

GENETIC MAKEUP OF OFFSPRING: GENETIC LOTTERY OR GENETIC PLANNING?

Vera Lúcia Raposo

Doctor in Law

Faculty of Law of University of Macao

vraposo@umac.mo

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ABSTRACT: This presentation will deal with parental choices regarding the genetic makeup of offspring, especially when including features considered neutral for the child's well-being, the so-called futile characteristics. Modern medical techniques allow parents to pick some of their offspring's characteristics. Nowadays the range of choices is still limited by scientific knowledge, but in the near future we might be able to establish the entire genetic makeup of offspring, by using gamete donation, preimplantation genetic diagnosis and especially gene editing. The development of CRISPR-Cas9, a new and more efficient technique of gene editing, increased the discussion in this regard. The research will analyse the various types of genetic choices that parents can do in light of the existing laws, also having in consideration legal and bioethical doctrine: Sometimes parents want to select characteristics that will provide them a healthy child. The use of medical technologies for health related purposes is commonly allowed based on the greater good of the child to be, assuming that it is better to live a healthy life than an unhealthy one. So, the choice of health-related features is considered a lawful one, eventually even an obligation included in the scope of parental duties; In some other situations parents want to pick characteristics objectively detrimental for the child (for instance, parents create a child with Down Syndrome to be a playmate for a previous child suffering from the same condition). This possibility is commonly rejected, under the argument that parents cannot exercise their reproductive rights to injury the child; Somewhere in between these two scenarios there are cases in which parents pick features that are neither clearly beneficial nor clearly harmful. This is will the main topic of this research. Usually it is considered that this last kind of parental choices should not be allowed on the grounds that they create tailor-made children, transform children into commodities, result in a loss of human diversity or reinforce discrimination, without any clear benefit for the child. But this presentation will demonstrate its rejection is far from simple based on the following arguments: It is not always possible to distinguish apparently neutral features from health-related ones. For instance, is obesity a disease or a characteristic? What about sexual orientation or a specially tall or short stature? Although they are called futile, some of these features can actually provide benefits to the child, either because they are usually considered a form of enhancement (higher IQ) either because they target characteristics considered more valuable in specific communities (a certain hair or eye colour). This presentation that does not intent to sustain that genetic planning should be admitted in what regards non-health related features. Instead, its purpose is to deconstruct the traditional rejection against this kind of parental genetic choices, eventually to find new argument that can sustain its rejection in favour of genetic lottery.

KEYWORDS: Eugenics; Human enhancement; Health-related features; Genetic planning; Genetic lottery.