

Review Essay

Baby Markets and Global Inequalities: Conundrums of Commodification, Care and Social Reproduction in International Commercial Surrogacy**Kristen E. Cheney**

Miranda Davies (ed.), *Babies for Sale? Transnational Surrogacy, Human Rights and the Politics of Reproduction*. London: Zed Books, 2017. 416 pp. £ 19.99 paperback.

Laura Harrison, *Brown Bodies, White Babies: The Politics of Cross-racial Surrogacy*. New York: NYU Press, 2016. 320 pp. £ 22.99 paperback.

Karen Smith Rotabi and Nicole F. Bromfield, *From Intercountry Adoption to Global Surrogacy: A Human Rights History and New Fertility Frontiers*. Abingdon: Routledge, 2017. 190 pp. £ 37.33 paperback.

INTRODUCTION

Recent literature on the emergence of an international commercial surrogacy industry has raised a number of questions about care work, social (re)production and economic (in)equality. A number of feminist scholars have been debating commercial surrogacy for a while now — without reaching much consensus about its implications (see Maniere in Davies, pp. 313–27). The books reviewed here supplement that debate with important questions about race, genetics and relatedness as well as the position of the child in surrogacy arrangements. Unfortunately, they do a better job of raising questions than answering them, but at least they point towards areas for future research. It may be in the ways that these volumes look back that we find a way forward for understanding international commercial surrogacy's implications for social and reproductive justice — and the commodification of both women's and children's bodies. I would also argue that

while these are important issues, the commercial surrogacy debate obscures larger issues of kin creation in a crowded yet divided world.

International commercial surrogacy (ICS) is a form of assisted reproductive technology (ART) in which intending parents commission a surrogate mother abroad to carry a child for them. Advances in ART have meant that most ICS today is gestational, utilizing gametes from (or chosen by) the intending parent(s), rather than the surrogate's egg, as in traditional surrogacy. A fertilized egg is implanted in the surrogate's womb but retains genetic links to the intending parent(s).

ICS typically involves intending parents from wealthier countries commissioning poorer surrogates (quite often women of colour) in less developed countries. Intending parents resort to ICS either because commercial surrogacy is prohibited in their country or because ICS is cheaper than domestic options. The resulting political economic dynamics are discussed in the volumes under review.

Karen Smith Rotabi and Nicole F. Bromfield's (2017) book, *From Inter-country Adoption to Global Surrogacy: A Human Rights History and New Fertility Frontiers*, notes how the questions raised by ICS are in fact continuations of discussions about intercountry adoption. Amid a global decline in intercountry adoption due to regulation designed to prevent corruption and trafficking, demand for ICS (which remains largely unregulated at the global level) has increased, raising new concerns about social protection and welfare. Framing ICS as the next 'fertility frontier', Rotabi and Bromfield trace this historical trajectory from adoption's roots in child rescue narratives through scandals in Romania and Guatemala, to the market's latest shift to Africa, and ultimately to the growth of ICS, particularly in the US and India. Throughout, they consider the implications of these shifts for international human rights-oriented policy, particularly on the best interests of the child within intercountry adoption but also from the perspectives of women acting as surrogates in the US and India. In the end, they raise the important question of what new conceptions of protection will be necessary in ICS arrangements.

Miranda Davies's (2017) edited volume *Babies for Sale? Transnational Surrogacy, Human Rights and the Politics of Reproduction* claims to be 'the first genuinely international study of transnational surrogacy', assembling chapters written by 30 of the world's foremost scholars and activists in the field, covering ICS practices from Israel to Mexico to Sweden. Utilizing a bottom-up, feminist approach to the topic, the volume examines the ethical and legal implications of global commercial surrogacy, engaging critically with questions of exploitation of women and commodification of children. Though no clear consensus emerges, most authors problematize current practices and appear in favour of greater regulation — whether the intent of that regulation would be to ban, curb or allow for continuation of ICS.

Laura Harrison's (2016) *Brown Bodies, White Babies: The Politics of Cross-racial Surrogacy* explores the resulting racial semiotics of surrogacy.

Observing that '[w]hen motherhood is separated into biological, gestational, and social components, new opportunities for pregnancy and parenthood are created that put the very "nature" of race and kinship into question' (p. 2), Harrison goes on to argue that reproductive technology practices like surrogacy, because they tend to deploy brown bodies in the production of white babies, serve to reproduce the dominance of 'the white, heterosexual, married, middle-class family' (ibid.). She demonstrates this through discussion of historical examples of racialized reproductive labour and more recent growth in international reproductive tourism. Harrison also considers the ways assisted reproductive technologies continue to re-inscribe the social meanings of genetics.

