

## Educational Resources on Cloning for Contemporary Students

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### Demographics and Psychographics of Today's Students

In September 2005 I had the privilege to present this brief paper before the Second Annual Pro-Life Science and Technology Symposium at the Engineers Club in Dayton, Ohio. I hope that the audience assembled for the event found what I had to say useful not only in their own research, but also in their activism on behalf of protecting human life, now threatened by those who advocate indiscriminate cloning. My intention for the initial paper proposal was to collate research on cloning to that date, but in the course of my research and discussion with colleagues it became evident that what was needed was a succinct paper not so much on cloning per se, but on the techniques that those who support the life-affirming use of technology must know when they engage in research. The paper thus assumed much more a library science focus.

While it deviated from its original course, this paper addresses two corollary issues which should be the concern of any life-affirming researcher. Developing adequate research on cloning involves two activities: first, a discovery of principles of basic research for the twenty-first century student and, second, an explosion of certain myths held by library science professionals or those whose political correctness precludes an honest evaluation of resources which oppose cloning.

Before investigating and evaluating those resources which can assist contemporary students as they research cloning from a perspective which has the respect of human life as its first ethical principle, we must begin with four demographic and psychographic facts affecting all research in the academy. [See slide two, the first slide beyond the title page.]<sup>1</sup>The terms "academy" or "academia" as used in this paper mean any institution of higher learning, whether public or private, religious or non-religious, for-profit or not-for profit.

First, the Reagan-Bush babies are now flooding college enrollments. Many of us can recall that colleges experienced a precipitous decline in students in the early 1990s--seventeen years after the Roe v. Wade decision which legalized abortion

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<sup>1</sup> Since a PowerPoint presentation was used simultaneously when this paper was presented, and since that presentation is included with this paper, notations in brackets within the text will designate when to advance to the next slide.

throughout the nine months of pregnancy. While academia may have been puzzled by this drop in students, abortion activists knew exactly why the drop occurred: an entire generation had been aborted.

Fortunately, the years of the Reagan-Bush presidencies were hopeful years for those abortion activists who were pro-lifers. Much anecdotal evidence exists to demonstrate that they were busy not only doing pro-life work, but also increasing the population by having children. Now, in the late 1990s and these early years of the twenty-first century, the children born in the Reagan-Bush years have begun to enter colleges and universities; many are already doing graduate work.

The impact of large numbers of pro-life young adults into academia has several profound consequences, not the least of which is that traditional academia must respond to the trenchant questions that pro-life students will raise to challenge their hegemony. Professors in the traditional academy will view this surge of pro-life young people as a threat because professors are solidly so-called "liberal" and anti-life while their students are increasingly "conservative." The transformation by young people has already begun, as demonstrated by the 2004 presidential election.

The second important characteristic of today's students is that the vast majority of students turn to the internet first for research. While the internet is the first site for research for both anti- and pro-life students, the fact that pro-life students are as adept at using the tools of the internet as their anti-life counterparts is significant. Students can now directly challenge the autocratic pronouncements of anti-life professors with a choice excerpt from a primary document on the web. Moreover, besides being exorbitant and outdated as soon as they are published, hardcopy materials, especially reference works, are little used by contemporary students. The pc labs in college and university libraries are the places humming with research activity, not the stacks of dusty reference works.

Third, today's students are increasingly conservative politically. A recent article in The Chronicle of Higher Education intimates as much. Christopher Hayes, a contributing editor at In These Times, suggests that, while students at evangelical colleges focus on religion, "what they learn is to become Republicans" ("Turning" B6; italics in original). Apparently, the process of conversion to a conservative philosophy is simple:

Worldviews take religion as total truth, and in doing so blur the distinction between facts and values, says Mr. Hayes. If a student is taught that homosexuality is a sin, for example, then a Christian worldview requires that it should also be illegal. But that attitude flies in the face of the "fundamental" fact-value split necessary in a functioning, pluralistic society, he says. "If you suggest to students that an opposition to abortion and a defense of

'traditional marriage' are foundational aspects of a Christian worldview," he writes, "you will very likely produce reliable Republican voters." ("Turning" B6)

Fourth, today's students are greatly concerned with the relevancy of their education. This feature is evident not only in the great numbers of students entering community colleges instead of four-year universities, but also in the numbers of non-traditional adult learners who enter for-profit institutions like the University of Phoenix. Students in community colleges and for-profit universities are aware that the educational agendas of these institutions are real-world based, unlike traditional four-year institutions which have been unable to shed the perception that their educational programs are irrelevant. The perception of the irrelevancy of traditional education is well established. Writing in their 1998 monograph, What Business Wants from Higher Education, Diana G. Oblinger and Anne-Lee Verville state that

Employees' most caustic comments about their education are reserved for courses, activities, and professors considered to be largely disconnected from the work world and, therefore, a waste of their time. A consistent theme--whether they had majored in the liberal arts, business, or engineering--was a desire for more courses offered by professors who had hands-on experience in the business world rather than purely theory-based knowledge. (148)

The perception from seven years ago has only been exacerbated. According to a recent article in The Chronicle of Higher Education:

The leaders of liberal-arts colleges have failed to change the widespread perception that their institutions are bastions of irrelevance, particularly among increasingly career-minded students. In recent national surveys, 80 percent of freshmen say getting a high-paying job is their primary reason to go to college. Applicants are less interested in a comprehensive educational experience than ever before. (Hoover A11)

## Demographics and Psychographics of Today's Faculty

To match those of today's students, I have isolated four demographic and psychographic facts pertaining to today's faculty. [See slide three.] First, academics and their work are perceived as liberal and, as mentioned above, irrelevant by the general public.

