037/a0025292
- *3. Golombok, S., Ilioi, E., Blake, L., Roman, G., & Jadv, V. (2017). A longitudinal study of families formed through reproductive donation: Parent-adolescent relationships and adolescent adjustment at age 14. *Developmental Psychology*, 53(10), 1966-1977. DOI: 10.1037/dev0000372
- *4. Golombok, S. (2017). Parenting in new family forms. In M. van IJzendoorn & M. Bakermans-Kranenburg (Eds.) *Current Opinion in Psychology*, 15, 76-80. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.copsyc.2017.02.004>
- *5. Golombok, S., Mellish, L., Jennings, S., Casey, P., Tasker, F. & Lamb, M. (2014) Adoptive gay father families: Parent-child relationships and children’s psychological adjustment. *Child Development*, 85, No. 2, 456-468. DOI: 10.1111/cdev.12155
- *6. Golombok, S., Blake, L., Slutsky, J., Raffanella, E., Roman, G., & Ehrhardt, A. (2017). Parenting and the adjustment of children born to gay fathers through surrogacy. *Child Development*, 89(4), 1223-1233. DOI: 10.1111/cdev.12728
- 7. Guasp, A., Statham, H., Jennings, S. & Golombok, S. (2010) *Different Families: The experiences of children with lesbian and gay parents*. London: Stonewall. <https://www.stonewall.org.uk/resources/different-families-2010>
- *8. Golombok, S., Zadeh, S., Imrie, S., Smith, V., & Freeman, T. (2016). Single mothers by choice: Mother-child relationships and children’s psychological adjustment. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 30(4), 409-418. doi: 10.1037/fam0000188

Evidence of min 2* quality: *publications have been peer reviewed; research supported by competitively won grants.

Key funding

PI: Golombok 2018-2022 **Wellcome Trust** Collaborative Award (GBP1,552,401) 21st Century Families: Parent-child relationships and children’s psychological wellbeing.

PI: Golombok 2015-2018 **ESRC** (GBP404,895) Parenting and the psychological development of children raised in adoptive gay father families: A follow up at early adolescence.

PI: Golombok 2013-2017 **Wellcome Trust** Senior Investigator Award (GBP1,037,142) Future Families: The social and psychological outcomes of emerging assisted reproductive technologies for individuals, families and society.

PI: Golombok 2009-14 **Wellcome Trust** (GBP350,000) Enhancement Award in Biomedical Ethics. Redefining families: Bioethics, assisted reproduction and emerging family forms.

PI: Golombok 2009-2012 **ESRC** (GBP351,863) Parenting and the psychological development of children raised in gay father families.

PI: Golombok 2007-2012 **US National Institutes for Health** (USD1,147,500) Families created by assisted reproduction: parenting and child development.

4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

Findings from the Centre for Family Research at the University of Cambridge on parenting and child development have contributed to significant changes in policy and legislation with broad reach including the UK, USA and Europe.

(i) Surrogacy

Informing review of UK surrogacy law

Currently, UK law views surrogate mothers as 'legal mothers', irrespective of their biological relationship to the child; they are named on the birth certificates of children born through surrogacy. Intended parents are required to apply for a Parental Order to become the legal parents, but this can only be granted from six weeks after birth. Complex situations (for example over consent for emergency medical treatment of a newborn) can arise when this process fails to complete and around 50% of families seek unregulated and often exploitative surrogacy abroad instead. In the UK alone, surrogacy arrangements are on the rise: the number of parental orders made following a surrogate birth has increased from 121 in 2011 to 441 in 2019 (source: UK Office of National Statistics).

In May 2018, the Law Commission of England and Wales and the Scottish Law Commission began a project on reform the law governing surrogacy. Professor Golombok was invited to give evidence at the start of the review in 2018, and again in June 2019, following the publication of a consultation paper. From the Law Commissioner: "*The work of Professor Golombok and the University of Cambridge's Centre for Family Research ("the Centre") has significantly informed our understanding of the long-term outcomes for families formed through surrogacy. Their 2017 longitudinal study is, to the best of our knowledge, the only longitudinal study worldwide of parenting and child development in surrogacy families [3]. As a result of this research, we met with Professor Golombok prior to publishing our Consultation Paper and we cite the work of the Centre throughout*" [A].

More specifically, Professor Golombok's research influenced the following provision proposals:

- Professor Golombok's finding that the earlier children born through reproductive donation are told about their biological origins, the more positive the outcomes in terms of the quality of family relationships and psychological wellbeing at adolescence contributed to provisional proposals for a National Register of Surrogacy Arrangements, removing the bar on children born through surrogacy in England and Wales to accessing their birth certificates, and maintaining the prohibition on the use of anonymously donated gametes [A].
- The provisional proposals for law reform of surrogacy do not make a distinction between the treatment of traditional surrogacy (where the surrogate also contributes her own egg and is genetically related to the child) and gestational surrogacy (where the surrogate is not genetically related to the child she carries). This is influenced by Professor Golombok's finding that the absence of a genetic or gestational link between the mother and the child does not appear to impact negatively on parent-child relationships [A].

A final Report and draft Bill will be published in 2022. It is hoped that by updating surrogacy regulation in the UK, intended parents would be discouraged from unregulated surrogacy abroad, reducing the number of children in legal limbo and unable to have later contact with the surrogate should they so wish.

Informing international review of surrogacy laws

Cambridge University research findings and oral evidence from Professor Golombok have also played a key role in informing the review of surrogacy laws in New York State, the Netherlands and Germany.

