Gender Selection

From today's home kits to the tedious fertility planning calendars of yesteryear, couples have tried for centuries to choose the genders of their children. Most couples, it seems, would pick the sex of their children if they had the option.

In countries like China, couples feel more pressure because of birth limits. One recent study has shown that more than forty percent of couples worldwide would choose the sex of their child if possible. Is the ability to select a child's gender really a good thing, though?

Proponents of gender selection have a strong argument and quite a bit of support from a number of different places. Dr. Ronald Ericsson, called "Dr. Sperm" by many, has been marketing a home test kit to help couples choose the gender of their child. As a result, he's quite familiar with both sides of the issue, and has been for the last thirty years. The critics, though, don't concern him. "It's none of their damn business," said Ericsson. "It's a human rights issue." Ericsson suggests that because the technology is available, people should be allowed to use it.

Seems strange to me, though, that after all the destructive things we've done with technology, someone would say that because it is available we should use it.

Just because we can, doesn't mean we should.
The thing most proponents of gender selection procedures don't want you to know is that the gender selection process is still in the beginning stages of development, so scientists don't get it right 100% of the time. As a result, couples can spend thousands of dollars trying to create a baby of their choice, only to be disappointed. This can result of the termination of such pregnancies. Terminating a child's life because you wanted a different gender - is that really acceptable?

Not only is gender selection dangerous, but it can create sex distortion ratios, particularly in countries where one sex is the preferred member of society.

Proponents of gender selection, though, have come up with an answer to this one as well. Dr. Suresh Nayak, an Indian Ob-Gyn, suggested that the fear that sex selection would change the natural ratios was unfounded because the practice is only used by a fraction of couples who can afford it. That fact, though, may soon change.

As the procedures get increasingly cheaper, more couples are taking advantage of them. Fertility clinics are literally swamped with couples trying to create designer babies. By the end of 2004, more than 4000 cases of successful gender selected babies were reported. Many schools are starting to study the procedure to make it more available to couples.

Houston's Baylor College of Medicine started a study of 200 couples in 2005 to examine the gender selection process, a study which caused some controversy among those who found it morally repugnant.

Undoubtedly, this procedure will distort the natural gender ratios if enough people can afford it. If some doctors and scientists have their way, everyone will soon be able to afford the procedure.
There is some light at the end of this tunnel, however. Gender selection has finally been banned in many countries on the continents of Europe and Asia. Perhaps they realize that this practice is not only unethical and dangerous, it will eventually lead to couples wanting to create designer babies by choosing hair and eye color, levels of intelligence, and even height!

If we continue to allow gender selection, serious, dangerous problems could occur in our society. Gender selection is a powerful tool that science does not yet fully understand how to use. If we do not draw the line between wants and needs early, there will be no stopping wealthy parents in the future who want to choose all of the characteristics of their babies, which will undoubtedly create problems in the human race and promote intolerance towards others.

By discouraging parents to choose the genders of their babies, we are encouraging our children to have fewer prejudices and accept others, regardless of sex and gender preferences. The only acceptable way to choose the gender of a child is through adoption. There are so many children in need of loving families that if you're adamant about having either a boy or a girl, then all you need do is adopt one!