Second, they are, in fact, increasingly liberal politically.

According to triennial surveys by the Higher Education Research Institute, in its survey for 1989-1990, 4.9% of professors identified themselves as "far left" and 36.8% identified themselves as "liberal." By the 2004-2005 survey, 7.9% of professors identified themselves as "far left" and 43.4% were "liberal"--a net increase of almost 10% in the total number of "liberal" professors whom students have to face in increasingly hostile classrooms. The number of "middle of the road" professors dropped from 40.3% to 29.2% between the same survey periods, and the number of "conservative" professors increased 1% ("Faculty Attitudes" A25).<sup>2</sup>

The third fact, a dominantly psychographic one, is that they are under pressure from accrediting bodies and legislatures to demonstrate that resources are used efficiently. Certainly, in Ohio and elsewhere, state dollars available for education are limited, especially now that anti-terrorist activities occupy much of the federal government's interests. Moreover, citizens are--justifiably--wondering whether their taxes deserve to go to institutions which produce such a poor product--a work force that should be educated but lacks, for example, basic writing skills.

Finally, today's college and university faculty is getting older. According to a 2004-2005 Higher Education Research Institute survey, 54.5% of community college faculty is aged fifty and older ("Views" B10). A massive wave of coming retirements will enable today's students, especially those who espouse a life-affirming position, to take their places.

#### Four Nondebatable Library Science

Although they are well-known to be politically liberal to the extreme,<sup>3</sup> library science professionals point out several

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<sup>2</sup> Interestingly, however, the numbers of professors who designated "influencing social values" as a goal of the academy dropped from 46.8% to 37.3%. Similarly, while 73.7% thought that "colleges should be actively involved in solving social problems" in the earlier survey, by the 2004-2005 survey that number dropped to 64.1% ("Faculty" A25).

Community college faculty may be less liberal. The 2004-2005 survey conducted by the Higher Education Research Institute identifies only 33.% of the 2,678 professors who responded as "liberal" and 5.5% as "far left"; 24.9% are "conservative and 35.3% are "middle of the road" ("Views" B10).

<sup>3</sup> A recent article in The Chronicle of Higher Education reports that

When David Brooks did some research into political donations by profession for his September 11, 2004, column in The New York Times, he found that for librarians "the ratio of Kerry to Bush donations was a

axioms regarding websites when providing library instruction to today's students. Four of these axioms I do not contest. [See slide four.]

First, students are encouraged not to use anonymous sites. The wisdom of this axiom should be obvious. Anybody can post his or her most illogical opinions on the internet.

Second, students are taught by library science professionals to distrust personalized sites, indicated by extensions following a tilde (~). As with the first axiom, information on a site identified merely by a name is effectively as unimportant as an anonymous entry.

Third, library staff encourage students to prefer edu, gov, and mil websites. Although arranged alphabetically here, information from these three domains is generally considered primary, unbiased source data. That a government site can be unbiased may confuse those who think that government entities consist of politicians who may want to assert their positions by advancing certain information over another. However, government agencies and legislative bodies do produce not only committee reports, but also indispensable statistical information and other primary source data.

The fourth axiom is that students should evaluate the credentials of the personal author. [See slide five.] A personal author (a human being living or dead) should have his or her terminal degree, be working in his or her field, and be published professionally. A corporate author is not necessarily a corporation, but any non-human entity, such as a not-for-profit charity, a lobbying organization, or, indeed, a for-profit corporation on a com or org site. A corporate author is automatically suspicious because it is perceived as an organization presenting a biased perspective on a controversial issue.

A fifth library science axiom regarding websites (avoid com, net, and org sites) should be challenged for two primary reasons. [See slide six.] First, the internet has become a savior for life-affirming activism. When information often cannot be disseminated to the public because of the opposition of the media elite to the first civil right to life, pro-life activists can turn to emails, web pages, and blogs to provide the public with the necessary freedom of choice when it comes to an alternative perspective on one of the life issues.

Second, pro-life researchers display some of their best work through these alternative websites, commanding as much respect as scholarly hardcopy publications. In fact, I argue that these alternative websites provide much more current information than either monographic or serial scholarly sources. Scholarly monographs can take up to a year to be published, and by then the information contained within the book may be outdated. Similarly, serial publication--journals, yearbooks, etc.--can be

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whopping 223 to 1." By contrast, the corresponding ratio for academics was 11 to 1. (Durant B12)

outdated since there is a significant lag time of several months from accepting an article for publication and seeing it published. Scholarly material on the web, appropriately reviewed by peers just as it would be in monographic and serial publications, offers students the immediacy of current research.

