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CENTER FOR GENETICS AND SOCIETY

BIOPOLITICAL VIEWS & NEWS

July 6, 2017

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

[Video of "Gene Editing and the Future of Reproductive Justice" Now Available](#)

On June 13, CGS co-hosted the webinar, [Gene Editing and the Future of Reproductive Justice](#), with [Black Women for Wellness](#) and [In Our Own Voice National Black Women's Reproductive Justice Agenda](#). Featured panelists included [Dorothy Roberts](#), [Ruha Benjamin](#), and [Lisa Ikemoto](#). A video of the webinar is currently available to [watch on our website](#) with closed captioning. A transcript will be added shortly.



[Talking Biopolitics 2017 Kicks off with Ben Hurlbut and Patricia Williams](#)

For the past six years, CGS' [Talking Biopolitics](#) series has served as a platform for cutting-edge thinkers to discuss the meaning of emerging human biotechnologies. This year's series will begin on August 23 at 11 am PDT / 2 pm EDT featuring [Ben Hurlbut](#) and [Patricia Williams](#). For more information, register [here](#).



CGS COMMENTARY

[Fertility Doctor Markets Risky Unapproved Technique; Looks Forward to "Designer Babies"](#)

Press Statement

Dr. John Zhang, who delivered the first baby conceived through 3-person IVF, is now trying to commercialize the risky technique, and says that he considers it "a step toward designer babies." Zhang has deliberately evaded regulations, creating "an extremely dangerous precedent for the prospect of full-blow human germline modification."



[Was Loving v. Virginia Really About Love?](#)

by Osagie Obasogie, *The Atlantic*

Fifty years after the Supreme Court struck down state laws prohibiting interracial marriage, CGS Senior Fellow Osagie Obasogie highlights how the case had little to do with love. Rather, *Loving* represented a major case on eugenics, whose

impact has newfound resonance in today's political climate.



[A Crack in Creation: A Review of Jennifer Doudna's Memoir on CRISPR](#)

by Jessica Cussins, *Biopolitical Times* Guest Contributor

In *A Crack in Creation*, CRISPR gene-editing star Jennifer Doudna provides a fascinating glimpse into what it means to create one of the most consequential scientific developments of the century. But does Doudna depend too heavily on familiar discussions around choice and responsibility to make sense of CRISPR complex ethical repercussions?



[UK Public Consultation on Germline Editing Draw Criticism](#)

by Leah Lowthorp

The Nuffield Council on Bioethics in the UK recently released a survey on the ethical implications of using gene editing for reproduction. But is the survey truly seeking a range of perspectives, or does it try to steer the feedback it receives in a predetermined direction?



[Acceleration of the United States on-demand genetic testing industry](#)

by Jessica Cussins, *The Pharmaceutical Journal*

Although the FDA has recently approved direct-to-consumer genetic testing for a few health risks, CGS consultant Jessica Cussins notes that it still is not clear how useful this information will be for consumers.



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CGS in the NEWS

[The Genetic Algorithm That Revealed My Possible Babies](#)

[citing CGS' Marcy Darnovsky]

by Rachel Lehmann-Haupt, *Neo.Life*

Marcy Darnovsky provides caution as GenePeeks pushes the boundaries of genetic testing by screening prospective parents for 900 recessive genetic variations for more than 1,000 diseases. "What will happen is that we'll start with eliminating cystic fibrosis and Tay-Sachs disease, and when the technology becomes available we'll start choosing traits that have nothing to do with medicine or disease."



[CRISPR DNA Editing Can Cause Hundreds of Off-Target Mutations](#)

[citing CGS' Marcy Darnovsky]

by Dave Roos, *Seeker*

Marcy Darnovsky from the Center for Genetics and Society — a nonprofit that advocates for the ethical and equitable use of genetic and reproductive technologies — agreed that the off-targeting study struck a "needed note of caution." She worries that because CRISPR is so much easier to use, and so



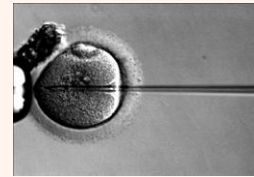
much faster and cheaper, that it “creates a temptation for everyone to pick it up and use it for everything.”

