



Will IVF ever be the Norm?



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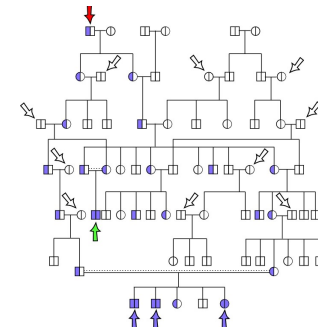


Who am I to claim to know the answer?

- What is the question?
 - Norm as "broadly occurring"
 - Norm as "widely recommended"
 - Norm as "supported by strong reasons"
- What are the (perceived) reasons for IVF and other ART?
 - Overcoming infertility
 - Satisfying procreative desires
 - Shaping and sizing populations
- Occurrence, recommendation of and perceived reasons for IVF / ART are linked

Reasons for IVF are Inescapably Dependent on Social Context 1

- Evaluative and normative trends shape culture and are shaped by social processes
- Individuals and societies are caught up in and perpetuate such webs of cultural and social change.
- Snapshots from just now: "family" (partly from IVF clinic or medical websites, or public domain):



Reasons for IVF are Inescapably Dependent on Social Context 2

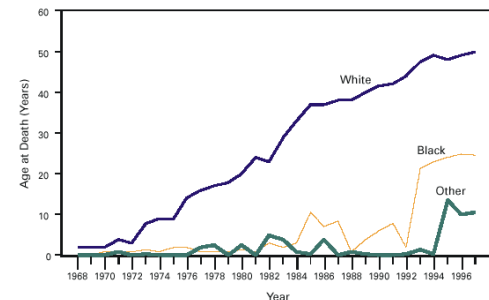
- What is part of the **normal variation** and what is an **aberration / pathology**? And which of all aberrations / pathologies **should we try to change**?
- **Nature provide us with no such borders** – we have to invent them and when we do that, we take stand on profound ethics and value issues in a way that shape future choice.



1970's

- Often left to die in delivery clinics
- No treatment for heart- and other common defects
- Harder hit by socio-economic ill-health determinants

FIGURE 1. Median age at death of persons with Down Syndrome, by race — United States, 1968–1997

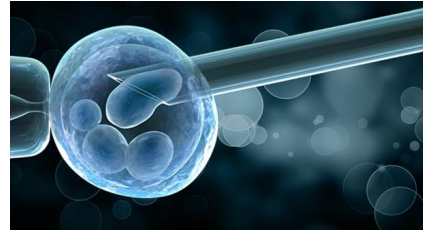


Stats from U.S. CDC

- There is **no given demarcation** of what is (pathological) infertility or need of ART / IVF – if nothing else dependent on personal desires and values
- There is no given demarcation of which cases of infertility or need of ART / IVF are "biological" and which are "social" either.

Background 1: how we value the means to the end

- The sacrificed gamete, embryo or foetus



- The sexless and technological / medicalised procreation: next step, artificial gametes, synthetic genomes, ectogenesis, automated ART?

- Procreation and rearing beyond the married, heterosexual couple



- Crossing or eradicating gender or other normative boundaries (the end of men?)

- Enhancing humans and their offspring beyond current ideas of health?

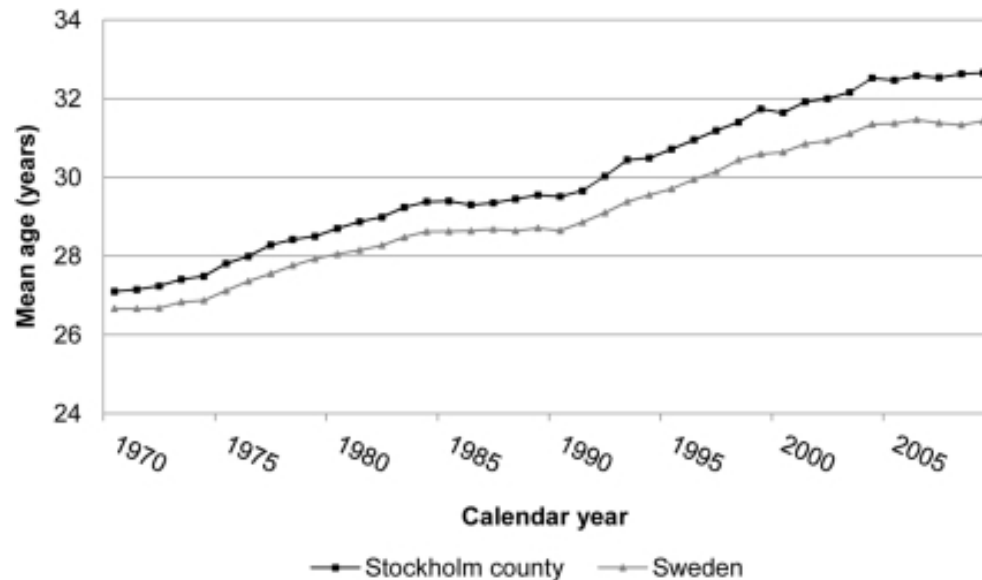


Background 2: how we value the end

- What *is* the end of IVF / ART?
- "Overcoming / responding to infertility" is not a substantial answer, as the terms are volimunous and subject to change and manipulation
- What is the end or value of *human procreation*?
- *Reproductive ethics* as an individual moral issue: **individual interests and liberty**
- Reproductive (not sexual) *public health ethics*: **societal interests and aims**
- **A society's need of *procreation* does not necessarily mean it needs *reproduction***

Background 3: how our valuing shape our contexts 1

- The delay of the female procreative premiere, caused by cultural and societal change, possibly reinforced by exaggerated confidence in IVF / ART, possibly caused by propagation of "sunny stories", part of an emancipating project for women (or is it a masculine project of controlling women through technology?), et cetera



- Of course, **this development is not in any way necessary**. It is a (nowadays) foreseen effect of a particular deliberate design of society

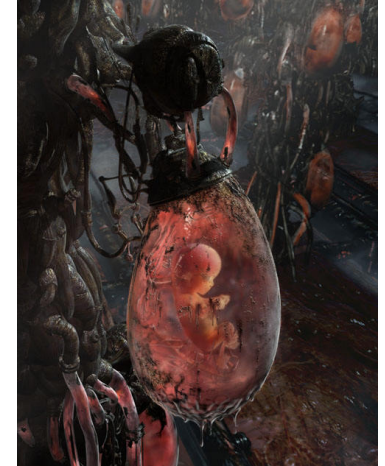
Background 4: how our valuing shape our contexts 2



Maybe we need to free some space for other people rather than make more of us?

Back to the start: So, *will* IVF ever be the norm?

- Do we *really* want it to?
- It means that we have shaped our conditions so that human procreation is *essentially* dependent on ART / IVF
- What would we get out of that? Is it a necessary evil following other stuff we value?
- What would the political consequences be? Technology may just as well facilitate control as liberation. Betting on ourselves may undercut fundamental values we desire our societies to possess
- While *procreation* may be a basic need of humanity, do we really need to *reproduce* that much?
- Is this really money (best) well spent, given all the things we could do?



The ultimate machine selection in ART?
From "The Matrix"



Now adult and aged children of the Nazi "lebensborn" eugenics program



Most importantly...

It is less about procreation and technology than
about what kind of society we want (to be),

and...

IT IS UP TO US!

