

Call for abstracts for two volumes on Care Ethics, Birthing, and Mothering

Urgent attention is needed to re-address maternity, mothering, and related matters in terms of caring. The ethics of care provides an important framework to take up issues of reproductive justice and intersections with new developments in technology. In this call, we invite scholarly contributions that can further our understanding of processes, practices, and policies towards enhancing human flourishing in and around mothering.

Our provisional plan is to create two volumes on ‘Care Ethics, Birthing, and Mothering’ with two linked but distinct focal points (reproductive justice and technology respectively) in the book series, ‘Ethics of Care’ published by Peeters Publishers, Leuven, Belgium. The editors will work in close collaboration on the two volumes, and a selected contribution may be included in either of these volumes depending on its fit. An initial selection will be done based on the abstract (approximately 350 words), while the final selection will be based on a review of the full paper (6000-8000 words).

Volume I: Reproductive Justice: Care Ethics and Beyond

Editors: Inge van Nistelrooij, Rodante van der Waal, Veronica Mitchell

Abstracts of approximately 350 words to be submitted to Inge at i.vannistelrooij@uvh.nl before April 3, 2022.

Volume II: Technology, Mothering, and Care Ethics

Editors: Amrita Banerjee and Priya Sharma

Abstracts of approximately 350 words to be submitted to Amrita at abanerjee.phii@iitb.ac.in before April 3, 2022.

Information on Volume I: Reproductive Justice: Care Ethics and Beyond

Editors: Inge van Nistelrooij, Rodante van der Waal, Veronica Mitchell

Growing awareness of the prevailing limitations on reproductive justice has led to collective and individual actions globally. Yet these movements of activism have had little traction from the field of care ethics. This is surprising for more that one reason: from its start in Gilligan’s work (1982) care ethics has been involved in questions concerning reproductive justice including abortion rights; it was rooted in inquiry into experiences of mothering and it has always claimed to protest against patriarchal ideologies of motherhood. The more recent Black feminist struggle for reproductive justice defines itself through four core principles: the human right to 1) maintain personal bodily autonomy; 2) to have children, 3) to not have children, and 4) to parent the children we have in safe and sustainable communities. *Reproductive Justice: Care Ethics and Beyond* will be a volume of original essays edited by Inge van Nistelrooij, Rodante van der Waal, and Veronica Mitchell. With this book their aim is to bring care ethics back to the questions that were central in its early days, and to enter a dialogue with more recent developments.

Research in the 1960s to 1980s into maternal practices, maternal thinking, and maternal being, conducted in fields as diverse as psychology, philosophy, social sciences and political theory, helped shape care ethics to the widely acclaimed global, interdisciplinary field of inquiry that it is today. Sara Ruddick's work on 'Maternal Thinking' (1980, 1989) was a groundbreaking impetus for an ethics that considers human lives and practices as embodied and embedded. The editors of this book believe that care ethics should pay renewed attention to questions concerning maternity and reproductive justice. This dialogue between different fields of scholarship is urgent in light of the continuing and new challenges emerging from issues around heteronormativity, diversity, racism, new family formation and global justice, among others.

Care ethics could make an important contribution to current questions concerning reproductive justice, and vice versa. Scholarly analyses of the structural character of reproductive injustice can help to deconstruct the various ideologies that naturalize, marginalize, essentialize and idealize maternity. Authors are urged to think about how we can locate "care" and understand the possible reconfigurations of "mothering" in the context of maternity care, maternal care, obstetric violence, and respectful maternity care, involving many more players differentiated on the basis of class, caste, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, ability status, and even nationality. Papers should engage in some fashion with the lens of care ethics and reproductive justice, and can also include analyses from other perspectives, like political ethics, postcolonial studies, intersectionality, marxism, (anarcho-)feminism, arts-based and artistic research, new materialism, midwifery and obstetric education, critical pedagogy, indigenous studies, abolitionism, posthumanism, queer studies, transnational feminism, disability studies, critical race theory.

