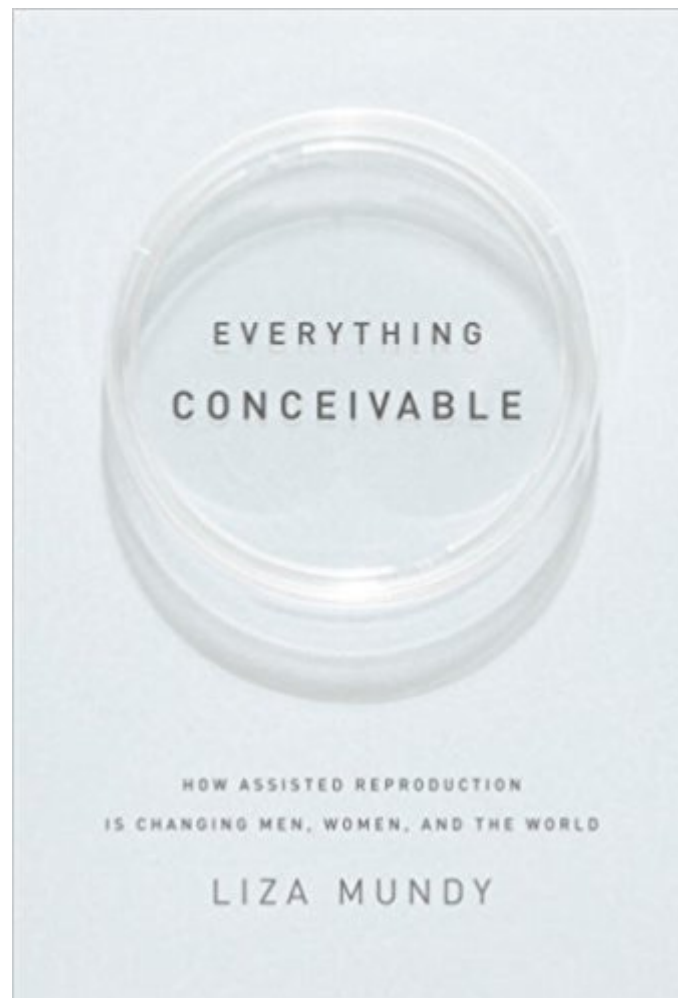




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# Everything Conceivable: How Assisted Reproduction Is Changing Our World



## Synopsis

Skyrocketing infertility rates and the accompanying explosion in reproductive technology are revolutionizing the American family and changing the way we think about parenthood, childbirth, and life itself. In this riveting work of investigative reporting, Liza Mundy, an award-winning journalist for The Washington Post, captures the human narratives, as well as the science, behind what is today a controversial, multibillion-dollar industry, and examines how the huge social experiment that is assisted reproduction is transforming our most basic relationships and even our destiny as a species. Based on in-depth reporting from across the nation and around the world, using riveting anecdotal material from doctors, families, and children—many of them now adults—conceived through in vitro fertilization, Mundy looks at the phenomena created by assisted reproduction and their ramifications. Never before in the history of humankind has it been possible for a woman to give birth to an infant who is genetically unrelated to her. Never before has it been possible for a woman to be the genetic parent of children to whom she has not given birth. Never before has the issue of choice had such kaleidoscopic implications. If you support reproductive freedom, does that mean you support everything being offered in the reproductive marketplace? Thawing frozen embryos and letting them expire? Selecting the sex of your baby? Conceiving triplets and “reducing” the pregnancy down to twins? Everything Conceivable explores the personal impact on individuals using assisted reproduction to conceive, and the moral, ethical, and pragmatic decisions they make on their journey to parenthood. It looks at the vast social consequences: for hospital neonatal wards, for family structure, for schools, for our notion of genetic relatedness and whether it matters, for adoption; for our nation as a whole, and how we think about the earliest human life-forms. The book explores questions of social justice: the ethics of buying or borrowing some part of the reproductive process, as with egg donation and surrogacy. It looks at entirely new family structures being created by families who have conceived using sperm donors, so that children may have half-siblings around the country with whom they are, or are not, in contact. And it looks toward the future, to the impact today’s technology may have on coming generations. Fascinating, commanding, keenly observed and reported, rich in personal drama as well as in the science of evolution and reproduction, Liza Mundy’s Everything Conceivable is a groundbreaking consideration of the changes sweeping through our culture and the world.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Starred Review. A revolution is taking place and it's being driven by the most fundamental of all human urges—the desire to reproduce. This revolution is the subject of Mundy's utterly fascinating book on assisted reproduction. The breadth and thoroughness of Mundy's investigation makes it nearly impossible to come away without having your opinions challenged if not changed altogether. Mundy, a feature writer for the Washington Post, combines a science reporter's objectivity with a mother's understanding, and she delivers her emotionally charged and often scientifically complex material in clear, bright and eminently readable prose. Mundy's research starts with the facts: 80 million people worldwide suffer from infertility; 500,000 frozen embryos exist in America alone; and fertility drugs are a \$3-billion a year business. From there she interviews mothers, fathers, infertility doctors, surrogate mothers, egg donors, sperm donors and adult children conceived through surrogacy and in vitro fertilization. The picture that emerges is one of a social experiment so new and untested—legally, medically, ethically and socially—that it behooves us all to be as informed as possible. There couldn't be a better starting point than this book. 75,000 first printing. (Apr. 24) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

Liza Mundy, an award-winning feature writer for the Washington Post, delivers a dispassionate, comprehensive view of assisted reproduction in the 21st century. She has clearly done her research, building the project from an initial assignment to look at infertility among minorities to a

book that examines the manifold ramifications of our newfound ability to circumvent evolution. Her clear-eyed look at the world strikes a few reviewers as a bit too removed, and her interviews and case studies sometimes gloss over deeper sociocultural issues, but the overall consensus is that Mundy wades through this complicated, emotional subject with aplomb. Copyright © 2004 Phillips & Nelson Media, Inc.

