

# A sad story of the commodification of children



Ever since I was a little kid, I have been crazy about babies and toddlers. My mom is the oldest girl in a family of 11 children, so growing up, there were always young cousins to dote over, to tote around, to push on a swing and to play peekaboo with.

While I was in college, I worked at a day-care center where I helped to look after a roomful of 3-year-olds. It's where I met my wife, who said my love for kids was part of what drew her to me. It certainly wasn't my good looks or my wealth. She said that watching me with those little kids assured her that I'd be a good dad someday. Now, some days I prove her right, and on others, I'm sure I fall short.

People raise an eyebrow when I tell them that Norah, our youngest, who turns 2 in a couple of weeks, is my favorite. They're never quite sure if I'm joking or serious. "You shouldn't have a favorite!" they'll reply. My response is always the same: Look at her! Everything about her oozes cuteness – even when she's bad (which is often). I'm a bit obsessed with watching her toddle around, listening to her new, tiny voice, making her laugh. While she might be my favorite now, I'm quick to admit that when the other kids were her age, they were my favorites, too.

All of this came to mind the other day when I came across a story on CNN.com with a headline that made me raise an eyebrow: ["Three dads, a baby and the legal battle to get their names added to a birth certificate."](#) The article tells the story of Ian Jenkins and his partners, Alan and Jeremy. "They're part of a unique and very modern family that includes three dads, two surrogates and one egg donor," the article

states. "In a new book, 'Three Dads and a Baby,' Jenkins chronicles their search for potential egg donors and a surrogate, and a fight to change a medical and legal system geared toward heterosexual couples."

The article tells the story of how this "throuple" – the term used for three people in a relationship – met and eventually decided that they wanted to be fathers. But there were obstacles – for example, "We just didn't have the ovaries," Jenkins wrote. One friend said she was willing to donate eggs to the couple with the stipulation that they let her be an "aunt figure," and the men agreed to pay for her to make a yearly trip to San Diego to visit the child. Another friend volunteered to be the surrogate. According to the article, "Over the next few months, Jenkins says the family spent nearly \$121,000 on contracts, legal fees, medical procedures and tests for their firstborn."

The three men won a long legal battle to have each of their names listed as the father on the birth certificate of their daughter, Piper, who was born in 2017. In 2019, another baby – a son, Parker – was born by a second surrogate, using the eggs of the same donor – a transaction that, again, needed multiple contracts. In the article, Jenkins acknowledged that keeping it straight can be confusing. "We did an egg extraction. We got a bunch of eggs ... and we fertilized them with sperm from all three dads. And from that effort, we got several embryos. One of the embryos was Piper, one of the embryos was Parker," he says. He did not say what happened to the other embryos – their other children.

As I said above: I love babies. Our children truly are the light of our lives – just as I'm sure that the children of these three men are the light of theirs. Just as God created our Norah with a dignity that can never be taken away, so, too, did he create their children. But sadly, and too often, as this story shows, children have become objects that men and women feel they are owed simply because they want them. And so

children are treated as commodities that can be manufactured, pulled off of a shelf and purchased like an iPhone or a television or a can of soup, instead of what they truly are: a gift from God.

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