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## The State Of Later Life Motherhood In The United States

Later life motherhood in the United States is steadily increasing, and the trend is indisputable. More women are waiting to give birth regardless of the common societal belief that women should give birth before the age of 35. Despite arguments of critics, the trend of later life motherhood is increasing, which proves that women who give birth later in life are more likely to have higher socioeconomic status and can provide more educational and emotional support for their children.

Firstly, older women tend to have increased psychosocial wellbeing during pregnancy and after the child is born. With increased maturity, older mothers are less likely to engage in risky behavior, and can “take better care of themselves during pregnancy; they were [also] less likely to smoke and more likely to breastfeed, compared to the younger mothers”. “We know that people become more mentally flexible with age, and are more tolerant of other people and thrive better emotionally ‘themselves’”; thus, older mothers have more patience for their children because it can be interpreted that the relationship between age and maturity is directly proportional. Their heightened emotional maturity also allows them to develop greater relationship stability with their children by punishing their child less often, and their offspring were often better adjusted to the world and to interactions with others”. Their new style of parenting and the way these women cultivate patience contributes to a positive psychological environment for their child to grow up in. As women get adjusted to motherhood, their maturity will allow them to make better decisions for themselves and their child.

Furthermore, during a woman’s child-free years, she is given more flexibility to control her lifestyle and improve self-care, which may connect to longer longevity compared to that of younger mothers. A recent study from the University of San Diego California that researched 28,000 mothers of all ages, and “found that about half of these women lived to age 90”. According to the study, all of the women who lived to age 90 shared one common characteristic: that they gave birth later in life. Through this study, it is clear that surviving pregnancy at an older age is a feat that women with excellent overall health can overcome. It is logical that “being older at childbirth can lead to complications for both the mother and child, those who do it and survive are likely more healthy”. However, increased longevity can also be a result of more access to healthcare. It is equally possible that social factors, such as “getting an education and establishing themselves in a good financial situation raise the chances that people will have good healthcare and make informed decisions about their health”. Therefore, future public health interventions can be implemented in order to promote healthier lifestyles and allow older women to pass down their advantageous genes of a healthy reproductive system.

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Moreover, having children later in life can give women the opportunity to reach higher levels of education, which is helpful for child development. According to a recent study published by the Journal of Research on Adolescents, a mother's education can predict a child's development. With a higher socioeconomic status, older mothers are able to provide more resources and knowledge to further enhance their child's development. For example, the child is more likely to have better performance in school because the mother might be "using more extensive vocabularies when interacting with their young children", which boosts the child's language ability. In addition, growing up in a home with an educated mother increases child achievement because a "parents' education influences child achievement indirectly through its impact on the parent's achievement beliefs and stimulating home behaviors". The importance of school is more likely to be enforced in the household, which encourages the child to be passionate about their own education. Mothers hold the power of influencing their child and their job is to shower knowledge of the world to their children. With more life experience, older mothers "have greater self-confidence... and their management skills often translate directly into managing a household and advocating for their children". By investing in education, older mothers are becoming positive role models for their child because of their unyielding work ethics and self-reliance. As a result of gaining higher education, older women tend to have more financial power because they are more likely to have established careers and higher salaries. These women are able to save up for their child, and unlike most younger mothers, they are less likely to worry about financial stability. "Children do not kill careers, but the earlier children arrive, the more their mother's income suffers. There is a clear incentive for delaying".

Instead of risking the welfare of their newborn, older mothers can start family planning once they are financially stable, and be able to take more time off to care for their newborn. Considering that it is likely that older mothers have a higher position in the company, these women will enjoy more flexibility with work hours, which leads to more time for the child. For instance, "they may have lots of stored up vacation time or may be able to negotiate more flexible work schedules or the ability to work from home". It is important that mothers can devote as much time as possible to their newborn instead of juggling school or their career on the side. Indeed, women that have a higher position also have a more stable support network in their company. However, these women can also share these benefits with other women by using their position in the company to advocate for new mothers. In particular, "women who delay having kids and advance to positions to authority at work then have the power to set policies they and their female employees would benefit from, like offering paid maternity and paternity leave or allowing flexible work schedules". For this reason, older mothers have the benefit of a being in a better position to raise a child and can take advantage of their socioeconomic status to aid women working in the same company.

Some critics often believe that having children at an older age is disadvantageous because of the high health risks and physical complications. For example, having children at an older age is

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risky because a woman's fertility decreases with her age. According to Medical News Today, "when a woman is over the age of 35, there is a risk of suffering multiple problems such as high blood pressure, diabetes, low birth weight babies, stillbirth and premature delivery". It is harder to conceive a child because the women's body is aging and her muscles and organs are weakening. Despite that fact, "because of fertility treatments and genetic testing, there is less fear about health complications and less stigma about having babies after 35". With increased knowledge in fertility enhancing medicines and techniques, women are able to postpone childbirth. Furthermore, it is often thought that the older you get, the harder it is to do anything that is physically and emotionally demanding. Younger mothers might be "physically healthier because of their youth, and the children's grandparents are younger and often live nearby". While that may be true, older mothers have already overcome the struggles of childbearing and can offer more to their children because of their higher socioeconomic status and more life experience.

Anita Lowe, a 47-year-old mother of two young children, was recently mistaken as a grandmother, but she shares "...I've had a life devoted to me, and now I'm absolutely ready to have a life devoted to my children". Fortunately, older mothers now have access to a wide variety of fertility enhancing technology and medicine; therefore giving women the opportunity to wait and focus on achieving personal goals before starting motherhood. For example, " ...the biological potential for childbearing is improving thanks to a panoply of fertility-enhancing medications, reproduction-assisting technology, better neonatal and OB/GYN care, and improved maternal education". In fact, with all these methods, women should not continue believing the false misconceptions of "decreasing fertility" after the age of 35, since most women enter menopause around the age of 40 to 50.

Following this further, there is a new effective treatment called AUGMENT that enhances a woman's egg viability. AUGMENT increases the chance of a healthy pregnancy by "essentially re-energizing the batteries in the egg so it has all the energy it needs to take a sperm and make a healthy embryo". Although AUGMENT is still a highly experimental procedure, its success rates so far have included mostly challenging infertility patients. (International Reproductive Technologies Support Agency) Additionally, women in today's society are different from women in previous decades because they have new technology which means that there is more hope for older mothers. For instance, "use of the pill (in tandem with more reliable versions of other forms of birth control) makes contemporary women different from all the generations of women before us". Women can now rely on the advances in the reproductive technology field to be able to conceive their own biological child. The countless fertility enhancement techniques and medicines are evolutionary, and new scientific discoveries are more promising than ever.

Ultimately, later life motherhood is destigmatizing in the United States as women are prioritizing education and financial stability in order to raise their child in the best environment possible and

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there are innumerable advanced methods to increase a woman's fertility. Older mothers may also have to deal with fewer stressors from work or school since they may have learned to manage their schedule. After all, having children for most of us is a huge and complicated situation involving relationships and personal factors, but the abounding benefits of being an older mother truly supersede all age-related struggle.

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