Author has done a great job introducing and explaining the issues around the advances in reproductive medicine. The science is changing so rapidly that books will need to be updated every few years. I hope that she is working on a new edition as much has changed since this book was published in 2007. Still, it's a good place to get a lot of information in readable form. She is great at integrating the science with personal stories that bring the issues to life.

Gracefully written, meticulously researched, compassionately reported, this is a Sorcerer's Apprentice story of technology that has vastly outstripped anyone's judgment. For once, the problem is not political or corporate corruption -- the failure to consider the most fundamental notions of policy or ethics is due, more than any other cause, to the overwhelming passion of people who want to be parents, as Mundy notes more committed and unselfish than any other people classified as "patients" in our health care system. Filled with heart-wrenching -- and heart-lifting -- stories, scientific and technological developments that seem like something out of a comic book but are going on right now in your neighborhood, unforgettable characters, mind-bogglingly difficult choices, and Mundy's own wisdom, this is one of the finest and most important non-fiction books I have read in years.

This is a book about the transformation of the process of human reproduction. It is a book about the whole business of Artificial Reproduction Technology (ART). It is a book about those people who seek to have children through ART and those who supply the services. It is rich in individual case-histories. And it gives a picture of a vast uncontrolled world which is playing a larger and larger part in the story of mankind. It is a book in which mankind is seen contending with unprecedented situations and questions. Artificial Reproduction technologies which were first introduced to help infertile parents in a short time became means for enabling the creation of families in which only one parent was genetically connected to the child. After this the way became open for the unprecedented capacity of selecting of a 'donor' on the basis of certain desirable qualities. As the technology first developed in the liberal era following the passing of Roe-Wade there was a large degree of laissez-

faire carelessness and exploitation in the development of the 'Industry'. The very process of Artificial Reproduction makes a fundamental change in the situation of humanity. It is no longer necessary for there to be sexual and ideally loving relations between 'man' and 'woman' to have children. This in itself is such a revolutionary turn about in our situation and conception of ourselves that it seems to me mankind as a whole, and certainly the major religious traditions have not known how to connect this with their own traditional positions. In any case this work is more a very realistic picture of what is happening in the world of Artificial Reproduction than it is anything else. It has been highly praised in all the reviews I have seen of it, as being clearly and comprehensibly written. It involves an exhaustive research in which many individual case- histories were traced. In the course of this it leads to the consideration of unprecedented situations, many of which create unique moral dilemmas. Enormous moral dilemmas have developed from the new Industry. Consider the question of 'frozen embryos' the leftovers after other fertilized embryos of the same genetic couple were employed. What does one do with the nearly five- hundred million such frozen embryos in the U.S.? It is the parents choice whether to donate them to other would be parents, or to research, or have them implanted in the mother. They too have the alternatives of keeping them frozen or 'disposing of them'. What is the moral status of any of the above decisions? One important side of this is the author's look at the relatively uncontrolled private sector involved in selling various technologies, and elements in the process of reproduction. For most readers a great share of the interest will be in reading of the individual cases, of those desperate to have children. One major question of course is whether 'happy endings' for prospective parents now will mean future well-being for the children involved. Another major question of course is the overall effect on the human community as a whole. Those critical of the excessive and over-liberal use of these technologies claim children are being brought into their world whose futures will be fraught with perilous identity-confusions. Those who believe in the importance of the two- parent nuclear family will be appalled at the chaos created by the new technologies. Even those who strongly support the technologies can be troubled by the separation which occurs in so many cases between 'genetic parents' and 'those who actually raise the children. The changes are very great indeed. Those interested in the overall situation and meaning of what it is to be human would do well to read this book.

"Everything Conceivable" by Liza Mundy is fascinating to say the very least. This book takes the reader on a thorough, unbiased trip through the world of Assisted Reproductive Technology (ART). As Liza Mundy proves with every turn of the page "reproductive technology is mirroring social change, but it also enables and drives that change, in ways that will affect every single citizen, and

probably already have." Thus this book should intrigue everyone, both male and female, fertile and infertile because these issues indeed "affect every single citizen." Liza literally takes the reader with her into reproductive clinics where doctors are performing selective reduction or stirring up humans in petri dishes. She brings the reader into the homes of the loving parents whose child came from those petri dishes and talks with both male and female gamete donors. "So broad is the patient base, and so eager is the field to accommodate them, that assisted reproduction has gone from being an oddball fringe technology to being perhaps the most socially influential reproductive technology of the twenty-first century." This exquisite compilation is not just of facts and figures but stories full of raw emotion, real people, real life right here and now with consequences so far reaching that soon no one will escape them. Meet same sex couples, their egg donors and surrogates. Meet the children of IVF and hear how they feel about not being biologically related to one of their parents. Hear tales of motherly exchanges via a website dedicated to mothers and children of sperm donor #1476. Ask yourself how you feel about a man donating sperm to his infertile son's wife so that his son will be raising his literal half brother. The situations are endless as are the opportunities, decisions, and repercussions. A scientific masterpiece, that reads like the most captivating novel, this book begs the answers to questions such as when does life begin? What is life? and morally what can and should be done with it? Along with bringing these soul-searching questions to the surface this book is simply an entertaining read. On all levels, this book is a must read!

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