

Publication

Rethinking advanced motherhood: a new ethical narrative.

JournalArticle (Originalarbeit in einer wissenschaftlichen Zeitschrift)

ID 4698145

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Year 2023

Title Rethinking advanced motherhood: a new ethical narrative.

Journal Medicine, health care, and philosophy

Pages / Article-Number 1

The aim of the study is to rethink the ethics of advanced motherhood. In the literature, delayed child-bearing is usually discussed in the context of reproductive justice, and in relationship to ethical issues associated with the use and risk of assisted reproductive technologies. We aim to go beyond these more “traditional” ways in which reproductive ethics is framed by revisiting ethics itself through the lens of the figure of the so-called “older” mother. For this purpose, we start by exploring some of the deep seated socio-cultural discourses in the context of procreation: ageism, ableism and the widespread bias towards geneticism and pronatalism. Afterwards, we provide a critical overview of the key arguments against or in support of advanced motherhood. We then briefly discuss how entrenchment by both sides has produced an impasse in the debate on the ethics of advanced motherhood and proceed by arguing that it is fundamental to bring about a change in this narrative. For this purpose, we will revisit the feminist usage of the concept of vulnerability which will allow us both to criticize culturally prescribed norms about motherhood and to address the painful reality of age-related fertility decline. In the last section, we argue that instead of defining “older” motherhood as an ethical problem, we should problematize the fact that female reproductive ageing is an understudied and ill-sourced topic. We believe that allocating resources to research to better understand female reproductive ageing is not only ethically permissible, but might even be ethically desirable.

ISSN/ISBN 1572-8633

Full Text on edoc ;

Digital Object Identifier DOI 10.1007/s11019-023-10172-w

ISI-Number MEDLINE:37659986

Document type (ISI) Journal Article