▶ [The Fertility Doctor Trying to Commercialize Three-Parent Babies](#)

[citing CGS' Marcy Darnovsky]

by Emily Mullin, *MIT Technology Review*

“Zhang’s breakaway plans don’t stop at spindle nuclear transfer. He says a future step will be to combine the technique with editing genes, so that parents can select hair or eye color, or maybe improve their children’s IQ. ‘Everything we do is a step toward designer babies,’ Zhang says of Darwin Life. ‘With nuclear transfer and gene editing together, you can really do anything you want.’”



NEWS

Assisted Reproduction

Gene Editing

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GENE EDITING

▶ [Fixing genes won’t fix us](#)

by Jim Kozubek, *Boston Globe*

Science is threatening a new era of “market-based eugenics,” whereby gene editing in combination with in vitro fertilization techniques will allow us to engineer our way to a society with fewer instances of diseases like schizophrenia.

▶ [The Upside of Bad Genes](#)

by Moises Velasquez-Manoff, *New York Times*

We evolved in environments that are radically different from today’s, and some of our genes may work better in those environments. This complicates the idea of trying to perfect the human genome with technology. Given how much the world has changed in just the past 150 years, and how much it’s likely to change again in the next 150, the question is, “What environment will we optimize our genes for?”

▶ [A Controversial Study Is Tearing the CRISPR World Apart](#)

by Kristen V. Brown, *Gizmodo*

It’s well-known that using CRISPR can sometimes also result in some unintended genomic changes, and scientists have long been working on ways to fine-tune it. But the researchers found that when they had used CRISPR to cure blindness in mice, it had resulted in not just a few but more than a thousand, unintended off-target effects.

▶ [China sides with Emmanuelle Charpentier and Jennifer Doudna in CRISPR patent war](#)

by Sarah Buhr, *Tech Crunch*

What remains unclear is how U.S. companies wishing to license the patented technology will need to deal with both the broader sweeping Charpentier and Broad patent, as well as the patent granted to the Broad Institute. That’s a different story across the pond in Europe and the United Kingdom, which both granted patents to team Charpentier/Doudna.

▶ [Forget GMOs. The next big battle is over genetically 'edited' foods](#)

by Caitlin Dewey, *Washington Post*

DuPont Pioneer has spent the past several months convening regular focus groups with leaders from government, agriculture and environmental organizations, Kerr-Enskat said. The goal is to learn more about the public's CRISPR concerns and use them to inform future messaging efforts.

ASSISTED REPRODUCTION

- News TOP -

▶ [This Rogue Doctor Wants to Charge Women \\$100,000 For an Illegal Fertility Treatment](#)

by Kristen V. Brown, *Gizmodo*

Now Zhang is taking his so-called "three-parent baby" technique commercial, and targeting a different market altogether: the booming, multi-billion dollar fertility market. Instead of focusing on women who risk passing on mitochondrial diseases to their offspring, he hopes to use the technique as a cure for infertility.

▶ ['A factory to produce babies for sale': surrogacy remains a lure for Cambodia's poorest despite ban](#)

by *South China Morning Post*

One by one, countries that had been popular surrogacy destinations like India, Nepal and Thailand have banned the trade. Cambodia did the same in November. But industry remains, albeit in the shadows.

▶ [The "Nobel Prize Sperm Bank" Was Racist. It Also Helped Change the Fertility Industry](#)

by Kat Eschner, *Smithsonian Magazine*

Today, sperm banks offer significant donor details to prospective parents. The lure of choice is one of the marketing strategies of sperm banks, which are, after all, businesses. But the question of whether sperm banks are engaging in eugenics on some level has never really gone away.

▶ [My Daughter Is a Person; Her Frozen Embryo 'Possiblings' Aren't](#)

by Lindsay King-Miller, *Rewire*

When anti-choice activists talk about protecting children, I wonder why they're so much more concerned with protecting hypothetical babies than the present and future needs of living kids.

