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Designer Babies

[After the presentation about eugenics] The process of designer babies involves a more artificial, and controversial, kind of genetic engineering than eugenics. A designer baby is a child created from the artificial selection of genetic characteristics to prevent genetic disorders and select healthy embryos. The process of designer babies includes two purposes. One is to ensure a genetically healthy child for parents who may be prone to conceiving a genetically unhealthy child; another purpose is to use the designer baby's DNA to cure the genetic disease or condition of its sibling. This process can also allow parents to select the sex of their child, as well as the physical characteristics and the level of intelligence the child will possess.

The concept of how designer babies are created is quite simple. The mother-to-be is prescribed a certain dose of fertility drugs by her physician. This triggers the woman's reproductive system to unleash multiple unfertilized eggs from her ovaries into the uterus. At this point, a physician carefully collects the eggs and places them into a petri dish. The eggs are fertilized with sperm, thus creating embryos. The embryos are then placed under a procedure called pre-implantation genetic diagnosis, also known as PGD. At this stage, the embryos are analyzed for any genetic diseases or conditions and tissue compatibility, if the DNA will be infused to cure the child's older sibling. The embryos that are diagnosed with a genetic disease or condition are disposed. The healthy ones are then injected back into the woman's uterus via in-vitro fertilization. After giving birth to the pre-determined healthy child, the umbilical cord blood can be transfused into the

child's older sibling to cure his or her genetic disease. This possibility allows the cure of many life-threatening conditions, such as cystic fibrosis and muscular-dystrophy. Even though this fairly new scientific process may save many lives, it presents many controversial issues towards religion and humanity.

Since designer babies have the potential of saving his or her older sibling from a genetic disease, many people view the parents who opt for this choice as treating the designer baby as a commodity to save the other child. Some state that this process is a barbaric and unethical harvest for body parts. Even though some parents that need a designer baby stated they wanted another child anyway, some people doubt that they truly do and are only saying so in order to not be viewed as "barbaric harvesters".

As mentioned before, all unhealthy embryos are disposed after PGD, while the healthy ones are spared. Many people view this action as murder. Even though they are unhealthy, the embryos still have the potential to become living human beings. These organizations consider merely discarding them like they are an act of barbarism and destruction of humanity.

The creation of designer babies would also have an effect on the different economic classes of society. Since this procedure is a hefty cost, only the wealthy will be able to afford it. They will be able to create healthy and more intelligent children. When these children grow up, they will be most likely to attend the most prestigious schools and earn the most high-paying jobs in the economy. As a result, they can afford to create designer babies like their parents and repeat the process, with the lower class producing healthy and intelligent child by the luck of the draw.

Designer babies are also viewed as humanity's destruction. Even though the procedure primary intention was to save lives and better the health and well-being of humanity, other aspects are not can be created by this procedure. For example, the sex of the embryo can be determined during PGD. Parents can easily choose whether to have a male or female child. Choosing the sex of the child would mean a great deal to parents who are producing children of one sex and would like one of the opposite sex. However, other genetic characteristics can be chosen too. The color of the baby's eyes, the skin color, hair type, and hair color are just some of the options parents would be able to access through PGD. Some people consider parents who make these choices are selfish and not real parents. These people believe that parents should be happy with their child, not matter how they look or what sex it is.

Even though the issue about designer babies is still being debated, British scientists have already been permitted by the government last year to create experiments that would allow alterations to DNA strands to create any kind of child and not be limited to the parents' genetic material, which is currently possible. If the experiments are successful, any type of child to the parents' wishes can be created. All that would be needed is a fertilized embryo from anyone as the medium to creating this form of artificial life.