

# Opinion

## Embryo selection suggests frightening implications Access for choosing infant's gender opens door for genetic discrimination

Geneticist in London has begun what he calls the first 100-percent sex-selection for couples who want to choose their baby before it



ELIZABETH STRAIT

According to a Website on the procedure, Rainsbury uses the existing in-vitro fertilization technique to take eggs from a couple, fertilize the eggs in a laboratory and then choose the embryo with the preferred sex and implant it in the mother's womb. Rainsbury says this is a rather simple process that will help improve the quality of life for people and will only cost them the amount of \$25,000. Rainsbury seems to have forgotten one thing — he is not God. Right now the choices are limited to the sex of the child, but what next? Sort of embryos based on hair color? Even-tempered parents may be able to tweak their sperm until they get the perfect one. Future parents could purchase the guarantee to produce a son that is the captain of the football team and a daughter guaranteed to be Miss America. The world would eventually be filled with a bunch of people who all look like Barbie and Ken. Once a child is a beautiful thing, deciding whether to have a male or female child reduces that beauty to going to the Chevy dealership and deciding to buy a truck or a car. It seems that in their haste to create a child everyone will envy, people are

beginning to go overboard. It is bad enough people are compelled to impress each other with material possessions, but now they want to go out and purchase the right embryo.

Rainsbury said that "his clinics have a place in a world where sex selection is already practiced, but in a cruel and inhumane way because of pressures to produce a male heir."

Making sex selection available prior to birth is not going to solve this problem. It will contribute to it. For example, people in China are persuaded to have one child in an attempt to control the population size, therefore, everyone wants a male heir to perpetuate their family's name.

If everyone is given the opportunity to choose the sex of their children before they are born and everyone chooses a male child, there would be a serious ramifications down the line. It is simply wrong for doctors to give

people who discriminate against women a new tool to use in that process.

That is exactly what giving people the opportunity to choose the sex of their baby prenatally would do.

than men.

It is understandable parents want to plan the perfect family with two-point-five kids and a dog in the backyard. The desire to control everything, including the future, is

part of human nature. The world is full of surprises, though, and it is those little surprises that make life so wonderful. Think of all of the wonderful people in the world who would not be here had there parents been given the chance to sort through their embryos and choose a child.

Everyone on earth right now is here because nature was allowed to take its course. If you asked most people, they will probably tell you they are pretty glad they were given that chance to a life. So what makes people think they have the right to interfere with another's chance to live.

This is not about giving parents the choice of their children's sex, but taking away the surprise of discovering a new human being, which is an injustice to the parents and especially the unborn child.

Elizabeth Strait is a junior journalism major.

## Courts treat parties fairly

The nation's crime rate has been declining for the past two years because of better crime prevention and an aging population.



STEWART PATTON

However, the mass of anti-crime rhetoric from politicians and judicial candidates has created a monster almost as evil as the crime it has prevented: a fundamental distrust of the justice system.

Many citizens view every "not guilty" verdict as a criminal "getting away with it" and chalk up another one for the good guys when the jury returns a "guilty" verdict.

Reality does not work like old westerns, however, and the line between good and bad is not as easily discernible as the color of the hat the cowboy is wearing. When a crime takes place without any witnesses, the only people that know what happened are the victim(s) and the perpetrator(s). The purpose of a trial therefore is to discover truth.

One of the sources of America's distrust of the justice system stems from the erroneous belief that, simply stated, "half the people that really did it go free because of some loophole in the law." This remark shows several misunderstandings about how the law works.

First, the stories we have all heard about the criminal who is set free because of a simple spelling mistake on a search warrant or something equally trivial are simply not true. The law is not as rigid and cumbersome a creature as many would have you believe.

Second, nearly 90 percent of cases end with a plea bargain and therefore never go to trial. Almost all people accused of a crime choose to serve the punishment for a lesser charge rather than have their day in court.

Since any rational person accused of a crime he or she did not commit would want to have a trial instead of serving any sentence unjustly, we can assume that the most likely scenario is that a majority of the accused who actually proceed to trial in fact did not commit the crime.

Third, Attorney Robert Shapiro states in the prologue to his book *The Search for Justice* that what most people call "loopholes," defense lawyers call the Constitution. The framers of the Constitution emphasized criminal rights because they hated the abusive practices of British criminal procedure.

We have seen what happens when an oppressive regime seizes power in a country with no Constitutional safeguards against government power.

