

COMMERCIAL SURROGACY

INFORMATION SERVICES TEAM

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CHILDREN MUST NOT BE REDUCED TO A COMMODITY



Commercial surrogacy (CS) has been growing worldwide and is promoted by the businesses involved in assisted reproductive technologies (ART) as a benevolent step forward in medical technology for childless couples and single adults, but it is, like prostitution, inherently dehumanizing and unethical.

Some would have us believe CS is just another service, like a mechanic fixing a customer's vehicle, but the intensely personal and private nature of sexual relations and the natural product of such relations, children, set it apart from most other activities which are social rather than personal.

Humans are not senseless machines, rather we are sensitive beings who must all be treated with dignity or we dehumanize them and by extension all mankind.

Dehumanization occurs when the purpose of sexual relations are changed from a loving and a mutually beneficial relationship to giving or receiving a sexual service, due to a duty or compulsion borne of a hierarchical relation or some form of benefit such as the payment of money.

Conception and child bearing can only be humane in relation to a specific individual with whom one has a loving relationship. Paying poor women to undergo an invasive medical procedure to harvest their eggs or act as a human incubator when these acts entail substantial risks is exploitative, thus unethical; all the more so when the biological mother and the surrogates who bore the babies for nine months will not have an ongoing relationship with the babies and their legal guardians.

This exploitation and the commodification of babies is a form of human trafficking and akin to baby farming, thus inhumane and unethical.

The commodification of babies objectifies these vulnerable human beings thus promotes child neglect and child abuse as children are naturally diminished to the status of objects to service the desires of adults, as if they were pet dogs one owned.

The most common ART technology used in CS is in-vitro fertilization (IVF) as it can greatly speed up the conception process, but at the cost of substantially increasing the incidence of underweight babies and structural defects.

Adults have a right to engage in CS, but service providers must be required to inform clients about the ethical issues involved; notably the danger to babies posed by IVF.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Commercial surrogacy commodifies babies, diminishes the dignity and status of women, and promotes the exploitation of the poor.

RECOMMENDATION

Ensure that service providers inform clients about the ethical issues involved in commercial surrogacy.

FURTHER READING

2010 Assisted Reproduction Technology, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, December 2012.

Babies, Child Bearers and Commodification, M.V. McLachlan and J.K. Swales, Health Care Analysis, 2000.

Procreative Liberty and Harm to Offspring in Assisted Reproduction, John A. Robertson, American Journal of Law and Medicine 30, pp. 7-40, 2004.

Why Commercial Surrogate Motherhood Unethically Commodifies Women and Children: Reply to McLachlan and Swales, M.V. McLachlan and J.K. Swales, Health Care Analysis, 2000.

