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Negotiations of sexuality in sperm donation**

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# What does one wear to a sperm bank?

## Negotiations of Sexuality in Sperm Donation

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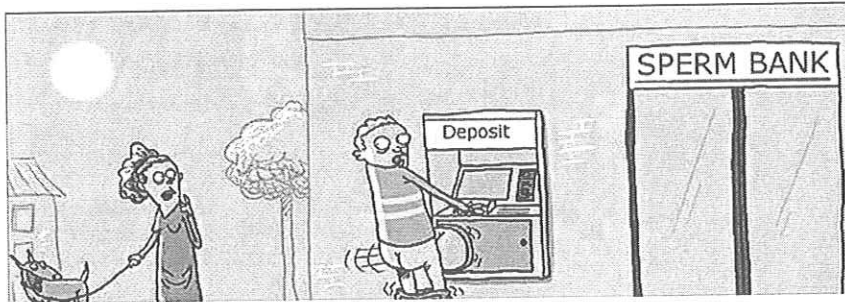


Figure 1: Wulff Morgenthaler: Sperm Bank Deposit. Comic Strip.

So, what does one wear to a sperm bank? According to Dorothy Zbornak, one of the infamous characters on *The Golden Girls*, the answer is quite obvious: “Something attractive in rubber.” (The Golden Girls 1989) According to the Danish cartoonist *Wulff Morgenthaler*, as we can see above, the attractiveness of the outfit is less important, it is rather the practicality that counts. For sperm banks on the other hand it may not matter at all what one would wear as long as what’s underneath the clothes lives up to expectations. But is it really that simple? Could a potential sperm donor really wear whatever he wanted? As trivial as this question might seem, it may turn out to be decisive for the men who consider being sperm donors, because showing up at a sperm bank in something attractive in rubber or for that matter only in underwear is guaranteed to keep you out of the pool of potential donors. Screening for sperm donors at sperm banks does not only involve ‘objective’ or ‘evidence based’ assessments. It also entails procedures in which men are judged in light of ‘social acceptability’. And something attractive in rubber, as sexy as it may be, might just categorize the person wearing it as unacceptable for sperm banks.

This article is concerned with what Adele Clarke (1998) has called *the disciplining of reproduction*— a claim to control over reproduction itself, the individuals involved in it, and the scientific and

disciplinary discourses about it – by looking at how sperm banks control the selection of donors through the negotiation of sexuality. In an analysis of sperm banks’ homepages, their donor recruitment strategies, and their media contributions as well as interviews with directors of sperm banks, I will show how selecting sperm donors involves negotiations of sexuality.<sup>1</sup> My aim is to show how sexuality as a category of knowledge works as a regulative momentum as part of the disciplining of reproduction and how this regulatory instance is negotiated by the involved individuals.

### Sexuality? Which sexuality?

I want to start by clarifying what I actually mean when I talk about sexuality as a category of knowledge. Let’s take another look at the cartoon to which I was referring earlier. What we can see is a woman taking her dog for a walk either at night or in the late evening. For some reason or another she chose to take a stroll by her local sperm bank. What we don’t know is whether she did that on purpose, or if she just happened to pass by. The man in the picture however is there on purpose. He is busy at a machine that looks like an ATM but which is clearly used not for withdrawals but rather deposits. He engages in some form of activity which, as a result of the overall setup, can be identified as sexual. A second thing we don’t know is whether the portrayed characters are in an intimate relationship with one

another (maybe even married) in which case she caught him committing ‘adultery’, or if they are complete strangers meeting for the very first time. Whatever the case may be, the cartoon clearly draws its humor from connecting sperm donation with sexual activity while simultaneously portraying *transgressive acts*. (cf. Donnan & Magowan 2009) Transgressive acts can be understood as practices that challenge a normative framework set up to *enforce compliant behavior* as Mary Douglas (2009) would phrase it. There are four things in the cartoon that could potentially be identified as transgressive acts: first, a sexual activity taking place in public and therefore, second, exposure of ‘indecent’ behavior, third, a person seeking pleasure by watching others engage in sexual activity, and fourth, the engagement in sex outside a monogamous relationship. All these transgressive acts mark the normative framework of the cartoon which relates to sexual acts as something *private, intimate, and personal* and which situates them in the context of *heterosexual love, desire, and procreation*. This *heteronormative* framework – “a complex regime of moral assumptions and cultural practices, which have the potential to instill a sense of rightness in some individuals and a devastating feeling of shame in others” (Klesse 2007: 10) – provides the background for this cartoon. Without it or rather, if we had no conception of what it means and refers to, the cartoon would not be funny. So, what I want to assume here is that we are likely to share specific knowledge about what constitutes a normative framework and what constitutes a breach of the norms the framework refers to – in this case *acceptable* (= heterosexual and procreative) sexual behavior.

