

Surviving Ourselves: Unpacking Reproductive Justice, Genetic Technologies & Eugenics



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Context



Emerging genetic and reproductive technologies are:

- Developing without critical dialogue – no organized social justice, women’s health, or reproductive rights perspective
- Impacting all of our communities – across race, class, internationally
- Market driven – commercialization of science & health
- Developing in a social, political, economic and ideological context of inequality and discrimination
- Search for technological fixes for social & environmental problems

Focus on genetics vs social/environmental factors



- Geneticization of health disparities
- Increased use of genetics to explain/justify differences:
 - Intelligence
 - Sexuality
- Technological, genetic fixes for social, political and environmental problems
 - Crime
 - Violence
 - Alcoholism
 - Obesity
 - Mental illness
 - Shyness

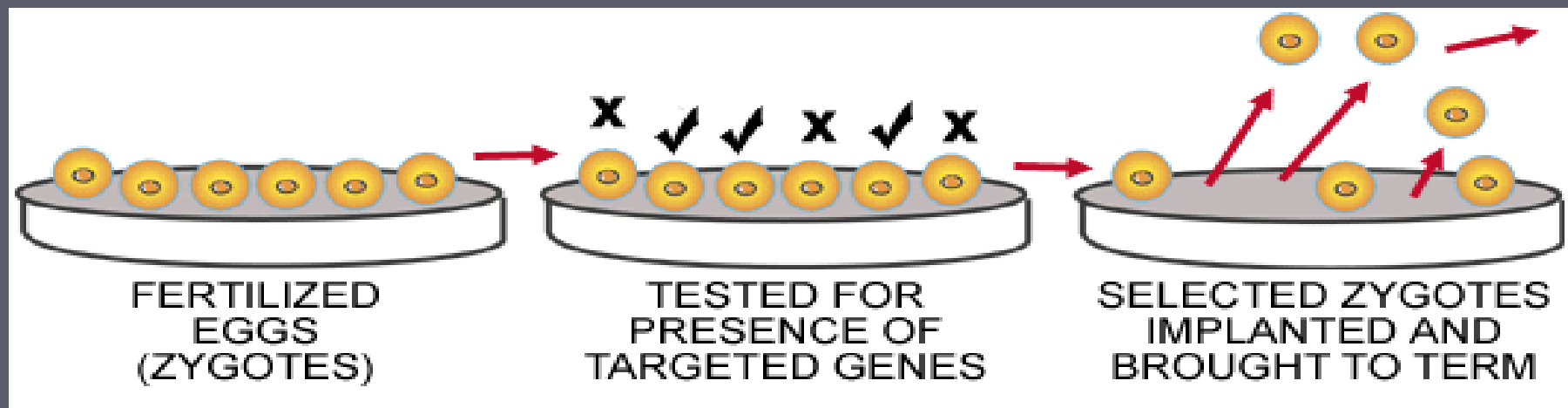


*Dorothy Roberts:
making the
connections*

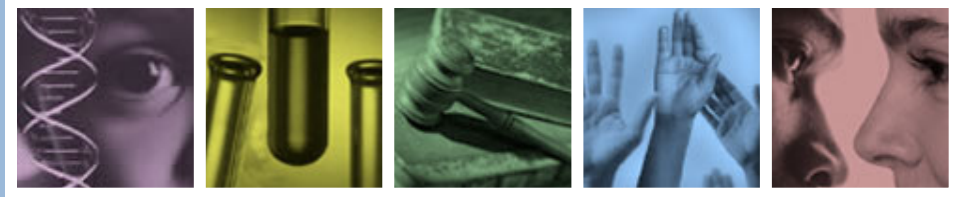
Pre-implantation genetic diagnosis (PGD)



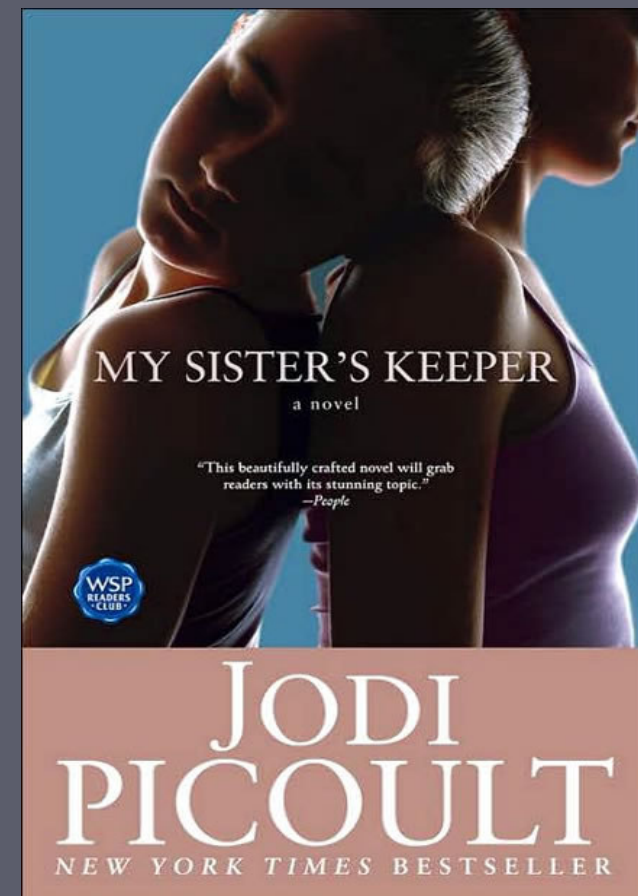
- In-vitro egg fertilization
- At day 3 (8 cells) a cell is extracted for testing
- Only selected (desired) embryos implanted



Pre-implantation genetic diagnosis (PGD)



- Developed for genetic “disability” de-selection
- More recently –
 - Sex selection
 - Late (adult) on-set diseases –
 - Alzheimer, diabetes
 - Tissue match for existing child needing transplant
 - “Best” embryos, not healthy embryos
- Normalizes genetic selection and desirability



Pre-conception sex selection



- MicroSort® -- sorts sperm cells carrying Y-chromosome (male) from X-chromosome (female)
- Ads in *NY Times* and in-flight magazines

The MicroSort® Gender-Selection Program at GIVF

Do You Want To Choose the Gender Of Your Next Baby?