GOVERNANCE

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▶ [State Panel Approves Police Use Of Controversial Familial DNA Records Searches](#)

by Nathan Tempey, *Gothamist*

A State panel of scientists is considering a controversial DNA testing policy that would allow police to investigate the relatives of New Yorkers whose DNA closely matches DNA recovered from a crime scene.

▶ [FBI raids offices of lab that pays doctors to promote genetic tests](#)

by Charles Piller, *STAT*

Proove Biosciences, an Irvine, California firm that purports to determine a patient's likelihood of becoming addicted to opioids, based on genetic tests and questionnaires, was raided by FBI agents and officers from the inspector general's office of the Department of Health and Human Services.

▶ [Can the Law Enforcement's DNA Database Tell Police your Medical Information?](#)

by Francie Diep, *Pacific Standard*

A team of geneticists from universities in the United States and Canada found a way to match forensic DNA profiles with health-related DNA profiles. In other words, somebody with access to both U.S. law enforcement's DNA database and a genetic research database could, theoretically, run an analysis to find if there's anybody who pops up in both.

▶ [Science organizations renew call for independent U.S. committee on forensics](#)

by Spencer S. Hsu, *Washington Post*

Led by the 120,000-member American Association for the Advancement of Science, which publishes the journal *Science*, the groups said in a June 9 letter that after years of enhanced scrutiny, "we simply do not know whether many forensic practices are reliable or valid scientifically."

GENOMICS

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▶ [The dangers of mail-in genetic testing](#)

by Daniel Munro, *Maclean's*

Mail-in genetic testing kits have been available for sale in Canada for nearly five years, but were not approved for sale in the United States until very recently. While the U.S. treats them as medical devices requiring pre-market approval, provinces appear to view them as non-therapeutic products which are regulated, but not in need of pre-market approval.

▶ [Baby Genome Sequencing for Sale in China](#)

by Antonio Regalado, *MIT Technology Review*

A Boston-based DNA sequencing company is offering to decode the complete genomes of newborns in China, leading some to ask how much parents should know about their children's genes at birth.

▶ [What If \(Almost\) Every Gene Affects \(Almost\) Everything?](#)

by Ed Young, *The Atlantic*

Three Stanford scientists have proposed a provocative new way of thinking about genetic variants, and how they affect people's bodies and health.

▶ [DNA testing vital to obtaining just convictions](#)

by Jim Petro, *USA Today*

With nearly 800 wrongful murder convictions identified in the U.S. since 1989, I now know that we must do much more to protect innocent people from wrongful conviction – and even wrongful execution....The State should have pursued the truth, but instead, it argued the DNA was contaminated and unreliable.

▶ [In healthy patients, genome sequencing raises alarms while offering few benefits](#)

by Sharon Begley, *STAT*

The key finding — that few people with "disease-causing" mutations actually had a genetic disease — therefore raises questions about whether genome sequencing in generally healthy adults can be medically justified.

VARIOUS

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▶ [North Carolina court upholds denial of eugenics compensation](#)

by Gary D. Robertson, *Associated Press*

Some surviving relatives of people involuntarily sterilized by the state of North Carolina decades ago can't get financial compensation from the state, an appeals court affirmed Tuesday. The state court said the victims in those cases

died before a legal cut-off date that determines who's qualified to receive the money.

▶ [Goat testicles in men, human organs in pigs: the past and future of xenotransplantation](#)

by Angela Chen, *The Verge*

The road to growing organs in pigs is paved with ethical questions.

▶ [Stem cells show promise – but they also have a darker side](#)

by Jill Johnson, *The Conversation*

Therapies using mesenchymal stem cells are being touted as a great new hope for the treatment of serious chronic diseases such as colitis, diabetes, arthritis, cirrhosis, kidney disease, heart disease, chronic obstructive pulmonary disorder – the list goes on and on...It's clear why there is so much interest in these cells. But can they really fulfill their promise – and do they have the capacity to harm as well as help us?