With Michel Foucault (1983) I want to understand a norm as *a means of social regulation* aiming at controlling procreation. A norm is made to work as such

through the body by referring to shared knowledge about what is 'normal' and what is not and, following Judith Butler, persists only "as a norm to the extent that it is acted out in social practice and reidealized and reinstated in and through the daily social rituals of bodily life." (2004: 48) To comprehend of a norm in this way enables us to think of norms as something that is *done* rather than something that is *pre-given*. It allows us to attend to norms as something that *involves* us in order to be effective instead of conceptualizing it as something that *affects* us only. Moreover, it opens up the possibility to attend to the many different ways in which norms are made to work and, most importantly for my argument here, which knowledge categories this involves. I want to comprehend sexuality as a *category of knowledge* that involves many different norms and that therefore regulates more than simply the intimate relations of people. I understand sexuality to be a category that constitutes a large part of our knowledge about reality and the world we live in. It helps us to conceptualize ourselves, the world around us as well as the people in it. To think of sexuality as a category of knowledge means to view it as a configuration of cultural systems of meaning that connects us with one another. (cf. Mohr 2009) Through it we are able to apply our *practical knowledge* necessary to engage in a *praxis* (Bourdieu 2003) which constitutes reality. And to look for this category of knowledge, then, means to attend to the manifold ways in which it is made to work.<sup>2</sup>

### **Sperm and what we know about the men who donate it**

The infusion of reproductive science with many different layers of meaning besides the so-called *evidence base* has been a topic for social and cultural science inquiries into artificial reproductive technologies since the mid-to-late 1980s. (cf. Knecht 2010)<sup>3</sup> Considering masculinities, men, and male bodies as legitimate research interests within the field of medical anthropology is however a fairly recent development. With a tremendous focus on the female body (cf. Rosenfeld & Faircloth 2006) and a predominant in-

terest in issues of kinship and family (e.g. Hargreaves 2006, Mamo 2005, Thompson 2005) masculinities, men, and male bodies have only been at the margins of social and cultural science critiques of biotechnologies and fertility practices. Sperm donors are a prime example for this kind of imbalance within scientific discussion. Sperm donation and donor insemination are practices that ultimately involve men; still, they are hardly ever considered important beyond the point that they *provide* sperm. (c.f. Daniels 1998) Until the change of the millennium, sperm donors had more or less only been looked at as a 'necessary evil.' As a result, until then the studies involving sperm donors had primarily focused on their motivations to donate sperm (e.g. Pedersen et al. 1994, Scheib & Emond 1998) and their willingness to comply with obligations of and policies governing sperm donation (e.g. Lui & Weaver 1996, Shenfield 1998). In other words, the sperm donors were only considered at all because they provided the medium necessary to sustain heterosexual procreation.<sup>4</sup> This need to investigate the motivations of sperm donors becomes apparent when the regulatory dynamics of sperm donation are reconsidered. Policies and guidelines are constantly changing and therefore it comes as no surprise that even recent surveys among sperm donors in Denmark (Ernst et al. 2007), Germany (Thorn et al. 2008), the United Kingdom (Crawshaw 2007), and Sweden (Daniels et al. 2003) all address policy issues that are thought to influence the willingness of sperm donors to provide their sperm.<sup>5</sup>

The public interest in sperm donation and especially sperm donors mirrors a more general curiosity into what kinds of people are involved in it and why they do it. (e.g. The Guardian 2010a, Plotz 2006) The image of the sperm donor in particular has developed over time from *Mister X* to the *friend next door* who helps out with creating a family. (cf. Schneider 2010) As Cynthia Daniels (2006) suggests these developments have to be situated in the context of changes in masculinities over time and the challenges that traditional concepts of masculinity have faced in the last decades. The commo-