If you want to choose — or need to choose — whether your next baby is a girl or a boy, you may qualify for the MicroSort® gender selection procedure at the Genetics & IVF Institute (GIVF).

Prospective parents come from all over the world to GIVF in suburban Washington, DC. They choose this exclusive *scientifically-based* sperm sorting gender selection procedure, currently in an FDA clinical trial, for several important reasons:

- For prevention of genetic diseases
- For family balancing
- Results so far show 90% success rate for achieving girls and 75% for boys.
- FREE MicroSort for qualifying patients who use Donor Egg or Preimplantation Genetic Diagnosis at GIVF.
- For sensitive, personal attention from a caring staff of professionals, dedicated to the success of your family.

Couples also choose the Genetics & IVF Institute because we are the world's largest integrated provider of infertility and genetic services. Our expertise in the diagnosis and treatment of complex genetic and reproductive disorders is second to none.

To learn more about the Genetics & IVF Institute, and how the MicroSort® technology may help you select the gender of your next child — please visit us at:

www.givf.com
or call us at
1-800-277-6607

Now available in New York and other metropolitan areas through collaborating physicians. Call for details.

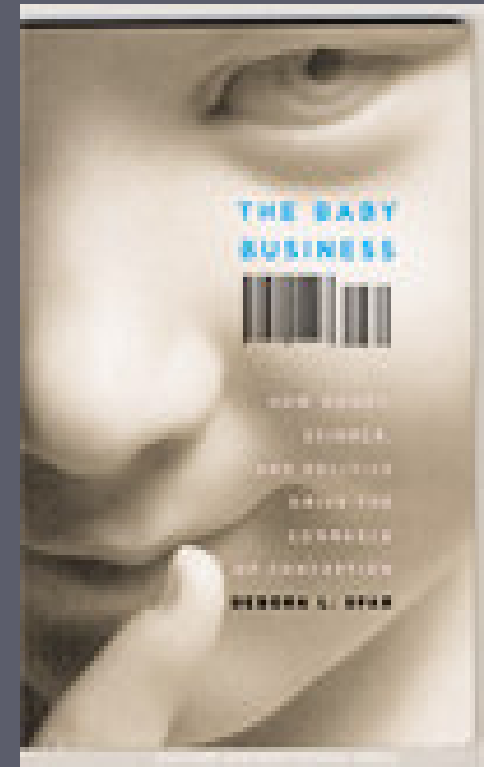
Caution: This procedure uses an investigational device limited by federal law to investigational use.

GENETICS & IVF INSTITUTE 

Assisted Reproductive Technologies



- Benefits -- expands family formation options
- Concerns
 - Accessibility & equity (basic health care)
 - Technological fixes for enviro problems
 - Geneticizes family formation and ties
 - Unregulated in terms of health & safety – lack of data and oversight
 - Reproductive Tourism – renting 3rd World wombs



Eugenic methods



Past	Present	Future
<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Forced breeding✓ Sterilization✓ Genocide✓ Segregation✓ Restrictive immigration✓ Forced abortion✓ Infanticide✓ Dangerous contraceptives	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Methods of past practices plus✓ Sex selection✓ Embryo screening✓ Selective abortion✓ Gamete donor selection✓ “Family” eugenics	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Methods of past practices plus✓ Increase pre-implantation diagnosis & screening✓ Reproductive cloning✓ Inheritable genetic modification✓ “Designer babies”

Market eugenics



Technologies of genetic redesign could foster a new form of eugenics: not state-sponsored, but driven by consumer dynamics

- Parents could feel compelled to obtain genetic “upgrades” for their future children, leading to a market-driven race for “enhanced” genes
- Criteria for “good” and “bad” genes and traits would reflect particular social biases - likely those that favor privileged groups

“Reproductive Oppression”



- Historical examples of reproductive oppression
 - Sterilization abuse of American Indian, African American, Puerto Rican and Mexican American women
 - Testing oral contraceptives on Puerto Rican women
- Current examples/potential for reproductive oppression
 - “Renting wombs:” India
 - “Outsourcing” for eggs: UK to Romania
 - Family caps, provider-controlled contraceptives

Concerns about new technologies



- Health equity and access – “designer medicine”
- Devalues lives of people with disabilities
- Geneticization of race and difference
- Reproductive health, rights and justice of women – exploitation of women’s bodies and reproductive capacity
- Potential market-based eugenics – breeding “better” people: consumer driven
- Lack of oversight, regulation and public debate
- International: reproductive tourism and markets

Reproductive health, rights, justice



- **Reproductive Health** -- health & safety, medical cures and technological fixes, administrative regulations
- **Reproductive Rights** -- legal protections and access to these technologies, privacy, state regulation
- **Reproductive/Social Justice** --
 - Health equity
 - Control/exploitation of women's bodies, fertility & communities
 - Potential eugenic outcomes
 - Geneticization of race, difference and social problems
 - Challenges individual choice model

Implications?



- What are the implications of these new technologies for women of color?
- Who is “choosing” and at what cost to women and society?
- What will be the impact of these new technologies on women of color’s ability to control their reproductive decisions & experiences?