Possible questions / topics may include but are not limited to:

- reproductive justice
- respectful maternity care
- obstetric violence and obstetric racism
- women's and LGBTQI+ reproductive rights
- midwifery (education)
- Postpartum Depression (PPD) and PostPartum Traumatic Stress Syndrome (PPTS)
- student learning in midwifery/ obstetrics
- continuity of midwifery care
- doula/ birthwork
- birthing beyond the binary
- the obstetric institution
- mothering against motherhood ideology
- the medical model of birthing
- material-discursive practices in labour
- competency and efficiency in maternal matters
- the impact of structures and institutions on maternal care
- death and birth - timespacemattering in birthing units
- COVID-19 and care in maternal matters
- Abortion (including miscarriage, abortion doula's, abortion care)

Information on Volume II: Technology, Mothering, and Care Ethics

Editors: Amrita Banerjee and Priya Sharma

For the longest time, mothering had been seen as synonymous with caring, and the mother as a quintessential figure of care. More often than not, such assertions were rooted in instinctive and biologized notions of both mothering and care. Care ethics has questioned such an understanding. Sara Ruddick's 1989 pioneering work, *Maternal Thinking: Towards a Politics of Peace* helped to expand mothering beyond its biologized and affective connotations. By looking at mothering as a central instance of caring, which leads to the emergence of "rationalities of care," Ruddick situates the people who mother as active, rational, and thinking beings. Her work also helped define "mothering" as a role and a form of labor rather than an identity rooted in biology, thus bringing people from diverse gender and sexual orientations within its fold.

Technological advancements in the fields of reproduction, childbirth, and child care over the last few decades, on the other hand, have had a great impact on the pre and postnatal experiences of people with the capacity to birth, as well as on the reproductive and mothering/parenting lives of people. To take the example of Assisted Reproductive Technologies (ARTs) as one form of technological intervention, these indeed are great leaps in medical science since they help people transcend the barriers one might face in natural reproduction and challenge normative notions of a heterosexual family and parenthood. However, ARTs have also been criticized from diverse perspectives. Feminist interventions have revealed that not all bodies interact with reproductive technologies in the same way, given structural inequalities (Roberts, 1997). Some bodies are encouraged to avail fertility assistance (for instance, in the form of IVF, surrogacy etc.), while other bodies are forced to undergo fertility desistance (for instance, in the form of forced sterilization). Differential value is accorded to an egg donor, sperm donor, surrogate, and intended parents, thus creating additional layers of complexity for understanding both exploitation and agency in mothering practices that are technologically mediated (Bailey, 2011; Banerjee, 2010, 2014; Pande, 2014; Rudrappa, 2015). In such scenarios, it becomes important to see how the concepts of care and mothering get complicated and/or reconfigured in technology mediated birthing and mothering.

The major works in care ethics do not take on the question of care and mothering in the context of technological advancements in the fields of reproduction, childbirth, and child care; an intersection that we think must be attended to given the emergence, expansion, and flourishing of such technologies in the recent decades. On the other hand, work on technologies of reproduction, childbirth, and child care have rarely engaged with the lens of care ethics to reflect on both care and mothering in these contexts. The volume, *Technology, Mothering, and Care Ethics* edited by Amrita Banerjee and Priya Sharma aims to attend to this absolutely critical interface between technology, mothering, and care ethics. We hope to showcase an engagement with a wide variety of existing and emergent technologies/technological interventions.

Authors are urged to think about how we can locate “care” and understand the possible reconfigurations of “mothering” in the context of technology mediated mothering that involves many players differentiated on the basis of class, caste, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, ability status, and nationality. Papers should engage in some fashion with the lens of care ethics. Authors are, however, welcome to bring into conversation other critical traditions such as feminist philosophy, feminist theory, queer theory, disability studies, reproductive justice, transnational and postcolonial feminisms, women of color feminisms, indigenous feminisms, third world feminisms, intersectionality theory, critical theory, decolonial studies, critical race theory, Dalit feminism, approaches rooted in environmental justice, and so on.

Possible topics/questions may include, but are not limited to:

- ultrasound imaging and cesarean section
- prenatal genetic testing
- eugenics (including micro, macro, positive, negative)
- abortion and miscarriage (including in the context of sex-selection, genetic testing, ARTs)
- contraception
- sterilization
- breast pumps and lactation devices
- facilities like human milk banks
- egg freezing
- gamete donation and gamete banks
- in vitro fertilization (IVF)
- third party reproduction
- uterus transplant
- apps and other digital tools to track menstrual cycles and fertility periods
- apps related to pregnancy and birthing
- assorted surveillance tools such as nanny cams, baby monitors, etc.
- digital health interventions concerning pregnancy, birthing, and mothering
- technology mediated mothering in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic
- technologies that have impact on pre/post natal health and mothering in the context of environmental vulnerabilities/precarities
- pregnancy, birthing, and mothering with social media
- pregnancy, birthing, and mothering through multimedia (eg. family planning awareness on public media platforms)
- policy in the context of technologically mediated birthing and mothering