dification of sperm then cannot be seen as an isolated phenomenon but should rather be perceived as an "interaction of biological bodies with economic processes and cultural norms in specific structural contexts." (Almeling 2009: 57)<sup>6</sup> Following this perspective and my interest in *processes of normalization* I want to focus on the knowledge category sexuality. The importance of sexuality as part of sperm donation and donor insemination has been noted by a number of scholars. (e.g. Mohr 2010b, Moore 2008, Steiner 2006) Sexuality has also been considered at the different regulatory levels involved in the exchange of sperm and bodily material, including for example the screening guidelines of sperm banks (cf. Burghardt & Tote 2010) or the policies governing the practices of biomedical ventures (e.g. Hoeyer 2010). Yet within this field, sexuality has not been conceptualized as a category of knowledge that provides meaning and therefore a logic through which we make sense of reality and the people we engage with. The point I want to make here goes beyond stating that discourses about and practices of procreation are likely to refer to a heteronormative framework since the societal and cultural contexts they are part of are heteronormative to begin with. Rather, I want to focus on how sexuality as a category of knowledge enforces or deters compliant behavior, how it configures concepts of the acceptable and unacceptable, and how it therefore provides a basis from which to negotiate control over the disciplining of reproduction. In the case of sperm donation this means to look for moments in which sexuality as a category of knowledge is utilized to screen for *acceptable behavior*, behavior which complies with the framework of disciplined procreation.

**Joe Average is a Sperm Donor: Screening as a Socio-Technical Practice**  
Sperm banks face one major business hurdle which they simply cannot avoid: selling sperm involves the procurement of sperm via masturbation. The foundation of their work is a sexual practice which has been at the center of attention of moral discourses for quite some time. (cf. Laqueur 2003)<sup>7</sup> In addition, selling

sperm also implies to offer sperm to women and thereby engaging with concepts of partnership and marriage which can be difficult to relate to when making the decision to conceive via donor insemination.<sup>8</sup> Trying to sell sperm then demands work to avoid these issues and establish a reputation which distances one's business from sexual desire and pleasure as well as infidelity and promiscuity. Sperm banks have an immense interest in assuring business partners, clients, and state authorized regulators that they are *professional* and *responsible*. And they do this in many different ways: by portraying scientificity and professionalism, by accentuating empathy for and helpfulness to the so called childless, and by resorting to imagery of happy family life and parenting. But sperm banks also have to address the men that consider being donors. And in order to convey an image of professionalism and responsibility sperm banks certainly need the *right* men to be their sperm donors: *socially acceptable* and *responsible* men, good business partners, in short, compliant men. To find these men the knowledge category sexuality is utilized to convey a picture of the responsible man by relating to what Michel Foucault has termed the *truth of sex* – the deduction of moral composure from an individual's perceived sexuality. (Foucault 1978)<sup>9</sup>

The screening practices of sperm banks can be understood as an effort through which sperm banks try to establish the image of being professional and foremost responsible. The screening procedures filter out the 'unwanted' men, the irresponsible individuals. One such example is the group of so called "men who have sex with men." These men are clearly marked as 'unfit' to be sperm donors. The sperm banks under consideration here address this issue in different ways.<sup>10</sup> The Danish sperm bank *European Sperm Bank* alias *Nordisk Cryobank* does not mention it at all on its homepage. The worlds largest sperm bank *Cryos International* based in Århus, Denmark, clearly rules out "men who have sex with men". The American *California Cryobank* demands that the "sexual partners are exclusively female", and the German *Berliner Samenbank* simply states

that "homosexuals" are not permitted. These different ways of phrasing the restriction leave room for interpretation: is a man who identifies as gay but abstains from sex excluded? Is a man who identifies as straight but has sex with men homosexual? Are two men who touch each other until they reach on orgasm engaged in sex with one another? Such ambiguities point to the normative dimensions of the knowledge category sexuality as applied within sperm donation.

*Nordisk* and *Cryos* both comply with the Danish *guideline for donation, procurement, and testing of human cells and tissue* that clearly states that "men who have sex with other men" should be excluded from being sperm donors. (Vejledning 55) This guideline represents the Danish implementation of the *European Union Tissue and Cell Directive* which demands that the donor's "assessment must include relevant factors that may assist in identifying and screening out persons whose donation could present a health risk to others, such as the possibility of transmitting diseases [...], or health risks to themselves [...]" (EU Directive 2006/17/EC). The directive does not call, however, for restricting sperm donation to "men who have sex with women" only. Just as in Germany<sup>11</sup> the exclusion of "men who have sex with men" is rather *strongly advised* by medical authorities.<sup>12</sup> Nevertheless, the advice is followed suit by sperm banks and sometimes referred to as "a law" by individuals working at sperm banks in Germany and Denmark. However, there is reason to wonder whether the exclusion of gay men from sperm donation based solely on the assumption that "men who have sex with men" have a higher possibility of being infected with HIV is really sensible. According to professionals at Danish sperm banks the exclusion on grounds of a supposedly higher infection rate with HIV has no scientific base since HIV will be screened for anyways.<sup>13</sup> A director of a Danish sperm bank remarked, when we were talking about why gay men are excluded: "I remember having to tell at least one of them [that he can't be a donor because he is gay], and I felt incredibly bad telling the guy because I think it's wrong. I think we should be able to

