



Labor of Love: Gestational Surrogacy and the Work of Making Babies (Families in Focus)

Heather Jacobson

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While the practice of surrogacy has existed for millennia, new fertility technologies have allowed women to act as gestational surrogates, carrying children that are not genetically their own. While some women volunteer to act as gestational surrogates for friends or family members, others get paid for performing this service. The first ethnographic study of gestational surrogacy in the United States, *Labor of Love* examines the conflicted attitudes that emerge when the ostensibly priceless act of bringing a child into the world becomes a paid occupation.

Heather Jacobson interviews not only surrogate mothers, but also their family members, the intended parents who employ surrogates, and the various professionals who work to facilitate the process. Seeking to understand how gestational surrogates perceive their vocation, she discovers that many regard surrogacy as a calling, but are reluctant to describe it as a job. In the process, Jacobson dissects the complex set of social attitudes underlying this resistance toward conceiving of pregnancy as a form of employment.

Through her extensive field research, Jacobson gives readers a firsthand look at the many challenges faced by gestational surrogates, who deal with complicated medical procedures, delicate work-family balances, and tricky social dynamics. Yet *Labor of Love* also demonstrates the extent to which advances in reproductive technology are affecting all Americans, changing how we think about maternity, family, and the labor involved in giving birth.

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