In this review, I highlight some of the conundrums raised by these books and indicate new directions towards which they may push research and activism, arguing that in the end, they skirt perhaps some of the most fundamental questions about ICS and other ARTs in an overpopulated world. Rather than employing a selective vision in which children are differently valued, 'future' over 'present', and 'ours' rather than 'theirs', I suggest that addressing these issues adequately will necessarily involve retreating from — rather than pursuing — new fertility frontiers.

WHAT MAKES A MOTHER A MOTHER? THE RESURGENCE OF GENETIC PRIMACY

One of the most compelling observations raised in these volumes is the influence of ICS on notions of care and relatedness, especially through the transformation of motherhood. In Davies's volume *Babies for Sale?*, Swerdlow and Chavkin discuss how ARTs such as surrogacy have contributed to the disaggregation of biology and care — to the point that 'we can no longer grant primacy to the biological component of motherhood because biological motherhood, as a *de facto* construct, no longer exists' (p. 20). ICS, they argue, is the ultimate obfuscation of biology and kinship. Plunging us into the conundrum that surrogacy creates for the definitions of parentage, they examine how in ART markets, 'genetic contributions are categorized as biological, while the biological contributions of gestation are deemed irrelevant, ignored or even reframed as care' (p. 29). Yet these conundrums are all premised on assumptions of a universal desire for children and heteronormative constructions of the nuclear family (even for gay men, as Riggs and Due point out in their chapter in Davies, p. 41).

While some feminist scholars have lauded how ARTs are undermining patriarchal social constructions that naturalize motherhood (Harrison, p. 23), ARTs also shift the focus from social problems to their biological roots (Generations Ahead in Davies, p. 283). 'By breaking the perceived unity between pregnancy and motherhood', Harrison claims, 'surrogacy belies biologically deterministic frameworks that rationalize the social and economic

inequality of women in relation to men' (p. 31). Furthermore, some critical scholars assume that surrogates are driven by economic desperation to deviate from 'normal' motherhood (Teman, 2008: 1109). Intending parents will reproduce that trope in order to distance surrogates from the nuclear family they seek to create through surrogacy — either by positioning surrogates as helpless objects of their charity or as shrewd businesswomen tapping into emergent reproductive markets (Deomampo, 2016: 61). Quite another nuanced and multivalent story emerges from the experiences of surrogates described across these volumes. For example, Rotabi and Bromfield cite studies with American surrogates, who 'frame the baby as not being theirs from the day of conception' (p. 138), whereas each of the books cites Amrita Pande's seminal ethnographic work on Indian surrogate mothers, one of whom claimed to be the baby's 'real mother' due to the belief that her care work and biological contributions of blood in fact trumped the intent of the commissioning parent(s) (Pande, 2014: 148–49). Unfortunately, most law does not agree with her; the intentions of commissioning parents are backed by laws that assert the primacy of genetics, preserving the privilege of those who have the means to harness ARTs and pay another person to gestate a child for them. The importance of genetics is thus highlighted in ICS discourse and practice in order to preserve the privilege of intended parents. That privilege has race and class implications.

THE POLITICS OF RACE AND CLASS IN COMMERCIAL SURROGACY: IN SEARCH OF REPRODUCTIVE JUSTICE

Harrison's *Brown Bodies, White Babies: The Politics of Cross-racial Surrogacy* is mainly about domestic commercial surrogacy in the US, but it points out that the ways in which laws reinforce genetic essentialism have profoundly racial and class implications, arguing that ARTs are deployed to assure the social reproduction of the white, heteronormative, middle class through the co-optation of brown bodies (p. 2). By citing historical parallels such as wet-nursing, Harrison establishes that when all actors in surrogacy arrangements concede to 'the fiction that race is reproduced genetically' (p. 7), they undermine the work of scholars and scientists who have been trying for decades to undo spurious beliefs in the biological bases for racial difference. With ARTs — alongside genetic testing — reinforcing genetic primacy, opposing evidence often fails to foil the popular imagination of relatedness.

