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Family Relations And Life Transitions

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UNDERGOING FERTILITY TREATMENT IN DENMARK: CONSEQUENCES FOR THE RELATIONSHIP AND THE ESTABLISHING OF AN EVERYDAY LIFE WITH CHILDREN.

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Abstract: We present results from a study on the family histories and establishing of daily life after fertility treatment among couples in a five-year-follow-up study in Denmark.

The findings presented will focus on the family histories; that is whether the couples preserve or dissolve their relationship and whether and how they establish a daily life with children during and subsequent to the treatment, including their own children (distinguishing between spontaneous conceived children, ART-children, adopted children and step-children), and whether they have contact with children they do not live with. Further, the family histories will be seen in relation to selected characteristics of the couples.

Women and men, who begin a fertility treatment are seen as having been through an individual as well as a joint decision making process regarding their lives, their childlessness and their fertility intentions with the current partner (Nauck 2007). Their subsequent family lives are expected to be influenced by their experiences during the treatment process.

The population in the current study consists of 568 couples, selected from the so-called COMPI-cohort (Schmidt et al. 2008) which is comprised of 1,081 men and 1,169 women, who initiated fertility treatment in one of four public and one private fertility clinic in Denmark in the period 1st January 2000 – 31st August 2001. Within this cohort, couples, which did not have joint children at this time and which in addition consists of men and women where both partners have answered a follow-up questionnaire both after one year and after 5 years, have been identified for the current project.

There is a lack of analyses which from a demographic-sociological point of view deals with consequences of the treatment and persistent infertility for individuals and couples. Internationally, follow-up studies have focused on the success and the safety of the procedures and health among children born after fertility treatment (e.g., Jensen et al. 2009). Further, there has been a societal and medical interest in calculating and comparing the 'rate of success' of the various forms of treatment, that is, the so-called 'take-home baby rate'. To our knowledge, no longitudinal approach has been used in analysing the relation between the situations during treatment and the subsequent family life, as applied in the current project.