

Choice Reads: A Book-of-the-Month Club

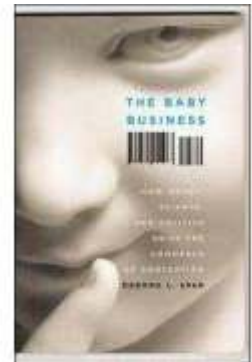
DECEMBER 2008:

The Baby Business: How Money, Science, and Politics Drive the Commerce of Conception

by Debora L. Spar

Description:

Harvard business professor Spar explores many aspects of the high-tech commodification of procreation: the fabulous revenues commercial fertility clinics earn from couples' desperate desire for children and the ensuing conflicts between medical ethics and the profit motive; the premiums paid for sperm and eggs from genetically desirable donors; the possible exploitation of poor, nonwhite and Third World surrogate mothers paid to gestate the spawn of wealthy Westerners; the fine line between modern adoption practices and outright baby selling; and the new entrepreneurial paradigm of maternity, in which the official "mother" simply finances the assemblage of sperm, purchased egg and hired womb and lays contractual claim to the finished infant. Spar considers most of these developments inevitable and not undesirable (they provide kids to parents who want them), but calls for government regulation to curb excesses and protect the interests of all involved.



Reader's Guide:

1. Deborah Spar wants us to "acknowledge the commercial truth about reproduction and to begin thinking about ways of governing it." Do you agree with her thesis, that we need to regulate the "industry" of reproduction? Are there limits or drawbacks to this line of argument? What are they?
2. Spar's chapters cover the mechanics of assisted reproductive technologies, surrogacy, designer babies, cloning, and adoption. How would you compare and contrast the various methods of "acquiring" children? What ethical dilemmas are involved in each method? What advantages?
3. Is it possible to do a "cost/benefit analysis" of the various "market segments"? How?
4. What most surprised you about what you learned from this book? What did you find most shocking or offensive? What did you find most helpful? Most hopeful?
5. How would you add to Spar's concerns or modify her proposals?

If you would like to recommend a book, receive book suggestions directly, or meet to discuss books, please contact Pem at pem@prochoicemass.org or 617-556-8800 x14.

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