Moreover, the narrative of genetic essentialism combines with consumer desire in ART. Harrison details how 'the usurpation of raced bodies in the service of reproductive labor has remained relatively stable within the framework of shifting ideologies of maternity, gender, race, and science. . . . knowledge production is influenced by the economic needs of the dominant class' (p. 89). As in previous incarnations of care work, commercial

surrogacy perpetuates middle- and upper-class white women's reliance on the reproductive labour of women of colour (p. 90), which gets outsourced in ICS. And yet, as Deomampo claims in her ethnography, *Transnational Reproduction*, just such a 'racial reproductive imaginary enables actors to envisage their reproductive endeavors in ways that conceal the operation of race' and obscure the inequities of exchange in ICS (2016: 14). In addition, it is class ideology that '*produces* the elision between the social and biological, which is then translated into medical "fact" through practice' (Harrison, p. 140).

Twine takes this one step further, identifying a 'global "reproductive caste system" that essentially enforces post-colonial race, caste, class and gender hierarchies' (Twine in Davies, p. 108). This 'includes domestic and international population control incentives to restrict the fertility of lower-income women, racial and ethnic minorities or unmarried women' (ibid.) while encouraging pronatalism among the privileged classes. Pande (2014) has pointed out how, before the medical tourism industry helped make India a prime destination for ICS, the Indian state heavily regulated the fertility of poor women — sometimes through coercive means such as forced sterilization but also through passive means such as limiting access to health care.¹ It was thus rather ironic that poor women who chose to become surrogates, when they made their wombs available to foreigners willing to pay top dollar, suddenly had access to better health care than they had ever had in their entire lives. Kumkum Sangari (2015) has conceptualized such reproductive constraints, coupled with post-Fordist market emancipation, as resulting in new trans/national reproductive formations that can be both fixed and flexible. Nevertheless, the activist group Generations Ahead (in Davies, p. 279) calls such practices *bio-colonialism*.

Some scholars and activists have tried to correct these injustices by arguing for reproductive rights, but Sharmila Rudrappa claims that they provide an inadequate frame given the complex realities of surrogacy in a place like India where power relations prevail (2015: 173). Debates thus rage over how to protect women's labour rights — in both the productive and reproductive sense — in the ICS marketplace.

ARE THE CHILDREN ALRIGHT? CONSIDERING THE BEST INTEREST OF THE CHILD IN COMMERCIAL SURROGACY

What marks these books as different from previous scholarly writing on surrogacy is the inordinate (but still arguably minimal) attention paid to the implications of commercial surrogacy for children. These include 'the unknown physical and/or psychological impact of being carried in a stranger's

1. The same can be said of US and other Western countries' policies aimed at controlling fertility among ethnic minorities.

womb, the danger that they might become stateless citizens or grow up wishing to know unrecorded details about their biographical and genetic heritage' (Davies, p. 3). Few authors elaborate or actually delve into research on the topic, but they do grapple theoretically with surrogacy's effect on children born via ICS.

Children's Rights

Several scholars use children's rights as a central analytical framework to explore these issues. Allan's chapter in *Babies for Sale?* discusses various children's rights such as identity (name, nationality, etc.) and the right to be cared for by one's parents. But again, this begs the question of who the parents really are in surrogacy arrangements — which then also determines nationality: early analyses have demonstrated that national law has indeed yet to catch up to new reproductive possibilities.

The desire to prevent the statelessness of children born from ICS has driven some recent European court cases where citizens of states that ban commercial surrogacy have gone abroad to seek services without researching citizenship implications for the children produced in those arrangements (Cheney, 2018). Most courts decide such cases of resulting child statelessness using the 'child's best interest' principle of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, but these *ex post facto* decisions made once a child already exists as a result of ICS make it virtually impossible 'to exercise any meaningful control' over the ethics or legalities of ICS (HCCH, 2015: 6). Allan argues that 'while best interest determinations regarding the legal parentage of a resulting child may be relevant in such context, analysis of the broader ethical and legal issues for children raised by such practice should not be lost, and in fact should take precedence when considering regulatory options' (Allan in Davies, p. 362).

Preservation of Identity

The issue of identity is a major ethical consideration for people born through ICS. At the 2014 International Forum on Intercountry Adoption and Global Surrogacy in The Hague, which inspired the volume *Babies for Sale?*, the delegation of scholars and activists agreed that preservation of records was of paramount importance for children adopted or born via surrogacy (Cheney, 2014b). Several contributors to *Babies for Sale?* take up this issue, and Davies points out that the demand for origins information will only increase as ICS becomes more common, 'making it all the more crucial that details of the surrogate's and egg provider's name, date of birth, nationality, how they were recruited, fees paid and any advice or counselling given be recorded for safekeeping' (p. 11).