have homosexuals in the program. The scientific reasoning behind it is not very sound, I mean with the multiple tests we do, with the standards of tests that are done today, with the six months quarantine, there really is no medical reason not to have a homosexual donor."<sup>14</sup> But if the medical evidence base is not the problem in this case, then what is? Why are "men who have sex with men" denied to be sperm donors?

Looking at the homepages of sperm banks and their recruitment strategies for donors it becomes evident that it may not be the "homosexual" per se that is excluded but rather the *sexually irresponsible* male. Being irresponsible in the field of sperm donation means to be sexually irresponsible. It means to engage in sexual practices that occur outside of monogamous, heterosexual, and procreative relationships. It means to engage in promiscuous homo-/bi-/heterosexual activity. And it means to enjoy the pleasure of sexual activity. If you want to be a sperm donor you should clearly abstain from all those things or at least be a master in hiding them.<sup>15</sup> Sexuality is utilized here as a category of knowledge in order to establish a normative framework as part of which a man is labeled responsible or irresponsible by deducing his moral disposition from the sexual practices he engages in.

To achieve the objective of recruiting only *responsible* men as sperm donors the sperm banks count on self-selection among the men who are interested in being a sperm donor.<sup>16</sup> So, let's consider this process of self-selection to review my argument that sexuality is used as a category of knowledge in order to convey an image of the *responsible* man, the responsible sperm donor. On a popular online video portal different sperm banks have posted videos aimed at either couples interested in donor sperm or at men interested in becoming a sperm donor. The US-based sperm bank, *Fairfax Cryobank*, for example has its own channel and posts videos that inform about the "specimen quality" at *Fairfax* or the "shipping standards", but also one that is directed at potential sperm donors.<sup>17</sup> The video consists of a woman dressed in a white gown which instantly indica-



tes that she is probably a medical professional working at the sperm bank telling the viewer about the application process at *Fairfax*: "Thank you for your interest in becoming a sperm donor. We have a very vigorous screening process that starts right here." We are informed that *Fairfax* is interested in "healthy men who are college educated" and, most importantly, "interested in helping people to start or grow their family." *Fairfax* is looking for *healthy men*, which also implies that these men take care of themselves, in other words, men who show responsibility in regards to their own health. These men are also *college educated* which is another way of saying that they act responsibly and build a foundation for their future. And furthermore, these men have an interest in *helping people to start a family*, which means they are committed to procreation and procreative sexuality. *Fairfax*, and for that matter any other sperm bank, is certainly not looking for *irresponsible* men who start an evening at the local swinger club after having picked up the latest social security check, drinking beer and engaging in orgies with different men and women before returning home to their seventh wife which they married after six successful divorces. A man who could be identified as living such a life, as engaging in irresponsible sexual behavior, is clearly not responsible enough to be a sperm donor, at least according to what responsibility means in the field of sperm donation.<sup>18</sup>

The screening process for sexually responsible individuals continues throughout the application process and even after the men have been accepted as sperm donors. Contracts between donors and sperm banks bind the donors to two to three days of abstinence before each sperm donation and give the sperm banks the right to deny payment if a sperm sample does not pass evaluation. Furthermore, tests for sperm quality and blood tests as well as physical and psychological assessments by medical professionals and judgments by the laboratory staff are put in place to control the compliance of the donors.<sup>19</sup> At both Danish sperm banks considered here men can be excluded as sperm donors if the staff working at the facilities conceives

them as *odd*. One director said: "Because we are running into those [men who disqualify as sperm donors even though they have excellent sperm quality]. I mean, we get people who just should not be sperm donors, and I think everyone that sees them or talks to them would agree this person should not be a sperm donor." The basis for these assessments can be rather vague as the following description by another sperm bank director illustrates: "We also have a final test, we call it the father-test, where the doctor must consider whether the donor could be used for the doctor's own daughter. If that thought is unacceptable [to the doctor] the donor will be rejected for subjective reasons. I think this is one of our responsibilities: Not to accept donors who would be considered unacceptable in a human sense." What this "human sense" implies though remains unclear. One interpretation could be that the assessment of the donor as a potential son-in-law points to the premise that sperm donors should be sexually responsible men, men who are in a committed relationship, men who can be envisioned as the hoped for father of one's own grandchildren, men who are heterosexual, monogamous, and procreative. Sexually irresponsible individuals would not pass the father test simply because they wouldn't fit into these categories, or, to be more exact, into the concepts of these categories as they are applied by professionals working at sperm banks.

