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# Ethics at the beginning of life

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## **Could infertile couples say no to assisted conception?**

In my doctoral thesis there are interviews of infertile couples who became parents either through assisted conception or through international adoption. The interviews and in other studies show that assisted conception is the primary choice of infertile couples adoption is considered "the second best choice". Some of my informants did however choose international adoption as their first choice and their stories highlight some of the perceptions surrounding assisted conception in Sweden today.

The perception that I would like to highlight is the "technological imperative" imposed by most new medical techniques. . Assisted conception is a good example of a technique that more or less requires to be taken into practice. Primarily the technique offers couples a way to establish normal families and if successful allows the parents to identify themselves as mothers and fathers. At the same time it reinforces the significant conception of likeness between parents and child. Biologically this implies a growing emphasis on genetic identity between the parents and their future child. Culturally it entails a support of primarily ethnic resemblance between parents and their future child. In this way assisted conception reinforces the biological child as the norm and other children as the exception from the norm. Adopted children, foster-children and stepchildren are not the parents' true children. When a man and a woman are hit by infertility what would it take to reject the promising possibility of assisted conception as a way back to the normal family?

Westerlund, Katarina. 2002. *Sammanhangets mening. En empirisk studie av livsåskådningar i föreställningar om genteknik och i berättelser om barnlöshet, assisterad befruktning och adoption.* (The meaning of context: An Empirical Study of Views of Life in Perceptions of Gene Technology and in Narratives about Childlessness, Assisted Conceptions and Adoption). Uppsala: Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis