



Regulating Autonomy

Sex, Reproduction and Family

*Edited by Shelley Day Sclater,
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and Martin Richards*

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These essays explore the nature and limits of individual autonomy in law, policy and the work of regulatory agencies. Authors ask searching questions about the nature and scope of the regulation of 'private' lives, from intimacies, personal relationships and domestic lives to reproduction. They question the extent to which the law does, or should, protect individual autonomy. Recent rapid advances in the development of new technologies - particularly those concerned with human genetics and assisted reproduction - have generated new questions (practical, social, legal and ethical) about how far the state should intervene in individual decision making. Is there an inevitable tension between individual liberty and the common good? How might a workable balance between the public and the private be struck? How, indeed, should we think about autonomy'?

The essays explore the arguments used to create and maintain the boundaries of autonomy - for example, the protection of the vulnerable, public goods of various kinds, and the maintenance of tradition and respect for cultural practices. Contributors address how those boundaries should be drawn and interventions justified. How are contemporary ethical debates about autonomy constructed, and what principles do they embody? What happens when those principles become manifest in law?

The Editors

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