#### About the Pleasures of Sperm Donation

Just as the applied assessments above rely on the assumption that there is a shared agreement that masturbation for purposes of helping childless individuals procreate is an admirable and responsible thing to do, the assessment of sperm donors as responsible relies on an assumption that there is a shared understanding that masturbation for purposes of sexual pleasure and entertainment is unsuitable for sperm donors and sperm banks. This becomes apparent when we consider the layout of the sperm banks themselves, the way the staff at the sperm banks talks about masturbation as part of the process of 'producing' sperm, and the ways the donors' mas-

turbation is controlled by the staff.

The laboratories are almost always visible. The donor cabins are not. They are situated at the very end of the sperm banks and/or have sound proof walls and doors as well as a signal that lights up when a cabin is occupied. Masturbation is considered something that should be hidden, something that should not take place in public. The processing of sperm however is deemed suitable for everyone to watch. A leading lab technician refers to a "company policy" when talking about the visibility of the lab: "We used to have walls around it and then we decided that the donors should be able to see it and could get in contact with it. Some donors also prefer to see what's going on and what's happening." At both Danish sperm banks donors are invited to watch their own sperm under the microscope and one bank even supplies them with an image of their sperm which they can take home with them. However, the donors are not provided with an image of themselves masturbating even though that moment is just as much part of the process of sperm donation as is the analysis, freezing, and storing of sperm. Sexuality is utilized here as a category of knowledge by situating sexual pleasure as something that should not be part of procreation, at least as long as this procreation is mediated through the sperm banks. Sexual pleasure is associated with self-indulgence, with enjoyment of the self, something that does not fit the image of the selfless sperm donor who only donates to help others.

This appropriation of pleasure (c.f. Foucault 1989) in sperm banks takes place through the control of masturbation. A leading lab technician refers to masturbation as something "secret" that is "intimate" and "personal", whereas in another Danish sperm bank, masturbation is simply "not talked about." Discussing pleasure as part of sperm donation is not deemed suitable, it is rather avoided at all times by the sperm banks' staff. This is marked by the *odd moment* situations cause in which the issue of pleasure comes up. A director of a sperm bank in Denmark said when being asked what kind of material he buys: "I think they are basically mainstream. [laughing] But

it is kind of an awkward thing. Actually, I bought some of the videos at a store a few blocks away and it was kind of, yeah, I bought these, I don't know for maybe 200 Euros or something like that and he [the owner of the store] looked kind of strange at me when I asked for a receipt. [shared laughter in the room] I don't think there are many people who ask for a receipt in places like that [laughter], in order to deduct that from their taxes [laughter]." The director marks buying pornographic material for 200 Euros as "awkward" and thereby relates to an assumption that sexual pleasure is only 'normal' if it takes place in a certain way. An overappetite for porn, for example spending 200 Euros on pornographic videos, could be considered 'not normal' and thus marks the person buying the material as dubious, as weird, as irresponsible. Furthermore, the director related to buying porn movies as an unusual business practice. He thereby marks pleasure as a practice of indulgence, not as a practice of professional and responsible businesses. Just the same thought applies to the screening of sperm donors. If a donor for example requested a magazine with content considered 'not normal' by the sperm bank staff he would be dismissed as a sperm donor. In a conversation with a lab technician who was also responsible for buying the magazines for the sperm donors the topic of 'content' came up: "If they ask for new videos I will see what I can do about it. Once a donor wanted a magazine with less hard-core pictures and more with pretty girls. So I bought a magazine like that. But we have not gotten any weird requests and if we did we wouldn't want that person to be a sperm donor." One of the directors of the sperm banks was more specific about what would be considered "weird" and therefore a reason for dismissal: "[...] of course you have to make sure that there are no videos with animals or anything strange, you know, that has to be kind of clean."<sup>20</sup> The word *clean* is used here to mark certain pleasures and desires as suitable and others as unsuitable. The normative framework of sperm donation thus requires men who want to be sperm donors to display a "normal range of behavior" as one lab technician put it. And

what is considered 'normal' is negotiated through the knowledge category sexuality by relying on an assumption that *normal sexual behavior* is common sense, meaning heterosexual, monogamous, and procreative.

