

Moral and ethical limits of genetic modification philosophy essay

[Experience](#), [Human Nature](#)



Not until just a few years ago, whether making a baby boy or a baby girl was considered a hit-or-miss affair. However, this situation does not persist anymore as parents now have access to the latest genetic testing techniques can predetermine their baby's gender with great accuracy. As technology progresses, we will soon be able to determine the children's attributes such as hair and eye colour, IQ and personality or even to the types of illnesses they are resistant to. In my opinion, we need to pause and think what moral and ethical limits, if any, should apply to the selection of our children's genes or characteristics.

Now that parents can choose what kind of traits they want their babies to possess, they can insert desirable genes into them. Comparing this to a supermarket, there is in fact no difference. Parents can pick from a list of options just like how they pick vegetables and fruits from the market, choosing all the fresh and juicy ones and discard the dry and rotten.

Designing your baby becomes an ultimate shopping experience, in which we turn babies into commodities that we buy off the shelf. We can accept plastic surgery in our present society, but how can we condone the mistake of a baby being crafted too perfectly to be accepted as a normal baby?

Are we supposed to fool with nature, or is it that genetics should be natural?

The prospect of designer babies is confronting the world so rapidly that people from all over the world are trying to grapple with its implications.

Such a procedure actually brings about more cons than pros. We know that these genetic techniques are very expensive. As a result, only the rich people can afford to eradicate diseases in their children, leading to a further

imbalance between the rich and the poor. With genetic enhancements so prevalent, we will soon breed a race of super humans. When everybody becomes so perfect, there will naturally be discrimination against people born with disabilities.

Every modification definitely carries its own fair share of risks.

Preimplantation genetic diagnosis is not risk free. Some fear that the removal of cells from the normal eight-cell embryos might have implications for the well-being of the babies created. Looking from the viewpoint of a doctor, they would of course encourage this diagnosis. Since they have the knowledge required, they feel the need to provide such service to their patients. It is his obligation to do so. After all this is a cash business, with the risks of the procedure being mostly unknown, doctors would encourage such a service to make money.

In conclusion, I file this case under personal choice. I have no problem with parents who prefer to use technology to choose the genes they want to pass on to their children, rather than being forced to accept what fate provides. However, personally I would not encourage this. There are definitely bumps and hitches along the way when the child is growing up. In this process, some children will become smarter than the others, better looking or even more successful. But the most important thing is, no matter how smart or good-looking they are, they are ours and we should love them unconditionally. The joy of parenting lies in helping and guiding our children in the growing process, without expecting any cash back returns.

Ethics and Designer Baby - Are human genetic modification technologies safe?

One very important ethical question brought into the designer baby issue is that of human genetic modification. Are such technologies certified safe enough to be used on humans, or are there implications behind the use of this technology?

One way to create a designer baby is through in vitro fertilization. Genetic engineers modify the embryo's DNA and then introduce it into a womb. The only kind of genetic engineering currently practiced on human beings is experimental, and involves efforts to fix the genes of somatic cells in people with relatively rare health problems that reflect the functions of single genes.

Current techniques of genetic modification introduce genes at random places in the genome. There is the possibility that an insertion of genes may disrupt the function of another gene crucial for survival. Many of the genes also have more than one effect and the effect we intend for the baby may be accompanied by others which we will become aware only later. What is more, many of the traits that the parents want to select are influenced by multiple genes.

Values compromised?

Designer babies raise up a knotty issue - sex selection. Societies that value boys more highly than girls, including China and India, are already out of balance; this could tip the scales even further. In the U. S, polls report that

Americans believe an ideal family has a boy as the oldest child. This not only emphasize one gender, while downplaying the other, but also make it harder to get rid of the skewed perspective of society about gender role stereotypes.

Whose affected?

As the technology in genetic modification progresses, sooner or later, designer babies will be accepted by many countries and more techniques would be available to the masses. The question arises about what kinds of genetic modification or even enhancement would parents be willing to pay to enhance already healthy children? And these designer babies, with HIV resistance, high IQ and an attractive veneer, would they be suffering under the pressure to be the perfect child? Designer babies, will thus, start an “obsessive search for the perfect child” for parents, resulting in a discriminatory society where unenhanced people are viewed as less superior by these same designer babies. And for designer babies who were born to help cure another child suffering from diseases or defections, will they be loved any more or less than the child? A question arises as to whether the child is wanted, or if he or she only acts as a donor to his/her sibling. The treatment of the baby then, as a commodity, as simply a cure, would grow up feeling abandoned and alone.

What's the solution?

Trait selection using PGD is too new – and unproven – for there to be regulatory laws in most developed countries. However, physicians and health

care organizations can help to regulate the use of such technology – by ensuring that only babies of genetic defects or diseases be entitled to these modifications. Laws should also be set up not to ban genetic testing or enhancement, but to allow genetic information privacy so that justified forms of genetic testing be allowed. Genetic discrimination should also be forbidden.