Babies for Sale? chapters by Crawshaw et al., Darling, and Dempsey and Kelly, as well as the book by Rotabi and Bromfield, all grapple with the question of identity for people born through surrogacy. Again, these discussions reveal the prerogative of the powerful — intending parents — to set the terms of the relationships forged through surrogacy arrangements as well as their ability to manage children's access to information about their origins. They are usually backed by laws that favour the privacy of commissioning parents (and ostensibly other parties) over the child's rights to identity. Despite evidence that surrogates would like to keep in touch with the families of children they have birthed (Pande, 2014), they cannot legally control or mandate it. It is equally likely that any 'openness' laws will also leave decisions about what information their children should know about their origins in the hands of the commissioning parents — even where that may differ from what children born of surrogacy find important. Studies so far have shown that children born of surrogacy are well adjusted and view the facts of their birth positively (Jadva et al., 2014), but there is still a question of how they may view the commercial nature of the transaction as they grow older and their perspectives change over the life course.

Commodification of the Child

Of course, the question of whether commercial surrogacy constitutes the commodification — or indeed the sale — of children is one of the central concerns about the practice. And here the jury is still out. In *Babies for Sale?*, legal scholar Allan argues that:

whether 'commercial surrogacy' is framed as the purchase of a child, the purchase of reproductive labour or the purchase of parental rights, they all involve the transfer, for a fee, of a child from the woman who carried it throughout pregnancy and gave birth to it, to the commissioning person(s). There is in all instances a failure to reasonably justify payment. (in Davies, pp. 357–58)

However, a number of ethnographic studies on surrogates and commissioning parents have noted how they employ the language of *the gift*, framing surrogacy as a practice wherein 'women help women' to have a child, and/or to earn an income (see Harrison). They may analyse these discourses as a way to decommodify the transaction at the centre of surrogacy (Rotabi and Bromfield, p. 157), but Harrison (p. 35) takes a slightly different tack, claiming that commodification solidifies social bonds through the purchase of intimate labour. However one views the issue, Ekman notes, '[w]hen a child is produced via surrogacy, the market is pivotal to the child's very existence' (2013: 160).

Such debates prompted Maud de Boer-Buquicchio, the UNHRC Special Rapporteur on the Sale and Sexual Exploitation of Children, to take up the

issue of surrogacy in her 2018 thematic report to the Human Rights Council.² The report specifically examines the question of whether ICS constitutes the sale of children according to the Optional Protocol of the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography. It concludes that ‘Commercial surrogacy as currently practised usually constitutes sale of children as defined under international human rights law’ (UNHRC, 2018: 12) due primarily to the financial transaction and transfer of the child upon payment. The report therefore urges states that allow it to closely regulate it so as to prevent the sale of children in surrogacy (ibid.: 11–12). For this to happen, it has to be ‘clear that the surrogate mother was only being paid for gestational services and not for the transfer of the child’ (ibid.: 17). Among other measures that would ensure prevention of sale, the report recommends that ‘the surrogate mother must be accorded the status of mother at birth, and at birth must be under no contractual or legal obligation to participate in the legal or physical transfer of the child’ (ibid.). Payments must therefore be made before the child’s birth and transfer — and that payment must be non-reimbursable, even if the surrogate mother ultimately decides not to relinquish parenthood. The report notes that it is important to ‘provide necessary protections for children, including post-birth individualized best interests of the child determinations, appropriate suitability reviews of intending parents, and protections of rights of origin and access to identity’ (ibid.: 18). This report constitutes the boldest statement from an international law-making body to date with regard to the children’s rights ramifications of ICS, strongly rejecting the commodification of children in ICS as being against children’s rights.

MARKET FORCES

One cannot therefore deny that ‘the surrogacy industry is a “market” in which body parts and bodies are being rented, and embodied labour sold to produce new life in exchange for economic capital’ (Twine in Davies, p. 112). The fact of commodification does not sit well with most scholars, who prefer a ban on surrogacy for this reason. They also allude to the ways in which the market reproduces social inequality.

