

# Surrogacy as a Meaningful Relationship

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**ABSTRACT:** *On the biggest surrogacy support website, this essay aims to show and evaluate the cultural and emotional labor surrogate mothers do together. Surrogate moms' experiences and conversations on the internet portray contract surrogacy as a "work of love." Surrogacy is often described by women as a "journey of shared love," in which they aim to form a long-term connection with the spouse for whom they carry a child. The language of love, as acquired and internalized via online contact with other surrogates, provides a cultural conception of surrogacy as well as a basis for action, according to this study. Surrogates aim for a long-term connection with their spouse, and love and altruistic giving are associated with intimate interpersonal rather than market ties. Surrogacy trips, on the other hand, often end in disappointment; surrogates sometimes feel deceived when couples decide to terminate their relationship. Surrogates' talks are increasingly articulating the viewpoint that love, even when unrequited, may lead to recurrent giving; love is noble and ennobling as a consequence of communal learning. Surrogates find support and gratitude in their online surrogacy community, where they all believe that giving life is a moral good. This attitude has led to a reinvigorated desire to have children for the benefit of others.*

**KEYWORD:** *Love, Relationship, Reproduction, Support, Surrogacy.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Surrogates' conception of their "journey" as one of shared love is compatible with the notion of procreation that prevails in contemporary American society. Invoking their own or the couple's feelings of love for them draws attention to the moral, intimate, emotional, and one-of-a-kind character of the connection, raising it beyond that of a contractual arrangement while differentiating it from that of familial relationship. In contrast to the stigma associated with commercial "baby production," the concept of surrogacy as a "work of love" has inadvertently pushed women to bear kids for others on a regular basis, despite the fact that this is not the case.

In this essay, I'm primarily concerned in narrative discourse. It is my goal to examine "traffic in significant symbols," in this instance written postings on (SMO), that "impose meaning onto existence," as well as the manner in which these meanings influence choices and behaviors. I investigate how the language of love may be used to assist individuals engaged in surrogacy find common ground with one another. Learning and internalizing this language results in the formation of a cultural conception of surrogacy as well as a foundation for action. When surrogates speak about their experiences, they are ordering those experiences and engaging in discussions regarding the meaning of those experiences. I'll go through two developments that are interconnected in the next paragraphs. The first part of this paper will demonstrate the hegemonic definition of surrogacy as a "labor of love," preferably in the context of a close connection with the intended parents (IPs). Second, I will look at a notable collective adjustment to tales of disappointment, in which surrogates maintain that surrogacy is a "work of the heart," even if IPs redefine the connection after the birth of the child in question. An added benefit that genuinely independent and strong women who "love surrogacy" aspire for but try not to take for granted is the development of life-long friendships[1].

It is my goal that through investigating the ways in which women collectively construct the meaning of surrogacy, I will contribute to a broader discussion concerning the workings of culture, defined as both a system of meanings and a practice. Human activity necessitates the use of cultural symbols, while the system of meanings—"the semiotic component of human social practice"—exists only in the context of the practices that perpetuate or change it. According to my findings, culture is "conversational," that it is constantly negotiated, and that it is dependent on a common semiotic code are all clearly shown in our society.

### 1.1 Money Or Love:

In surrogacy has dominated most of the literature on the subject, as well as much of the public discussion, since it involves the exploitation of women, the commodification of human existence, and the entrance of the market into what is considered to be a holy space. "Market intrusion" types of analyses, which are aimed at delineating the permissible scope of the market, are frequently based on assumptions about the binary nature of the social

world, which divides it into "hostile worlds" such as market versus family, money versus love, public versus private domains, and so forth. Despite the fact that the moral panic about surrogacy has faded and the arguments in favor of commodification have been somewhat subdued, binary logic continues to predominate in many spheres of public discourse[2].

Another way in which the binary logic is used is in the questions that academics ask, and one of the most often asked questions is concerning surrogates' motivations for bearing children for other people. According to psychological research based on interviews, the majority of surrogates are motivated by altruistic rather than financial reasons. But in modern market cultures, the main "vocabularies of motivations" are individualistic and monetary in nature, and academic works are no exception to this rule. To provide an example, a legal expert contends that removing market limitations would enhance the economic negotiating position of surrogates as well as their "part of the profits."

Legal scholarship often defines mutual benefit in monetary terms, stating that intended parents get a kid who is worth more than the payment to the surrogate, while the money received by the surrogate is worth more than the risks she takes on in exchange for her services. Epstein contends that enforceable contracts are sufficient to ensure good outcomes between rational actors; the fact that surrogates must surrender some freedom is "justified by the prospect of larger benefits," according to Epstein[3].

Some legal scholars and free market economists believe that women are free, rational agents who are primarily motivated by financial gain; feminists, on the other hand, believe that surrogacy is a form of patriarchal control over women's reproduction and an exploitation of financially destitute women. As long as reproduction is considered "work done by women for the benefit of males," Christine Overall believes there will be space for exploitation, as well as surrogacy; she describes surrogate mothering as an extreme type of "alienated labor." "Mary Beth Whitehead, the surrogate mother who refused to surrender Baby M, is a symbol of the "proletarian who refuses to remain isolated."

