

Infertile couples have more medical options than ever before—and more chances to become emotionally and financially drained in the quest to produce a child.

Is it time to take adoption more seriously?

Family Bonds

Adoption, Infertility, and the New World of Child Production

by Elizabeth Bartholet



The world of reproductive technology is exploding. What was once a finite process—with an end point that used to be defined as doctors' repeated inability to enable couples to produce a baby using their own genetic material—is now an elastic one, expanding to the degree that patients have the time, money and emotional wherewithal to explore a multitude of other options, many using third-party eggs, sperm, embryos and wombs. While this often grueling cycle of treatment goes on, there is one very logical choice for the infertile that is often overlooked, even discouraged: adoption.

In **Family Bonds: Adoption, Infertility and the New World of Child Production**, acclaimed family law specialist Elizabeth Bartholet tells her own story of infertility and adoption, recounting the poignant tale of how she moved from an “obsession” with getting pregnant to the realization that adoption is a desirable alternative. Originally published in 1993, it is the first book to have examined these two phenomenon together—the infertility treatments that are pushed too far and the ever-increasing number of children in need of permanent homes.

Inspired by her own experience, Bartholet calls for a reform of the policies that govern adoption, and the social attitudes that consider adoptive families to be inferior to biological ones. She also argues that there must be some regulation of infertility treatments. “We need to correct the societal bias that pushes those interested in parenting to produce new life at all costs, without regard to the needs of children who already exist,” she writes. “And we need to begin to address the issues that the new reproductive technologies have thrust upon us—issues that are central to the meaning of life, parenting, and family.”

Those issues are at the core of **Family Bonds**. Bartholet's own concept of parenting and family changed drastically one morning when, after a decade of infertility treatment, she woke up and realized that there were children out there waiting to be parented. She climbed on a plane and flew to Lima, Peru, where she adopted her son, Christopher. Two years later, she returned to Lima to adopt Michael.

Praise for
Family Bonds

Adoption, Infertility and the New World of Child Production

“Brilliant. . . An intelligent and passionate exploration of the legal, racial, and psychological issues.”

—*The New York Times Book Review*

“A jewel. . . Recommended to anyone contemplating or involved with adoption and to any citizen concerned about the welfare of children in our society.”

—*The Boston Globe*

“Bartholet’s book is a call for change of heart and social policy that reads like a thriller. Put it on your list if you care about children, or civil rights, or the future of the family.”

—Harriet Reisen, WBUR Radio

“This very readable book is. . . highly recommended to all who care about children and families. It will open their eyes to the many brands of hypocrisy the infertile face.”

—*The Washington Post*

“A riveting look at life through the lenses of adoption and infertility. It is difficult to imagine a reader who could put this book down before experiencing an inalterable change in thinking about the meaning of family.”

—Richard Barth, Professor of Social Welfare, UC Berkeley

“Family Bonds is at once powerful testimony to the robust ties adoptive families form and an urgent plea for the rights and needs of children.”

—*New York Newsday*

“In her penetrating exploration of adoption policies. . . Bartholet emphasizes that what matters most is not the biological bond but the family of love and care.”

—*Chicago Tribune*

“An engrossing account addressed both to women undergoing often futile treatments and to those fighting to adopt children.”

—*Publishers Weekly*

“A seminal volume. . . Bartholet offers an important exploration of the societal barriers to adoption, as well as an invaluable support to would be parents who face these seemingly insurmountable obstacles.”

—*Kikus Reviews*

“A compelling personal account of the social and political forces that divert prospective parents away from adoption of children and toward high-tech medical interventions that sound miraculous, but exact a high emotional and financial toll.”

—U.S. Representative Ron Wyden, author of
The Fertility Clinic Success Rate and Certification Act of 1992

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"I emerged from those experiences with changed views about the meaning of parenting and with powerful convictions about the need for major changes in the policies that shape parenting options for the infertile," she writes. "We need to stop defining parenting in terms of procreation. We need to stop treating adoption as a last resort and recognize the uniquely positive features of this form of family."

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Elizabeth Bartholet is a professor at Harvard Law School, and a renowned expert on issues of child welfare, adoption and reproductive technology. Her new book, *Nobody's Children: Abuse and Neglect, Foster Drift, and the Adoption Alternative*, is available from Beacon Press.

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