

THIRD-PARTY REPRODUCTION BEYOND STEREOTYPES

CONTEXT

Egg donation and surrogacy are some of the many ways to start a family.

These practices raise questions about the autonomy and freedom of choice of the women involved, as well as what defines motherhood. They are at the center of public debates.

THE DEBATE OVER SURROGACY AND EGG DONATION IN FEMINIST CIRCLES

AGAINST

- Surrogacy: a market in which women “produce” children.
- When parents turn to a surrogate from another country, there may be socioeconomic inequalities that could influence the power dynamics between the two parties.
- Little is known about the effects of fertility treatments on women’s health.

FOR

- Assisted reproduction technologies can help support women's reproductive choices.
- Contrary to popular belief, many women make these choices thoughtfully and without being pressured to do so.
- The issues surrounding surrogacy and egg donation can be attributed to the lack of legal framework.

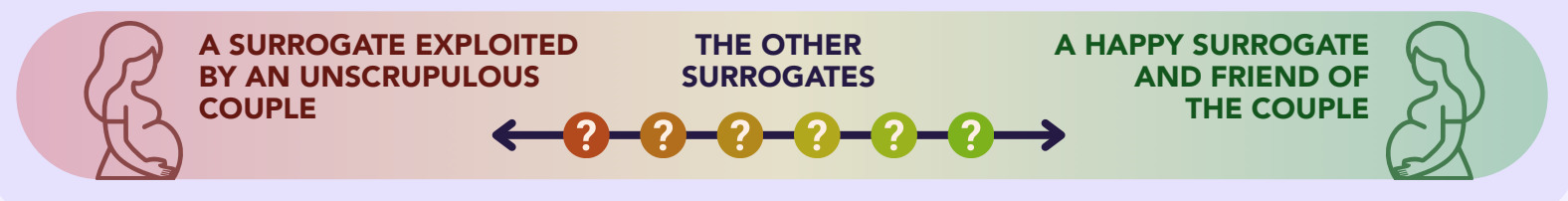
SURROGACY IN PUBLIC DISCOURSE

The debate over surrogacy comes and goes in the public sphere, according to current events and policy proposals. For example, in Quebec, the enactment of Bills 2 and 12 (in 2021 and 2023, respectively) sparked a wide range of reactions:

- Some people are in favor of these laws, which provide a regulatory framework to strengthen protections for surrogates and children born through surrogacy;
- Others oppose them, arguing that the practice is anti-feminist, anti-humanist, and capitalist;
- Some people are critical of certain aspects of the laws: in their view, the parenting skills of intended parents should be assessed before recognizing their affiliation with their child (something that current laws do not put forward).

THE DANGER OF A SINGLE STORY

The arguments against surrogacy themselves lead women, in response, to paint a particularly positive picture of their experience to avoid fueling criticism, thereby omitting certain aspects of their experience. However, according to anthropologist Elly Teman, this tension between the two narratives leaves little room for the complexity of other surrogates’ experiences. This is what she calls the “**danger of a single story**.”



Debates on surrogacy often overlook the perspectives of those most directly affected: the surrogates. To understand their needs and challenges, and to create laws and policies that adequately address them, it is essential to allow them to express their experiences in all their complexity.



To learn more (in French only): Lavoie, K., Côté, I., and Guay, R. (2025). Procréation assistée par autrui et fragmentation de la maternité : le piège du récit unique. *Canadian Journal of Family Law / Revue Canadienne de Droit Familial*, 36(2), 105-140.