As Shalev et al. note, ‘The idea that there is freedom of contract serves the market well, but it preserves pre-existing power relationships and imbalances that are enhanced in intercountry settings characterized by structural global inequity’ (Shalev et al. in Davies, p. 62). Nevertheless, that does not mean that the market excludes bonds of affect, altruism and relationality — quite the opposite. Almeling (2011: 172) has noted that how ICS is framed as an exchange influences the way each party approaches it within

2. This report (UNHRC, 2018) follows the Special Rapporteur’s 2017 thematic report on illegal adoptions.

‘complex choreographies of market and social relations’ (Dempsey and Kelly in Davies, p. 215).

Political economic analyses thus often sit uncomfortably alongside moral economies of ICS: for example, in what Nadimpally and Majumdar refer to as ‘counter-geographies of globalization’, they note how India created an ICS export business to alleviate national debt through the bodies of de-skilled women (in Davies, p. 77). *Babies for Sale?* case studies from Romania (Demeny), Greece (Davaki), and Mexico (Fulde) reinforce the deleterious effects of free market forces for women performing such reproductive labour, which Sassen (2002) refers to as the feminization of survival.

Pande takes a more pragmatist stance in her *Babies for Sale?* chapter: based on her ethnographic experience with ICS in India, she acknowledges its resemblance to other gendered, informal markets in which women participate (in Davies, p. 332), such as prostitution and care work. Rotabi and Bromfield, while problematizing the ‘choices’ women have in a marginalized position of poverty, also acknowledge that if intercountry adoption is any indication, it will be difficult to get the money out of the practice. If intercountry adoption tends to shift from countries that impose more regulation to countries with weak adoption laws and social protection systems (Cheney, 2014a), then ICS markets are likely to do the same.

PARALLELS WITH AND DEPARTURES FROM ADOPTION

Given that adoption and surrogacy are the two immediate options usually considered by infertile couples seeking to have children, there are many possible precedents from adoption studies that could be used to analyse surrogacy dynamics. Rotabi and Bromfield delve most into this topic. Though it could use a clearer analytical string tying it together, their book’s title and structure imply an evolution from intercountry adoption to ICS. As they point out, Cuthbert and Fronek (2014) have even referred to ICS as ‘perfecting adoption’. However, this book focuses on the illicit activities that emerge from both practices, suggesting that they are far from perfect. Parallels between adoption and surrogacy also include privileging the intending parent(s) — particularly white, monied intending parents from the global North sourcing children from less developed countries. In intercountry adoption, illicit practices are couched in the rhetoric of child rescue, whereas in ICS they are typically framed as empowering women.

Despite the parallels, Rotabi and Bromfield caution that there are limits to the possibility of adoption research informing the emergent scholarship on surrogacy (p. 133). One vital difference is that surrogates agree to be impregnated with, carry and relinquish a genetically unrelated child while birthmothers choose to relinquish their genetically related child who already exists or with whom they are already pregnant (Teman, 2008: 1108). At present, that surrogacy triad of intended parents, surrogate and child has

almost no social protection oversight, unlike adoption (where corruption and trafficking nonetheless flourish, see Cheney, forthcoming). Indeed, Harrison's book raises some case studies that demonstrate 'a lack of social and legal consensus over whether surrogacy should be treated as akin to adoption, and thus deserving of intensive state intervention, or akin to traditional reproduction, and therefore a supposedly private matter' (p. 71). This confusion allows for the growth of criminality and exploitation within a 'free' ICS market.

PULLING BACK FROM THE FRONTIER OF FERTILITY

Despite a relatively thorough exploration of the topic produced through these three volumes, the only consensus appears to be that there is little consensus when it comes to the global ramifications of ICS. While the authors assembled across these volumes acknowledge some level of commodification of women's and children's bodies, there is still no clear consensus on the implications of that commodification. The Special Rapporteur on the sale of children is unequivocal that ICS, if not well regulated, constitutes the sale of children. But does ICS amount to the exploitation of women, or is it women's prerogative to offer their reproductive services at cost? The answer to this lies in whether one views surrogacy as commensurate with care work. While surrogates are inclined to classify their labour as such, intending parents are often ambivalent, as acknowledging a surrogate's care work may attribute surrogates a mothering role from which the intending parents hope to distance her in order to strengthen their own claims to parenthood, while minimizing hers. This recent body of work on surrogacy points to how these practices gloss over considerations not just of the nature of social and reproductive labour in surrogacy but of race, class and kinship. ICS therefore continues to confound notions of social reproduction as they pertain to reproductive justice and equality, leading other scholars to more and more radical critiques and to adopt an abolitionist stance, such as in Renate Klein's (2017) book, *Surrogacy: A Human Rights Violation*.