I was screened to have a life expectancy of 30 years before my life starts. My parents were also informed that I would be born with some physical defects and they went through a very difficult time hesitating if they should let me go and create a perfect girl in the Preimplantation Genetic Diagnosis (PGD) Laboratory suggested by their doctor. Then they made a decision that I believe not many parents will have the courage to make.

Very soon later, I was born – with a little imperfection. My thumb is missing from my right hand and my left leg is shorter than my right so I walk with a little limp. Mummy always tells me that I am perfect in her eyes. I had asked her why did she not choose to have an even more perfect girl and she replied, “ You are just as perfect as nature wants you to be. I just can’t ask for more!”

PGD is a very attractive option in such competitive society. That is why the government should impose some restrictions on the use of PGD before it gets out of control and people make babies with their own requirements and standards. The use of PGD should be limited only for the parents to free the child from potential hereditary disease and the genes should only be limited

to the parents' ones. The use of PGD when the parents have the hope to create a perfect baby in mind or to create a life to save the life of another man should be forbidden.

I am very thankful for the choice that my parents made many years back and let me have the chance to celebrate my 29th birthday. We choose to believe that there will be a miracle and decided not to go against nature so I hope to encourage the parents-to-be who are facing the same problems as them to distinguish between selecting the genes for therapy and enhancement before they go for embryo biopsy. I believe that you can make the right choice and what is best for your baby.

Advances in genetics now allow parents who have a higher chance of genetic disorder in their offspring to carry out genetic tests on their baby while it is still inside the mother. Now, people want to use this technology for uses that go beyond medical uses but also for cosmetic uses - for example, choosing the colour of the child's eyes. However, we have to consider the moral and ethical limits of this choice.

The more powerful the technology, the more serious any mistake made will turn out. By allowing these genetic advances to be open to parents to use for uses that go beyond medical uses, there is a lot of possibility that we might occur with devastating consequences, one of them being the possibility of completely changing the whole human species.

When this option of the parents being able to choose the baby's physical traits is open to those who are willing to pay, then how would that be

different than buying a Barbie doll of the shelf in the mall? Parents should love their children for who they are, and learn to accept them the way they are. If they are able to choose certain physical traits, the surprise of uncovering their own child's beauty would be gone.

Genetic engineering for cosmetic uses does not encourage parents to love their children for who they are, but on the contrary give rise to parents who are unhappy with their children. Parents will compare their children with other children who have 'better' traits. Parents whose children have gone through such genetic selection will also saddle their child with false expectations - the parents chose him or her to be smart, and if the child does not succeed, they will be unhappy as they had spent a lot of money to do so, but did not get what they wanted.

As such, we can see how 'designer babies' can result in controversies and parents are important stakeholders in such a technology. Parents need to really think if the selection of such physical traits are really that important to them. Why go through such unnecessary trouble, instead of embracing the beauty of nature when they have their own baby?

Pre-implantation genetic diagnosis (PGD) was created to screen for diseases, then used for gender selection and possibly now, to select physical traits. However, the use of PGD should be restricted only to check when there is higher chance of genetic disordering, and not for other cosmetic uses. There are risks involved in PGD, which include miscarriage, maternal bleeding and premature birth. Both mother and child should not be exposed to such

complications unnecessarily, and hence genetic screening should only be used when there is higher chance of a genetic disorder occurring in the child.

Final Solution

The consequences of such genetic modification are complex and numerous. If the technology for designer babies is allowed for cosmetic or genetic enhancement purposes, this will only create a frantic and obsessive search for the “ perfect child” on the parents’ part. Moreover, such technology is only available at a high price, meaning only the rich would be able to afford to pay for such disease-free super babies. Sooner or later, as such technology becomes mainstream among nations, class differences between the rich and the poor would also involve genetic differences. This will result in the bottom part of society being the place where all disease genes lay out, and creates a superior race among the humans, causing genetic discrimination. Moreover, due to its high costs, irresponsible doctors may hike up the prices in order to cash in on the business, and ethical issues would be ignored in the pursuit for money. Designer babies also raises up a knotty issue - sex selection. Societies that value boys more highly than girls, like China Care already out of balance; this could tip the scales even further. This not only emphasize one gender, while downplaying the other, but also make it harder to get rid of the skewed perspective of society about gender role stereotypes.

Thus, we propose a solution whereby physicians and health care organizations can help to regulate the use of Pre-implantation genetic

diagnosis (PGD, whereby this technology can only be applied for the checking of genetic defects when there is higher chance of genetic disordering, and not for other cosmetic uses. As there are risks involved in PGD, (e. g. miscarriage, maternal bleeding and premature birth etc), both mother and child should not be exposed to such complications unnecessarily, and hence genetic screening should only be used when there is higher chance of a genetic disorder occurring in the child. Laws by the government should also be set up - not to ban genetic testing, but to allow the privacy and storage of such genetic information so that justified forms of genetic testing are allowed. Genetic discrimination would also be banned so as to prevent the forming of a superior race among humans, and to promote equality despite genetic differences.