

Human cloning should be permitted in the United States

Key Terms

Cloning
Reproductive
Therapeutic
Genetic Defects
DNA
Genes
Stem Cells
Embryo
Degenerative disease

Sources

How Stuff Works
<http://science.howstuffworks.com/human-cloning.htm>
Human Cloning Foundation
<http://www.humancloning.org/>
Ethical Considerations regarding human cloning
<http://www.puaf.umd.edu/IPPP/Fall97Report/cloning.htm>
New York Times cloning page
<http://www.nytimes.com/library/national/science/cloning-index.html>

Fact Set

- There are two types of human cloning. Reproductive cloning is aimed at producing a child with the same genes as its genetic parent. Therapeutic cloning involves taking stem cells from tissue created in a lab. This tissue may be used to treat human degenerative diseases.
- Six states already have bans on at least some form of cloning and anti-cloning measures were debated in 22 states in 2002. The U.S. House of Representatives voted to ban human cloning in February 2003 and President Bush supports a ban on human cloning, but the Senate has not taken up the issue as of yet.

Arguments in favor of permitting human cloning

- If cloning is not permitted in the United States, people will simply go overseas to take advantage of other countries without cloning bans. A ban will not end cloning and will cost U.S. businesses the ability to enter this part of the biotechnology industry.
- Cloning provides our best hope for treating or curing diseases like Alzheimer's disease.
- Therapeutic cloning can be permitted without allowing reproductive cloning. This would allow scientists to research cures to diseases without all of the ethical considerations surrounding reproductive cloning.
- Cloning is not that different that many fertility treatments that are available now.
- Cloning would allow children to be born without genetic diseases and avoid the pain and suffering that goes along with them. It would perhaps eventually allow us to remove these diseases from the gene pool entirely.
- Parents with genetic diseases could clone healthy children and have their own child without the risk of transmitting their disease.

Arguments against permitting human cloning

- Reproductive cloning might lead to birth defects in children. Cloned animals have shown a high rate of birth defects.
- There are ethical and religious concerns about the use of human embryos for scientific or research purposes. We should not let scientists perform experiments on cells that would develop into a human being.
- If we allow one type of cloning there is no good way to make sure that scientists do not engage in other forms of cloning as well. It is best to just make all forms of cloning impermissible.
- Cloning will merely allow wealthy individuals to create custom-made children with a hand-picked genetic make-up. This will allow the wealthy to create children that have genetic advantages over others.
- Cloning groups such as the Raelians, the religious group that claims to have cloned human beings, are not responsible scientists. Cloning is most likely to be carried out by less-than-reputable scientists for profit. Banning cloning is the best way to keep these groups from being involved with the creation of human life.
- Genes do not determine the personality or health of an individual. Even producing children with perfect genetic make-ups does not guarantee much of anything about their health or personalities.

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Discussion Questions

- What types of cloning are currently scientifically possible? What cloning advances do scientists hope to achieve in the future?
- What role should government have in regulating science? If government does not constrain genetic technology, what checks will exist on the scientific community?
- What moral issues are involved in debates about cloning? How should those making decisions about scientific technology evaluate moral arguments?
- What controversies have existed in the past about the development of scientific or medical technologies? Have those debates been resolved by regulation? If so, has that regulation been effective?