For some reason, Whitehead represents diametrically opposed positions for feminists and surrogates: the former usually view her as the archetypal exploited mother, while the latter typically consider her as the deviant surrogate who brings them into disrepute. I used an anthropological method to better comprehend this difference and obtain a more comprehensive understanding of the "social and cultural dynamics" of surrogacy in general. It was my goal to discover and comprehend surrogates' beliefs, their worldview, and the manner in which these assumptions and meanings are worked out in interactions on SMO and influence surrogates' choices. According to the authors, this method "discourages reified narratives and too simplistic generalizations, emphasizing agency rather than deterministic results."

As part of an attempt to understand and critique reproductive technology, a fruitful feminist approach describes and analyses "a myriad of micro-practices," which are "neither inherently liberating nor repressive." Reproductive technology is "neither inherently liberating nor repressive," and its "meaning derives from the social and political context in which it is embedded." The interpretations produced in a study's local context are taken seriously when it is ethnographically informed. Understanding how participants make meaning of assisted reproduction within certain sociocultural settings is not an easy task; social actors "may interpret an encounter in a variety of ways, some of which are at odds with one another."

Surrogacy studies conducted in different nations provide a comparative perspective on the problems. Researchers discovered that Israeli gestational surrogates use love metaphors to describe their relationship with their intended mother (IM) even as they talk about the need for money to support their children; unlike in the United States, money and love are not culturally antagonistic, yet Israeli surrogates maintain that gestational work cannot be fully compensated, just as their American counterparts do. Genetic relatedness between the fetus and the commissioning spouse is emphasized as the "natural" foundation of parenting by Israeli surrogates. Surrogacy is framed as a service to the nation as well as a loving gift to the commissioning couple in the pronatalist state of Israel. Based on shared blood and pregnancy-related labor, an ethnographic study of Indian gestational surrogacy shows that surrogates claim kinship with the baby they are carrying. They assert maternal authority while acknowledging the "property right" of biological fathers in the child; these conceptualizations simultaneously question and acknowledge Indian patriarchal traditions[4].

When it comes to establishing a feeling of relatedness, Israeli surrogates prioritize genetics, whereas Indian surrogates emphasize "shared blood" and gestation. When it comes to claiming parentage in the United States, both gestational and conventional surrogates use the term "intent," which refers to a passionate yearning for a child. Kinship is reconceived as a combination of intent, love, and nurture; the desire to become a parent is seen as the "natural" foundation for parenting. While aim serves as a focal point for the emotional structure of motivation, it also serves to crystallize the altruistic effort of "making people's dreams come true" for surrogates in the United States. It is via these many interpretations of relatedness and connection that we may get insight into the manner in which individuals draw on and mix cultural meanings within certain sociopolitical settings.

Researchers were the first to investigate surrogates' language of love and gift, as well as their expectations of a life-long relationship with their spouse, in a social context in the United States. Surrogates in Roberts' research also expressed their feelings of "closeness" to the spouse they were representing. Several studies have documented the role of agency-organized counselling and support services in not only reinforcing the notion that surrogacy is "an ultimate act of love," but also in providing a forum for "social control," in which members exert peer pressure but also "empower themselves," by comparing their own experience. The researchers also discovered that surrogates who portrayed themselves as strong, independent, and altruistic were nevertheless supporters of the group treatment sessions that agencies had arranged for them, according to their findings. These studies demonstrate the significance of both cultural conceptualization and social structure of practice in the development of practice[5].

Since the release of these findings in the United States, there has been a significant shift in both the social and technical structure of assisted reproductive technologies. In recent years, IVF technology has improved in terms of reliability, making gestational surrogacy a much more realistic option. This has, in turn, paved the way for the growth of surrogacy, which often involves the use of "donor" gametes. In the case of heterosexual and homosexual couples, as well as single intended parents, donor gametes expand the range of choices available, and the primacy of intent as the foundation of parenting makes their usage for IPs and surrogates acceptable.

Other technological practices, such as Internet use, have had a significant impact on the social organization of assisted reproduction, with far-reaching implications for the organization of support and motivation; it is, in fact, "an engine of social change" in the sense of "a catalyst for social change." Much of the information that was previously only accessible via government agencies is now readily available on the internet. Surrogates have access to ongoing self-organized support online, which includes a significantly greater number of women with a wider range of experience than any other kind of support group can provide. When the above-mentioned studies were carried out in the United States, organizations coordinated and facilitated the "giving the gift of life." My research extends the social context to influential support websites that help to establish the environment for donating, and it examines the ways in which surrogates collectively determine the cultural and emotional significance of their contributions to these websites[6].