These volumes do, however, allude to a number of possible directions for future research that may help resolve some of the tensions and conundrums that ICS poses. A number of authors point out the need for more research directly with ICS-affected parties. It is interesting that ethnographers like Teman and Pande, who have spent a fair amount of time with surrogates, are less inclined to ban surrogacy altogether than others who have not done such involved fieldwork, suggesting that ethnography yields a more nuanced and sympathetic picture (Maniere in Davies, p. 318).

In the meantime, one policy option is to attempt to gain consensus regarding greater regulation of ICS. Experts at the 2014 International Forum on Intercountry Adoption and Global Surrogacy agreed that a regulatory convention would be difficult to enforce (Cheney, 2014b). States that

are permissive will resist regulation, while the majority of countries that currently restrict or prohibit surrogacy will likely reject a more facilitative convention (Allan in Davies, p. 361). Nevertheless, the Hague Conference on International Private Law has issued several preliminary reports on parentage as it pertains to ICS in particular (HCCH, 2014, 2015), and International Social Services Geneva has convened an expert group to prepare international guidelines for ICS in hopes that it will eventually be adopted by the United Nations as a regulatory framework.³

They had better hurry up: anti-choice ‘personhood laws’ in the US and some other countries are moving toward embryos having more rights than children born from ARTs. But this comes with a twist: ‘While a relatively stable segment of the population responds favourably to the notion of personhood as it pertains to the right to *terminate* a pregnancy, it appears that the general public is far more hesitant to limit the ability of individuals to *create* a pregnancy’ (Harrison, p. 204). This reinvigorates the question of whether attempts at global regulation of commercial surrogacy will help foster more or less reproductive autonomy for women around the world.

In the absence of universal policy that can ensure reproductive autonomy, one other option is to explore ways of maintaining the positive connections built through ICS, including non-exploitative relationships and more open ICS arrangements. The surrogates in Pande’s study consistently expressed desires for an ongoing relationship with the families of children they have birthed (Pande in Davies, p. 339). Open adoptions have demonstrated not only how this could work but how forging such expanded notions of ‘family’ is beneficial for all parties (Richards, 2014).

The more difficult work, however, may be acknowledging that, ultimately, ART concerns far more than just reproductive justice; it also involves eco-justice — but then we are getting into the very unpopular yet crucially important topic of (over)population, which authors in these volumes only indirectly address by questioning rights and entitlements to procreation:

the right to reproductive health and autonomy, the right to found a family, and the right to respect for privacy and family life are relevant in the context of surrogacy. . . . However, the content of such rights arguably does not provide an entitlement to enter into surrogacy agreements. The right to reproductive health could not be held to go so far as creating an entitlement to enlist the reproductive capacity of another woman to enable a person to bear children. (Allan in Davies, p. 335)

Put another way, ‘children are not an entitlement through which we can justify exploiting other human beings’ (Ekman et al. in Davies, p. 308). Acknowledgement of this limitation may involve pulling back from — rather than pursuing — new fertility frontiers, instead reimagining forms of relatedness to encompass a broader sense of responsibility for one’s already-existing

3. See www.iss-ssi.org/index.php/en/what-we-do-en/surrogacy

fellow human beings. Haraway (2015: 161) refers to this as ‘making kin not babies’: forging different kinds of human connection not through procreation but by ‘kinnovating’ (ibid.: 164), or expanding our ideas of kin and caring beyond natalism to embrace existing ‘others’ in non-exploitative relationships. For Haraway, this includes such marginalized, demonized and even criminalized populations as refugees and immigrants. My own work has often pointed to the myriad of ways in which the figure of the child as hope for the future gets caught up in discourses of global emergency and present uncertainty in complex and contradictory ways that lead to a kind of reverse myopia or farsightedness, specifically by seeing beyond those children (and adults) who are in front of you to embrace those far away — and even those not yet born — as kin. But could embracing those before us — rather than far-away children and imagined-but-not-yet-conceived babies — obviate some of the issues raised by ICS? Critical debates and careful social research about ICS and other ARTs may yet push the frontier away from procreation and toward more non-coercive, inclusionary forms of ‘kinnovation’.

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Kristen E. Cheney (cheney@iss.nl) is Associate Professor of Children and Youth Studies for the International Institute of Social Studies. Her current research concerns the political economy of childhood — including the 'orphan industrial complex' — and sexual and reproductive health. In 2014, she organized the International Forum on Intercountry Adoption and Global Surrogacy.