

# Genetic engineering and eugenics exploratory



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## s Research Papers Genetic Engineering and Eugenics

The idea of genetic engineering has been a very heated topic of discussion lately. The possibilities of this topic range from cloning to gene therapy and eugenics. The most recent type, eugenics through gene therapy has created a lot of controversy. Eugenics is the study of how to improve human genetic heritage. This basically is the engineering of babies. The thought of these new designer babies raises many new questions. What are the consequences of these advances? Is it right to design an embryo in a certain way to make it into what the parents want it to be? These are just a couple of the very important questions raised by this issue. As the debate to whether eugenics should be allowed rages on, the technology comes closer to making this possibility into a reality.

The way in which this new technology will be used is by correcting genetic problems in embryos. Extensive DNA testing will soon be able to show awaiting parents an accurate view of their embryo's genes. This will allow any defects of the child to be seen. If the unborn child is perfectly healthy, no changes will be made. If a problem is spotted, the parents may turn to abortion or gene therapy. Gene therapy is the treatment of genetic diseases by introducing genetic material into the patient's genes. This new process of having children where the parents decide what type of child they will have is called genetic counseling. This process will be able to not only identify health issues, but also personality traits. This is another topic that raises an interesting controversy. It allows a baby to be designed to the specific desires of the parent. This presents the question of: who is to say what another person should be like? Instead of a person's individuality being

created naturally it will be molded by science. Some might say that this amazing process would create some of the greatest humans that will lead mankind into the future. Others might say that genetic engineering would destroy what could be a great person by changing their personality, removing trying health situations that build character, or aborting a person before they are born. There are many pros and cons to the concept of eugenics. Whether the pros outweigh the cons or the cons outweigh the pros is still to be seen. If the benefits and drawbacks of this seem to balance, then how will the situation be resolved?

Of the benefits offered by genetic engineering, one of the greatest is the possibility of curing types of cancer and fighting thousands of identified genetic illnesses. These could be cured by germ-line therapy. This is where a person's genes are altered and the traits are passed on to their children. This process is much easier to complete to a fertilized egg. The doctor can then inject an artificial human chromosome into the fertilized egg that will grow as the egg does. This will produce a child with a gene to cancel the effects of genetic illnesses. People will be able to live longer, healthier lifestyles. The extent of this genetic engineering is not limited to curing ailments. There is also the possibility of modifying behavioral and physical traits. This opens the door to creating the "perfect child." Parents will be able to create a child just the way they want it to be. These seemingly unlimited possibilities will enable the human race to advance at a much quicker rate. "Life would enter a new phase, one in which we seize control of our own evolution" (Begley). Such exciting ideas spark speculation of what could be accomplished by this new group of genetically engineered humans. These

advances in science could better the entire human race. With this new technology, people may become healthier and smarter.

Despite all of the good that may result from this new type of eugenics, there are also certain drawbacks. This idea of creating better babies is not a new one. The eugenics of today is reminiscent of the eugenic ideas of Nazism. In a way, it is parallel to Hitler's idea of creating a superior race. Though the new eugenics does not go to the extremes of those used in World War II, the goals are the same. But will the goal of creating better people actually work? It may increase discrimination of those that have not been genetically engineered. Inequalities would form between those whom had been treated and those whom had not. By creating a higher state of living for some, other people will be thought less of and reduced to a poor state of living. Also, as certain genetic diseases are cured, others will emerge making this a never-ending battle. Another problem presents itself in the role of parenting. The job of parents is to love and care for their children as they are. " Parenting is not about requiring a child to be as you would like him or her to be. In this respect, children are in danger" (Boukhari and Otchet). On the other side, parents also face some problems. If this process of gene therapy becomes open to the public, parents will feel great pressure to help their baby as much as they can. If the process is not used due to religious or personal beliefs, and a problem arises for the child, the parents will feel extreme guilt. They will blame themselves for something they really have no control over. Even if treatment is given to the embryo, there is no hard evidence that the therapy works. There is also a possibility that another illness could have occurred. All of these ewhat ifsi could drive a parent crazy with guilt. With

the drawbacks of eugenics being seen, many wonder whether this step will do more harm than good for mankind.

As the debate over this process continues, it becomes closer to being a reality. There are experiments currently underway with animals to prove that this process does not produce something terrible. The future of this is right around the corner, approximately three years away. While the original reasoning behind this scientific advance is for the benefit of the human race, there is always the chance that it will be taken too far. “ We know where to start. The harder question is this: do we know where to stop?” (Begley).

## **Works Cited**

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