## 2. DISCUSSION

Surrogacy scholarship continues to be dominated by males, with women's voices—particularly those of... gestational mothers—being marginalized. In order to understand the "meaning-making" of surrogates, I have been listening to their voices since they represent "grounds of agency and intentionality." According to researchers, their "radically different readings" constitute an essential semiotic component of surrogacy practices, and they have real-world implications for everyone who is engaged. I've made it clear that these interpretations are the result of a collaborative effort. It is possible to see an example of a "semiotic community" on SMO: a group of women who "make use of a semiotic code to accomplish something in the world": bear babies for others. The use of the semiotic code, according to the researchers, entails associating "abstractly accessible symbols with actual objects or situations and, as a result, positing something about those things or circumstances." As an example, the term "journey" refers to a common goal-oriented and transformational route that has come to represent the contractual agreement between surrogates and intended parents through time. After a period of time, the meaning of the word "journey" came to include a more transcendent sense. Through these "creative cultural activities," women were able to create and maintain the moral significance and purpose of surrogacy[7].

It is common for surrogates to write about their feelings for their partner; they debate, agree, and argue about the responsibilities, behaviour, and emotional responses that result from such feelings. Surrogates see IPs' failure to fulfil their promise of continuous communication as betrayal rather than a violation of contract, which is congruent with the conception of the "journey" as one of shared love between the IPs and surrogates. "A collaborative effort to shape emotion" is required in the process of negotiating meaning. SMO conversations may be heated, but they are usually characterized by the recognition and validation of emotions of disappointment. Despite this, although these interactive discussions recognize emotions of sorrow and rage, they tend to condemn simply negative feelings about the "journey," while praising attempts to overcome disappointments and disappointments. Consequently, they are able to successfully argue for, as well as support, different emotional positions such as emotions of pride or even moral superiority, as well as alternate interpretations for the adverbial phrase "journey." The researchers said that "communities deliberately attempt to teach emotions, to idealize some while condemning others." They also claimed that This is exactly what the surrogacy community on the internet is doing. Family and children are the common ground between surrogates and intended parents, but there is considerable cultural and emotional work to be done in order to traverse surrogate 'journeys,' and to obtain respect in the SMO community. Women's attempts to find IPs they can love and to love IPs they match with are documented in a plethora of postings on the Message Boards, and these tales are always met with passionate support. Being too reliant on IPs' affection, on the other hand, is not acceptable. The same way that women are expected to take control of their "journey" by researching the legal and medical elements of surrogacy, they are also expected to take charge of their emotional well-being throughout the process[8].

My findings suggest that emotional taking control may be accomplished in an engaging manner and without the assistance of an institution. It is inextricably linked to the ongoing negotiation of the "standards of conduct" that the SMO community upholds: to be well-informed, responsible, dependable, loving, and yet emotionally autonomous surrogate, among other qualities[9].

When developing these standards, women look to culturally feminine values such as empathy and compassion, as well as culturally middle-class values such as autonomy, intellect, and self-control, to inform their decisions and actions. It is difficult to live up to these expectations, but there is a great deal at risk, and the stakes are the same for women who are engaged in surrogate motherhood. When IPs do not keep in contact with them, they may feel "ditched" and emotionally devastated, or they may be able to recover their self-respect and even claim moral superiority as a result. On social media, they may acquire power, fame, and adoration, or they may be scolded and ridiculed by the very people who are meant to understand and support them, if they are not careful. In addition to collectively gaining validity for their own life choices, which emphasized children and family, they also receive validation for those of those who are unable to bear their own children or have chosen to do so. Surrogates' interactive emotional monitoring and adjustment are linked to shared objectives and the communal character of surrogates' "feminine power," which they exercise on a regular basis. Social media organizations (SMOs) provide a much bigger platform for self-organized social control and "self-empowerment" than agency-organized support groups[10].

### 3. CONCLUSION

Internet sites like as SMO, for example, are used to a great degree to develop and refine our understanding of the cultural significance of surrogacy and the connections it entails. For example, researchers have highlighted the significance of specific symbolic vehicles such as tales in the development of an overall shared perspective. The purpose of this research was to investigate how shared emotional experience and perspective may be created via tales and conversations, as well as the implications of this for practice. Surrogates' online conversations, birth stories, blogs, and diaries serve as tools for the creation of meaning for themselves and others. A trip of ultimate significance and purpose, a voyage that serves as a test of character and confirmation of one's own value, is the message that they most frequently convey to the viewer. In an ideal situation, the romance of surrogacy is experienced via a "perfect match." This does not necessarily imply that the framework of love is in danger because of a lack of reciprocation from intended parents. "Honor the journey," women say, as they acknowledge their sorrow while constructing and intensifying feelings of pride. This allows them to experiment with different emotional reactions and courses of action: disappointments do not have to discredit the love or undermine the purpose as long as women "honor the journey." The "heart" is a symbol that represents not just emotions, but also strength and stability.

SMO members are willing to share their pain tales because they think that by sharing their experiences, they may both educate and soothe others. "I believe that everyone in this room has experienced some kind of heartbreak... As surrogates, all we can do is respect the journey and attempt to move on, knowing that all we did was to the best of our abilities. This emotional routine helps surrogates to enhance their autonomy as well as their determination; the collective emotional labor of surrogates has contributed to their excitement for bearing children for others on a regular basis.

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