In *The Gulag Archipelago*, Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn paints a horrifying picture of the Soviet Union in the early twentieth century. Solzhenitsyn describes mass arrests without cause, torture to force prisoners to sign fictional confessions written by the interrogator, and horrible prison conditions.

Constitutional protections for the criminally accused are the only barrier between our country and the Soviet Union during the reign of the Bolsheviks.

The media also has played a large role in convincing America that the justice system does not work. The majority of rhetoric heard during O.J. Simpson's trial favored the belief that Simpson had committed the crime.

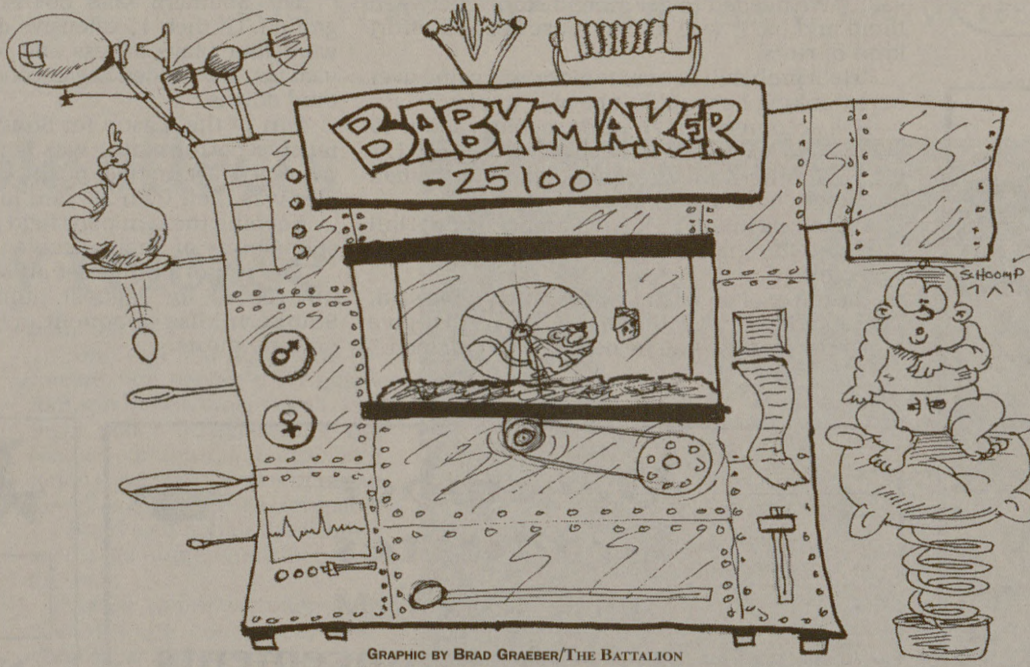
Rather than let the justice system decide guilt or innocence, the media took that task upon themselves and subjected their biased findings to the masses.

Polls during the trial showed Americans slightly favored a "guilty" verdict. Such polls are entirely void of meaning, however, because those who participated in the polls were not exposed to every fact and argument in the trial. The members of the jury were the only people on the planet qualified to determine if Simpson did commit the murders, and we must believe that their decision that Simpson is innocent was correct.

The United States has been so successful because of the guarantees in the Constitution. If we are to remain great, Americans must have faith in the justice system and acknowledge the truth it produces.

Lisa Fook is a senior journalism major.

Stewart Patton is a senior sociology major.



GRAPHIC BY BRAD GRAEBER/THE BATTALION

The goal is not to make it easier to discriminate against women, but to put an end to discrimination and eventually have women across the globe considered equal to men. By advocating this practice, doctors are confirming the misconception that women are less desirable and competent

### MAIL CALL

#### Food drive helps identify victim

Name is Helen Huddleston. She was on Sept. 20, 1997, in an automobile accident. People offered to help me. I named Jennifer Luton several people for me. I would like to thank Jennifer helping to organizing the drive with the American Red Cross and The Bryan-College Station, and The Battalion for providing information about the drive. I would like to thank everyone for the support by donating as extraordinary as blood. You saved my life, by me a part of yourself.

Helen Huddleston  
Local resident

#### Federal police protect Americans

Response to Josh Maskow's column: I am offended by Josh Maskow's "Federal police cause madness" column. To compare America's present law enforcement agencies to those of Adolf Hitler is usable. The FBI and SWAT daily go into

situations none of us would even dream of going into. Mace canisters and car alarms are more prevalent because of police making citizens more aware of crime, not because police agencies are less effective. I think more research should have been done on your part as to why law enforcement is the way it is.