- The New York State Task Force on Life and Law's 2017 majority report heavily referenced Cambridge research and recommended 'the use of a pre-implantation order approved by a Family Court as the best method for granting parental rights in a gestational surrogacy arrangement [B]. New York State legalised gestational surrogacy in April 2020. In particular, Section 581-406 clarifies that upon birth of a child under an enforceable surrogacy agreement, each intended parent is the legal parent of the child and neither the person acting as surrogate or their spouse (if any) is the legal parent[B].
- In the Netherlands, Professor Golombok gave evidence to the Government Committee on the Reassessment of Parenthood, which heavily cites Golombok's work and subsequently recommended that regulations are put in place such that, with court approval and deeds, "*..the child will be regarded from the moment of birth to have legal familial ties with the intended parents*" and that "*A legal framework for surrogacy should provide safeguards that the origin story of the child can be ascertained by the child in the future*"[C]. The Dutch government is currently updating its guidelines on surrogacy and parental authority for up to four people.
- In 2016, following Professor Golombok's 'welcome inspiration' [D] the German Ethics Council recommended that legal parenthood should be transferred to the intended parents at the point of embryo transfer and a database established for over 16s to access available information on their genetic origin (citing [R8]). In 2018, the Sperm Donor Register Act was introduced, requiring clinics to ensure that donor data is provided to a central register, giving donor-conceived offspring the right to access their donor's identity [E]. Leopoldina, the German National Academy of Science, continues to press for changes to the law around assisted reproduction describing the current legal framework as outdated and incompatible with the new diagnostic and therapeutic measures for fertility, or with the new 'social concepts of marriage and family'.

(ii) Gamete donation: Progress towards equal access to IVF in France

Cambridge University research was also used in France to pass a new bill allowing single women and lesbian couples to access IVF, previously only accessible to heterosexual couples. In 2018, Professor Golombok gave oral evidence to the Bioethics Committee of the French Parliament on research on children born to lesbian couples and single women through donor insemination. The French Parliament's January 2019 Report on the Revision of the Law on Bioethics stated 'Ms Golombok directly confirmed to the mission that it is very clear that children who grow up in a lesbian couple's home are no different from those who grow up in a so-called traditional family. Their psychological well-being is quite comparable, as well as their development in terms of gender. There is no difference which tends to show that the latter is affected by the behavior of parents' (translated from French). The report proposed that France should amend the law on assisted reproduction to allow single women and lesbian couples to access treatment [F]. France's lower house of parliament approved the draft bill in September 2019, which was passed in the Senate in January 2020 and approved at a second reading in August 2020 [F].

(iii) Single parents by choice: Amendment of the UK Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act

In 2019, the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act was amended to permit single parents to apply for a Parental Order to become the legal parents of children born through surrogacy. This was significantly informed by Cambridge research findings that children of gay fathers, single mothers by choice and children born through surrogacy do not suffer long term harm.

Previously, only couples were permitted to obtain Parental Orders and become legal parents of children born through surrogacy in the UK. Natalie Gamble Associates applied for a declaration of incompatibility under the Human Rights Act. Cambridge research evidence '*played a crucial part in the successful outcome to the case*' and '*was crucial in countering some very specific negative assertions made in the case about single parent and surrogacy families which were not substantiated by evidence*'. '*Your input has had a direct impact on changing the law for the better- thank you*' [G]. On the 20 May 2016, the President of the Family Division of the High Court, made a declaration of incompatibility under the Human Rights Act; UK law discriminated against single parents [H]. In December 2018 this prompted the Government to put forward a remedial order and amend the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act [I]. 1st January 2019 and 30th April 2020, 47 applications from single parents have been submitted [J].

Impact on teaching and understanding

Beyond policy, Cambridge research has led to Stonewall developing new school resource packs (containing [R7]) to tackle stigmatisation of students with same-sex parents who were previously not represented in learning materials. These have been distributed to more than 10,000 primary schools directly and via 75 local authorities [K].

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

- A. (i) *Building families through surrogacy: A new law*. Law commission and Scottish Law Commission. June, 2019 pg 27-31, quote 2.25 pg. 28 (ii) Testimonial from UK law commissioner
- B. Changes to legislation in New York State, USA (i) Majority report New York State Task Force for Life and the Law quote pg. 55, example references to research 283, 327, 329-334, 337, 347-351, 388-391 (ii) New York State Family Court Act Article 5-C Judgments of Parentage of Children Conceived Through Assisted Reproduction or Pursuant to Surrogacy Agreements pg. 18 (iii) NBC news article: "New York state, long a holdout against legalizing surrogacy, overturns ban" 3rd April 2020.
- C. *Kind en Ouders in de 21ste Eeuw: Rapport van de Staatscommissie Herijking Ouderschap*, Netherlands (in Dutch) December 2016, recommendations 52 (pg. 94) and 56 (pg.94)
- D. Correspondence from German Ethics Council
- E. Bionews article: German Parliament passes the Sperm Donor Registry Act
- F.(i) France: report proposing extension of IVF access to single women and lesbian couples. *Assemblée Nationale Rapport fait au nom de la mission d'information sur la révision de la loi relative à la bioéthique (doc in French)*. January, 2019, pg. 42 (ii) France's 'Loi Bioéthique' http://www.assemblee-nationale.fr/dyn/15/dossiers/bioethique_2 (in French) [This is rolling through the parliament and will be updated – no substantive amendments have been made to the bill that affect our impact claims].
- G. Testimonial from Natalie Gamble Associates
- H. Declaration of incompatibility 2016
- I. Amended Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act
- J. Email correspondence with CAFCASS regarding number of single parental orders applied for
- K. (i) Email correspondence from Stonewall (ii) distributed literature