### Sperm Donation Reconsidered

I started out by asking how sexuality is negotiated in sperm donation in order to recruit sperm donors. I considered sexuality to be a category of knowledge that enables us to engage with one another, to set ourselves in relation to others, and to make sense of the ways people interact. I tried to show that the normative framework that structures sperm donation and through which sexuality is utilized as a category of knowledge in order to recruit sperm donors allows only for certain men to be sperm donors. And I identified the practices of sperm banks that are put into place to achieve the objective of getting responsible men to donate sperm. I understood responsibility to be a characteristic that sperm banks try to convey as part of establishing a professional business reputation, a reputation that is necessary for them to do business. To do responsible business as a sperm bank means to provide *semen* for procreation and it means to abstain from pleasure and desire. People who are identified by the sperm bank as not complying with this requirement are screened out from the pool of potential donors. Sexuality as a category of knowledge is used as part of the assessment of sperm donors to identify incompliant behavior. To not comply with the normative framework means to engage in sexual practices regarded as unacceptable by the professionals carrying out the screening, a process that involves the assumption that everything out of the 'ordinary' (meaning not heterosexual, not monogamous, and not procreative) is a sign of irresponsibility, of moral dubiousness. Sperm banking however is not a dubious business and it certainly is not irresponsible. But it is a business that is highly normative.<sup>21</sup> And it is a cultural phenomenon that marks dominant concepts of the normal and the unacceptable. My inquiry into the normative framework of sperm donation was an attempt to point

to these concepts and to engage with the assumptions underlying them. Attending to them provides us with an understanding of how normative and compliant behavior is made to work and how we participate in making it work. I am sure most donors prefer to masturbate in private, and I am sure, most of them do not show up at the sperm bank in something attractive in rubber. Nevertheless, the thought of it is provoking, and I would like us to think about why that is.

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#### Anmerkungen

<sup>1</sup> The material for this article is partly drawn from my own ongoing research and partly a result of a research project I participated in at the Institute for European Ethnology at Humboldt University. I especially thank the coordinator of the project, Michi Knecht, and my fellow researchers. Together with Michi Knecht, Frederike Heinitz, and Scout Burghardt I edited a publication which summons up the results of that research project. (cf. Knecht et al. 2010)

<sup>2</sup> This approach can be applied to many different fields of investigation as for example to the historical analysis of scientific discourses (cf. Mohr 2011) or to the introspection of one's own methodological approaches (cf. Mohr 2010a).

<sup>3</sup> Many different perspectives have been taken among a long list of other contributions the following examples which can be situated within a research tradition that regards masculinities as important elements of culture and society (cf. Connell 1995): Goldberg 2009, Martin 1991, Moore & Schmidt 1999, also Tjørnhøj-Thomsen 2009.

<sup>4</sup> Of course sperm donation and even more so donor insemination have also been considered

as ways to challenge the heteronormative framework of procreation as present in medical and popular discourse. A lot of work was and still is focused on gay and lesbian families and queer kinship pointing to the potential of these concepts to undermine heterosexual hegemony. (e.g. Hayden 1995, Levine 2008, Riggs 2008)

<sup>5</sup> This research can also be seen in terms of research funding schemes which, at least in applied research such as clinical studies, call for a mandatory application of research results in practical settings – in this case the sustainability of fertility treatments.

<sup>6</sup> Examples that apply Almeling's perspective are: Adrian 2006, Blaagaard 2009, Daniels 2004, Hanson 2001, Kroløkke 2009.

<sup>7</sup> Masturbation was thought to be damaging both physically and morally to the people who practice it and it is even today still considered by some to be a sign of moral corruption. For example Christine O'Donnell, Tea Party candidate for the US-Senate election in 2010, voiced during her campaign the belief that masturbation is a sin. (The Guardian 2010b)

<sup>8</sup> Tine Tjørnhøj-Thomsen's study on infertility in Denmark is a wonderful example that portrays how many difficulties are involved when making the decision to conceive via donor insemination especially for the men involved in this process. (Tjørnhøj-Thomsen 1999; see also Inhorn 2004 and 2006)

<sup>9</sup> The knowledge category sexuality will of course never be standing alone as an instance to enforce compliance with a certain normative framework. It intersects with other categories of knowledge such as for example gender, race, age, and social class. In the case of sperm donation concepts of masculinity are present at all times when discussing sexuality as a category of knowledge. As part of my interest in processes of normalization I allow myself to consider sexuality as a category of knowledge by itself for my argument here which does not mean however that other categories will be ignored.