Jared Anderson  
Class of '00

#### Cancer awareness helps students

I would like to thank everyone who helped in the 1998 Testicular Cancer Awareness Campaign. Beth Miller for spreading the message to the entire student body through the Sept. 1 article in *The Battalion*.

The Corps of Cadets, Residence Life, Resident Hall Association and the Athletic Department for funding the fliers. Residence Advisers, Athletics and Corps Staff for distributing the fliers.

Just a reminder to everyone that if you have any questions, you can call the Health Education Department at A.P. Beutel Health Center (847-9242) to get

answers or assistance in getting medical attention.

Without the help of all these organizations this campaign could not have reached as many individuals as it has. It has already helped many students and is bound to help more. Knowledge is the primary weapon in fighting cancer, and with the support of these organizations we are helping to arm the students of this campus. Early detection is the key.

Thank you very much for helping us help others.

Margaret Griffith  
Health Education Coordinator

Chad Steitle  
Student Assistant

The Battalion encourages letters to the editor. Letters must be 300 words or less and include the author's name, class and phone number.

The opinion editor reserves the right to edit letters for length, style, and accuracy. Letters may be submitted in person at 013 Reed McDonald with a valid student ID. Letters may also be mailed to:

The Battalion - Mail Call  
013 Reed McDonald  
Texas A&M University  
College Station, TX  
77843-1111

Campus Mail: 1111  
Fax: (409) 845-2647  
E-mail: batt@tamvm1.tamu.edu

## Aggies may overlook technology's problems

The problem with technology today is that it is not always reliable or helpful.



LISA FOOK

Almost all Aggies have experienced the joy of their computers crashing right in the middle of a large project or arriving late for an important meeting because their cars would not start.

But there are even more frightening problems associated with technology, such as the recent SwissAir crash that killed 229 people.

These were 229 people who were planning to visit family, take a business trip or maybe just taking a break from it all. But thanks to the inadequacies of technology society takes for granted, these people never reached their destinations.

The point is, society is taking these technologies for granted. Flying to a far destination, turning on the television when walking into a room and sending e-mail to a friend are all conveniences past generations never dreamed of but today's college student could not live without.

But should the average college student be able to spend time in a room without the background noise of a television? Perhaps if they did, they would find the work they produce is superior to what they do when concentrating with only half of their mind.

Perhaps the reason America has such a high incidence of psychological problems is because it is more technologically oriented than most other countries.

If people are counting on Internet chat rooms to fill the void in their personal lives, they will never develop the relational skills that they need. And then they go see their therapists trying to figure out what their problems are.

There is a difference between using technology and allowing technology to be the master.

Of course, the other extreme is no solution. Obviously, nobody in their right mind would choose the dirt and disease of the Middle Ages over a comfortable, sanitized existence. Would anyone really want to take a three-week boat trip, when they could save the time by flying in a plane?

But in recent times, it almost seems that without technology, everybody would be lost.

Studies have shown that in the past few years, American people are more obese than ever. This really is not surprising.

If a person drives to work in the morning, spends all day working at a desk with a computer, and goes home at night to their e-mail and their television, there can be no doubt about their physical fitness — or lack thereof.

Ironically, those great modern philosophers, the Simpson family, contemplated what would happen if one day all the children stopped watching television. It was amazing. People went outside, started playing frisbee and talking to each other. Society was significantly improved.

Now this is not as far-fetched as it might seem. There are a few people who choose not to have a television, claiming it drains time away from their daily life. Some people still choose to type papers on a typewriter because they find computers cumbersome.

The situation calls for moderation. There is no reason to throw out the helpful aid of a computer, if it does not become a required crutch.

For example, if an average Joe Smith Aggie is doing his math homework and happens to have MAPLE installed on his computer, then it is okay to use the program to double-check his answers. It becomes a different story if he has to run home every time he needs to do a math problem because he does not have the mental capacity to figure a proper tip.

The computer, as every professor keeps saying, is not capable of being a human brain.

Basically, Americans need to look at how other countries manage without the fastest, slickest, best technology available. Picture a world where there are only three television stations and they play really stupid programs. Picture a world where the only access to e-mail is through a store that sells it by the half-hour — for very expensive prices.

That world would force people to go out and find other hobbies. People would learn how to make things and build things and write things and talk about things.

All of this would need to be in moderation, sure. It would be sad to have to miss the latest episode of "South Park."

Lisa Fook is a senior journalism major.