Often, students who do not think critically about the resources they consult may merely do a search on Google for their topic and are besieged with thousands, if not millions, of sites.<sup>4</sup> [See slide seven.] However, searching significant standard online sources has been made easier by college and university libraries, which qualify as better depositories for scholarly academic works on stem cell research than public libraries for one primary reason. Academic libraries, operating on restricted budgets, must be careful in choosing materials that not only meet the specific information needs of their students, but also present both sides of controversial issues. Thus, based on this last aspect, scholarly sources purchased by academic libraries may not be tainted with as much bias as less expensive works found in public libraries catering to the general public (see, for example, the work of Gregory E. Pence, which is obviously non-scholarly and in some instances biased against a life-affirming position on stem cell research).

Moreover, academic libraries can afford premier subscription databases, such as Academic Search Premier and the Opposing Viewpoints Resource Center, especially if their resources are pooled with other academic libraries. Moreover, databases such as Ohiolink, which combine catalogs of most college and university libraries within Ohio, are invaluable sources of bibliographic and audiovisual material. Fortunately, two public libraries in Ohio are now connected with Ohiolink. Patrons of the Cuyhaoga County Public Library (in the metropolitan Cleveland area) and patrons of the Westerville Public Library (in the metropolitan Columbus area) now offer to their patrons the vast resources of the Ohiolink system. A patron in Cincinnati can access materials held by a library in Cleveland; more importantly, that patron can interlibrary loan material and have it reach him or her within a few days.

### Significant alternative Websites

The intent of this paper is to promote certain resources that offer a life-affirming view of stem cell research. To enhance their research, students can access significant alternative websites which, unfortunately, are not frequently

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<sup>4</sup> On 4 December 2005 a search for "stem cell research" on Google yielded 35,400,000 hits; searching "embryonic stem cell research" yielded 42,000,000 hits. Some students may be tempted to access the first few websites on any search engine and consider them reliable sites.

mentioned by library science professionals. I will discuss these alternative websites in alphabetical order. [See slide eight.]

The Center for Bioethics and Human Dignity (cbhd.org) offers premiere scholarly summaries on all bioethical concerns for the researcher. Students can subscribe to the Center's weekly news alerts for more information on current news and activities.

A new research center is The Humanitas Project: A Center for Bioethics Education (humanitas.org). Interested students may want to subscribe to the group's newsletter, "Living in the Biotech Century" by contacting Michael Poore, Executive Director, at [mpoore@humanitas.org](mailto:mpoore@humanitas.org).

Lifeissues.net provides a venue for life-affirming scholars to offer results of their work for the general public. This site has the advantage of being internationally-based and thus able to comment on life issues around the world.

LifeNews.com and LifeSitenews.com offer daily email summaries of news on pro-life issues. LifeNews is US-based, and LifeSitenews is Canadian, but I value both services. Often, news on the Canadian site cannot be found elsewhere, and the coverage is thorough. Both services provide succinct coverage of pro-life news--an important feature for today's students who may not have time to sift through lengthy articles.

There is another advantage to both LifeNews and LifeSitenews that should be mentioned here. Few people rely on network news any more, especially after various scandals such as that involving Dan Rather and other media elites. Moreover, an increasing majority of Americans rely on Fox stations for unbiased coverage, but committing oneself to avidly watch a Fox talk show may be interrupted by family, school, or work duties. For today's students, especially those who are tech savvy with pcs, laptops, and other devices allowing for email and text messaging, I highly recommend that students subscribe to both LifeNews and LifeSitenews to obtain the pro-life perspective on news.

The National Right to Life Committee (nrlc.org) is still the premiere pro-life organization in the United States. It should be obvious that one would want to sign up for its email alerts and to check its website frequently for educational and legislative news.

Pharmacists for Life (pfli.org) is another organization which may especially appeal to pharmacy and other medical students.

Finally, University Faculty for Life (uffl.org), a non-profit scholarly research organization, exists to promote research, dialogue, and publication among faculty members who respect the value of human life from inception to natural death and to provide academic support for a life-affirming position. It strives to address the life issues of abortion, infanticide, and euthanasia from various perspectives so that society and our students can benefit from scholarly work. The organization sponsors the "University Faculty for Life Scholarly Achievement in English Studies" essay contest each year; the grand prize is \$300.

I hope that this brief discussion of key principles in research will assist students as they venture into a topic which has generated massive amounts of data and information, most of which may seem biased against a life-affirming position. More importantly, today's students should enjoy the fact that they are well advanced over their older and politically stagnant professors in certain aspects of research, especially that which is internet based. Unlike those older biased professors and librarians, when today's students research the issue of embryonic stem cell research, supporting their life-affirming position is virtually a click away.

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