<sup>10</sup> For reasons of clarity and simplicity I will most of the time only consider the California Cryobank, European Sperm Bank alias Nordisk Cryobank, Cryos International, and Berliner Samenbank. I will cite the appropriate sources in case I am referring to other sperm banks.

<sup>11</sup> In Germany sperm donation is regulated by the Embryonenschutzgesetz (embryo protection law), the Transplantationsgesetz (law for transplantation) and by guidelines by Bundesärztekammer (federal board of physicians) and Arbeitskreis für donogene Insemination (working party on donor insemination). Sperm banks in the USA are regulated by a guideline by the Food and Drug Administration and state laws for the licensing of tissue banking. The decision to include "men who have sex with men" as sperm donors is a matter of company poli-

cy. California Cryobank will not accept "men who have sex with men" whereas Rainbow Flag Health Services does. In the UK "men who have sex with men" are accepted as donors and it is up to the individual sperm bank to decide whether they are admitted as donors or not.

<sup>12</sup> Which also means that, potentially, sperm banks in both countries could opt to waive the policy of excluding "men who have sex with men."

<sup>13</sup> A sperm sample will be released only after 180 days of quarantine and only after the donor has tested repeatedly negative for HIV.

<sup>14</sup> Interviewees will be referred to anonymously in all quotes as it was assured to them beforehand.

<sup>15</sup> Engaging in heterosexual monogamous sex with no procreative intention on the other hand is considered alright as long as it is part of preparing oneself for proper family life.

<sup>16</sup> We have to remind ourselves that the set of norms under consideration here only functions if the sperm donors comply with it, something which is part of what Foucault (1993) has termed the technologies of the self.

<sup>17</sup> The video can be accessed via the following link: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3yaYYApv1MA>.

<sup>18</sup> This is just one example of many. European Sperm Bank's American branch in Seattle for example tries to recruit donors with a video that situates sperm donation in the context of making the responsible choice of helping childless couples: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qubuz\\_Arblo](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qubuz_Arblo).

<sup>19</sup> European Sperm Bank for example relies on the Keirseij Temperament Sorter II in order to assess donor personality. The test can be taken online (<http://www.keirseij.com/sorter/instruments2.aspx?partid=0>) and consists of 70 either or questions such as "which rules you more – your thoughts or your feelings" or "Are you prone to – exploring the possibilities or nailing things down." As a result the person being tested will be sorted into one of four main categories – artisan, guardian, rational, idealist – through which "a person's temperament and character type" is "revealed" as it is stated on the Keirseij homepage. The sample of such a test result for a sperm donor that is accessible to customers of European Sperm Bank portrays the tested individual as a provider, a subcategory of the guardian. Providers "happily give their time and energy to make sure that the needs of others are met, and that social functions are a success."

