



# Surrogate Motherhood: Conception In The Heart (Institutional Structures of Feeling)

*Helena Ragone*

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Ever since the Baby M case, the public has been fascinated with the continuing phenomenon of surrogate motherhood. The Baby M case raised, and left unanswered, many questions about what constitutes motherhood, fatherhood, family, reproduction, and kinship. What do the surrogates, commissioning couples, program directors, and attending professionals think and feel about surrogacy? How and when are the children told of their birth origins? How do surrogate mother programs select a surrogate? What psychological tests are administered? *Surrogate Motherhood: Conception in the Heart* examines the phenomenon of surrogate motherhood in depth, through the unique perspective of a cultural anthropologist, providing us with answers to these and other questions in a richly textured ethnography. Included in the book are actual surrogate and couple evaluation forms completed by clinical psychologists, confidential surrogate mother information sheets, and the legal contract used by one of the programs. To date, thousands of surrogate-assisted births have taken place, but never before have the experiences of the participants and program staff been explored in such detail. Participants who have never before spoken publicly about their involvement in surrogacy here speak out, and their statements are startling and intriguing. Surrogate mothers and commissioning couples who have suffered the pain of infertility open up their hearts to illuminate the compelling world of surrogacy in which many of our assumptions about nurturance, family, and kinship are reconfigured. The following quotes from surrogates, a father, and an adoptive mother speak to the richness of this text.

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