

## Research Project

# Family Building at Advanced Parental Age: An Interdisciplinary Approach

### Third-party funded project

**Project title** Family Building at Advanced Parental Age: An Interdisciplinary Approach

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**Organisation / Research unit**

Ethik / Bio- und Medizinethik (Elger)

**Department**

Ethik / Bio- und Medizinethik (Elger)

**Project start** 01.09.2021

**Probable end** 31.08.2025

**Status** Active

**Families with parents of Advanced Parental Age (APA)** are becoming more and more common; a trend that has raised serious concerns for several reasons. APA is typically advised against as it is assumed that older parents will not be able to fulfil their parental duties. Older parenthood is associated with medical complications for the mother and for the child and an increase in the use of medical assistance to conceive. The debate on APA has focussed on a number of different topics including reproductive autonomy, parental rights and responsibilities, (discrimination on the basis of) gender and age, justice, and the welfare of the child. However, key principles, such as principle of reproductive autonomy (the right of a person to decide for her or himself when, how, etc. (s)he plans to reproduce) and the welfare of the child (which is the main argument used to restrict parental autonomy in reproduction) will need to be balanced against other values and must be understood in a setting of normative ideas. While more and more data are gathered on factors that contribute to the increase in parental age at first birth, little research is done on how society reacts (and should react) to this evolution and how citizens think about it. Our research aims to increase insight into how and why people decide to have children later in life and to what extent moral views and principles play a role in this decision and on how and why professionals make treatment decisions. Given the fact that every society has an elaborate set of rules and theories on family building and reproduction, it is important to explore whether personal views of citizens match this set and if not, in which direction changes should be made.

**The overall goal of the project is to create a strong and coherent normative framework about responsible family building at an advanced age:** >40 years old for at least one of the parents. This normative framework, that is empirically informed, will help to design recommendations for clinical practice and policy making.

To examine **how age is used as a factor in decisions and moral reasoning about reproduction in two contexts: natural conception and reproductive medicine**, we will critically analyse the validity and acceptability of widely accepted ethical principles and guidelines as well as the stakeholders' convictions. The study will examine what defines a 'good' parent, which characteristics describe such a 'good' parent; and what are the minimal standards for parental competence. Special attention will be given to questions of justice and the presence of double moral standards in restrictions on women's and men's possibilities to procreate at an older age.

This complementary study includes 1) an **explorative study of the normative literature** to scrutinize the principles, arguments and background theories forwarded and available in the academic and soci-

etal discussions on APA; 2) a **critical analysis of existing empirical evidence** delineating the extent to which parental age is a factor in relevant concerns resulting in arguments for and against APA in the two contexts; 3) a **mapping of the regulatory framework** on APA in Belgium and Switzerland to underscore how the law, regulations and guidelines shape the practice; 4) a **qualitative interview study capturing the experiences of stakeholders and their moral views** concerning responsible parenthood in relation to APA; and 5) an **integration of the empirical findings and the normative-theoretical knowledge in a new and coherent normative framework** about responsible family building at APA. Based on our combined expertise and disciplinary backgrounds and with the support of the partners of the research project, we will cover a multi-faceted research question in a way that creates new pathways of impact. The project will result in novel findings and important scientific outputs for the field of reproductive medicine and biomedical ethics.

#### Financed by

Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF)

### Add publication

#### Published results

4652213, Martani, Andrea; De Clercq, Eva; De Geyter, Christian; Pennings, Guido; Wangmo, Tenzin; Elger, Bernice Simone, Deconstructing age(s): an analysis of the different conceptions of age as a legal criterion for access to assisted reproductive technologies, Journal of Law and the Biosciences, Publication: JournalArticle (Originalarbeit in einer wissenschaftlichen Zeitschrift)

4698145, De Clercq, Eva; Martani, Andrea; Vuillimoz, Nicolas; Elger, Bernice S; Wangmo, Tenzin, Rethinking advanced motherhood: a new ethical narrative., 1572-8633, Medicine, health care, and philosophy, Publication: JournalArticle (Originalarbeit in einer wissenschaftlichen Zeitschrift)

### Add documents

### Specify cooperation partners

ID	Kreditinhaber	Kooperationspartner	Institution	Laufzeit - von	Laufzeit - bis
4614576	Wangmo, Tenzin	Prof. Veerle Provoost	University of Ghent	01.01.2021	31.12.2024
4614578	Wangmo, Tenzin	Prof. Guido Penning	University of Ghent	01.01.2021	31.12.2024
4662742	Wangmo, Tenzin	Vuillimoz, Nicolas, MD	CPMA (centre medical de fertilité), Lausanne	01.01.2021	31.12.2024
4662743	Wangmo, Tenzin	de Geyter, Christian, Prof.	University of Basel	01.01.2021	31.12.2024