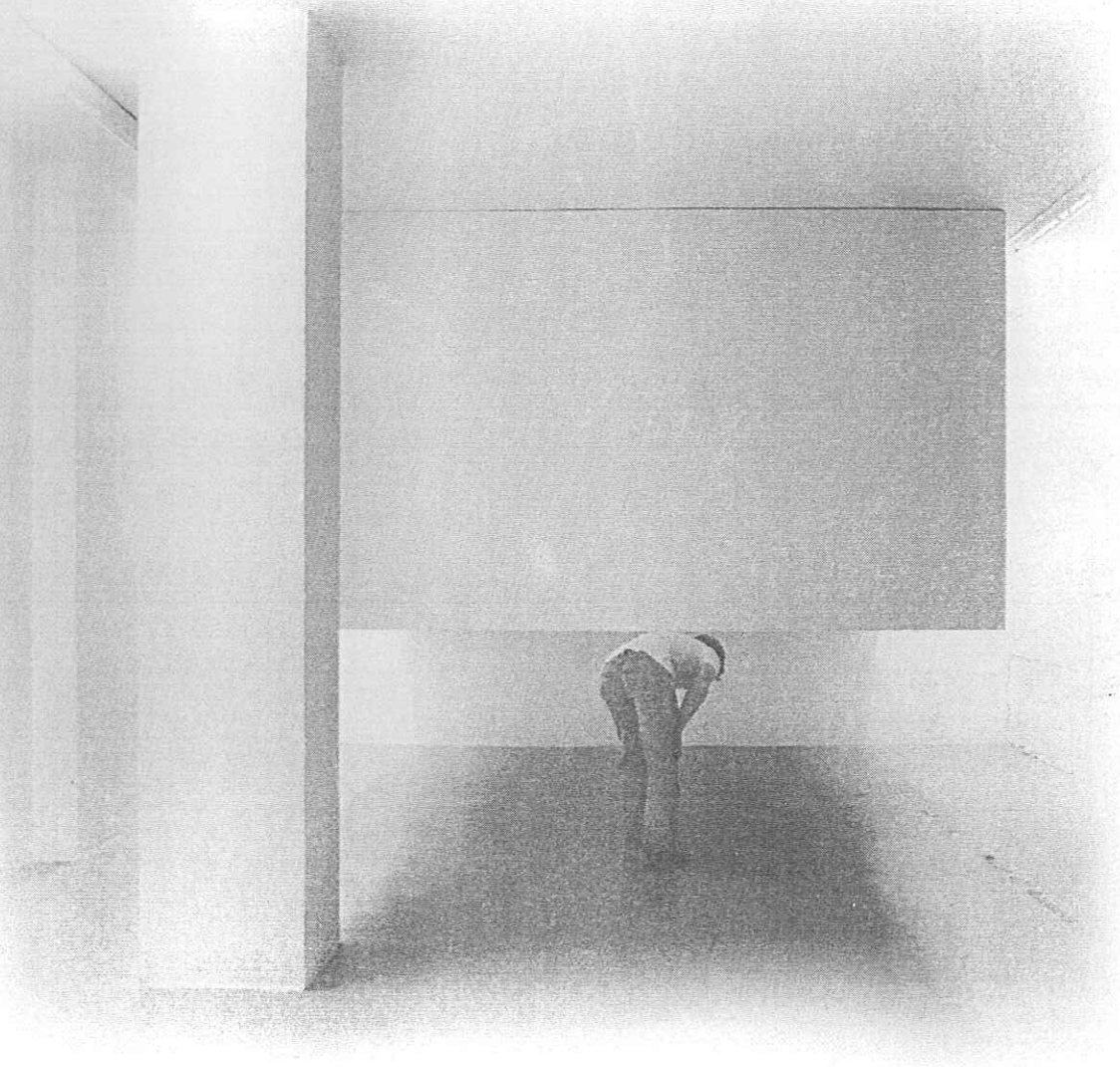
<sup>20</sup> Sperm banks engage in a range of practices that aim at controlling the pleasure connected to masturbation such as restricting the time men can be in the cabin or setting up appointments for the donors to 'come.'

<sup>21</sup> And normative in many other ways in addition to what was my focus here.



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## inhalt

<b>Impressum</b>	2
<b>editorial</b>	3
Zur Konstitution der Kontrollgesellschaft <b>Serhat Karakayali</b>	4
Kontrolle und Autonomie der Migration in Griechenland <b>Bernd Kasperek</b>	10
„Lernen zu Helfen“ Ein essayistischer Indizienbericht dazu, wie Projekte und Techniken Ehrenamtliche professionalisieren <b>Maria Schwertl</b>	14
Electronic Monitoring Aggregatzustände einer aktuellen Überwachungspraxis <b>Sven Bergmann</b>	20
Jugendliche unter Kontrolle Logiken des Umgangs mit problematischen Jugendlichen <b>Gerlinde Malli</b>	26
Das Unsichtbare Auge in der Stadt Der Überwachungsdiskurs in den Medien <b>Barbara Frischling &amp; Claudia Rückert</b>	30
What does one wear to a sperm bank? Negotiations of Sexuality in Sperm Donation <b>Sebastian Mohr</b>	36
Spätmoderne Mutterschaft und der Wille zur Arbeit <b>Petra Schmidt</b>	44
From Self-Policing to Authenticity zu wechselnden Prämissen des Antiterrorkampf unter George W. Bush und Barack Obama <b>Jens Kabisch</b>	50
Unter Kontrolle Der Mensch im Utopismus <b>Josef Bordat</b>	56
<b>Autorinnen und Autoren</b>	62