Abstract

“Kinship and Relatedness in Commercial Gestational Surrogacy in India” is an ethnographic presentation of the practice of commercial gestational surrogacy in a transnational context. The focus here is on the different participants who enter the arrangement to produce a baby (or babies). Such as: the commissioning couples/ intended parents from all over the world and India who come to have children by engaging Indian medical expertise; the doctors and surrogacy agents who help couples and individuals navigate the assisted reproductive technologies, such as in-vitro fertilization (IVF), the choice of foreign and/or Indian gamete donors (egg and sperm), and gestational surrogate mothers; and the Indian commercial gestational surrogate mothers who help incubate an artificially fertilized pregnancy.

Embedded in an Indian setting but involving a transnational engagement with technology, laws, people and relationships, this thesis seeks to explore the ways in which kin are made and understood. The cross-cultural navigation of kinship beliefs, especially those regarding genes, biology and blood, is mapped through the process of the commercial gestational surrogacy arrangement. Through the choice of the arrangement, the surrogate pregnancy, and the seeking of state identity and membership for the newborn—kinship and relatedness are constructed, understood and dismantled through multiple other processes that inform the commercial gestational surrogacy arrangement in India. Debates on biology and the social within the anthropology of kinship are revisited through the process of commercial gestational surrogacy in India, especially in the ways in which motherhood and fatherhood are re-imagined through the socializing role of technology.