

# Surrogate mothers: Contact and relationships with families created through surrogacy

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Susan Imrie, Vasanti Jadva and Susan Golombok  
Centre for Family Research, University of Cambridge



## Background

Surrogacy, the process whereby a woman carries and gives birth to a baby for an infertile couple, has become an increasingly popular and more widely-accepted way of building a family.

There are two types of surrogacy practiced in the UK:

- Gestational surrogacy, in which the surrogate gestates the couple's embryo, or an embryo created using a donor egg
- Genetic surrogacy, in which the surrogate uses her own egg

A study of 33 families created through surrogacy found that 61% remained in contact with their surrogate ten years after the surrogacy (Jadva et al, 2012).

One study of 34 surrogates found that 76% remained in contact with the surrogacy child one year after the child's birth (Jadva et al, 2003), but nothing is known from the surrogate's perspective about whether contact is maintained or whether this pattern remains when larger numbers of surrogacies are considered.

## Method

**Participants:** Data were collected from 34 surrogates, aged 23-62 years (mean = 41, SD = 6.6). The study followed a sample recruited between 2000-2002 (Jadva et al, 2003). 20 surrogates from the original sample participated in the present study and 14 additional participants were recruited.

10 surrogates had completed one surrogacy each, and 24 had completed more than one surrogacy (mean = 3.06, SD = 2.03). In total, surrogates had completed 102 surrogacy arrangements (41 gestational, 61 genetic).

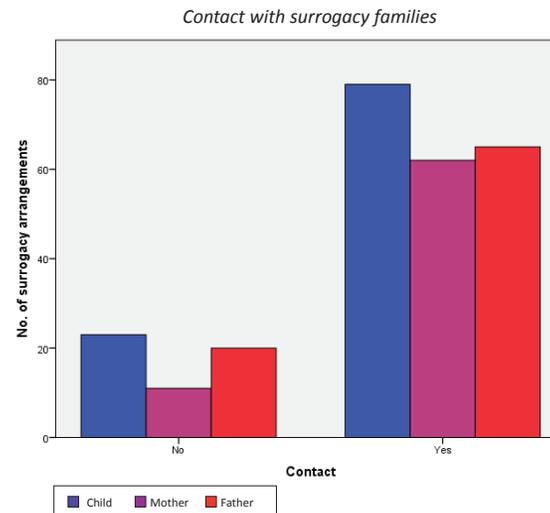
Surrogacy children were aged 0-18 years (mean = 7, SD = 4.4).

**Measures:** Data were collected over an 18-month period using in-depth semi-structured interviews. Participants were visited at home.

## Results

### Contact

Surrogates had remained in contact with seventy-nine (77%) surrogacy children, sixty-two (85%) mothers and sixty-five (76%) fathers. Surrogates were happy with their level of contact with the child in eighty-six (84%) arrangements. Of the surrogates who had remained in contact with the surrogacy families, the majority had face to face contact. There was no significant difference found between whether surrogates remained in contact with children, mothers and fathers and the type of surrogacy undertaken.



### Disclosure

Surrogates reported that fifty-four (53%) surrogacy children had been told that they were conceived through surrogacy. In twenty (20%) surrogacy arrangements surrogates reported that the child had not been told. In twenty-eight (27%) arrangements surrogates did not know whether the child had been told or not. There was no significant difference by surrogacy type between the children who had been told of their conception by surrogacy and those who had not.

### Relationships

In cases where the surrogate and child had stayed in contact, surrogates reported a positive relationship with the child in sixty (76%) arrangements.

Surrogates reported feeling a 'special bond' towards the child in 40 (39%) arrangements. Genetic surrogates were significantly more likely to report feeling no special bond towards the child ( $\chi^2 (1) = 12.31, p < .001$ ).

### Overall experience of surrogacy

Surrogates reported that eighty-nine (87%) of the surrogacy arrangements had been positive experiences. Eight (8%) were categorised as neutral/ambivalent experiences and five (5%) were negative experiences. No significant difference was found between surrogates' overall experience of surrogacy and the type of surrogacy undertaken.

## Conclusions

In the majority of surrogacy arrangements surrogates remained in contact with the families created and reported positive relationships. Type of surrogacy was not significantly associated with whether or not contact was maintained, how the surrogacy was viewed, or whether the surrogacy had been disclosed to the child.

**Limitations:** Whilst the sample size was relatively small, the study examines a larger number of surrogacy arrangements than any other study.

## References & Acknowledgements

Jadva V, Murray C, Lycett E, MacCallum F, Golombok S. (2003). Surrogacy: the experiences of surrogate mothers. *Human Reproduction*, 18 (10), 2196-2204.

Jadva V, Blake L, Casey P, Golombok S. (2012). Surrogacy families 10 years on: relationship with the surrogate, decisions over disclosure and children's understanding of their surrogacy origins. *Human Reproduction*, 27 (10), 3008-3014.

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