Human cloning is a topic that tends to instantly spark debate: is it a useful scientific advancement that will thrive in society, or is it the demise of mankind as we know it? Not everybody reacts as drastically as mentioned. Most will tend to lean either one way or the other. Sometimes they are subtle and slightly doubtful: “Advances that depend on a series of small technical steps rather than a large conceptual breakthrough are notoriously hard to predict” (Wade). Sometimes they are obviously defiant: “What a dumb idea, I marveled” (Quammen).

Through my research, I noticed how quickly the topic of cloning worked to irk people, causing them to chose a side which, in turn, led to debate-style writing. Because of this, both opposing sides would further sink into the satisfaction of asserting the fact that their side was true. This is where I felt that I could play a crucial role in the academic conversation. My goal is to understand the topic of human cloning and why it is so difficult to discuss among academics without sparking debates and arguments.

Academic writing has not been kind to cloning throughout the decades that it has existed as a science or even as a concept. The emotion behind the topic can range from neutral to hostile and has expanded to cover a wide variety of subjects such as science, religion, medicine, psychology, and everything in between. The opinion closest to neutral in the entire debate is, surprisingly, science. Because scientists understand all of the technicalities behind the art of cloning, they often do not strongly lean towards a side. Religion, on the other hand, likes to take
a more strict and hostile approach to the matter by using absolutes as both a defense and means of reasoning. “Nevertheless, human cloning is a profound threat to human dignity. The practice will inevitably result in a confusion of basic human roles in the objectification of persons” (The Christian Century). It seems that most religious arguments do not choose to understand the opposing side. Rather, they seek to prove it as false without question. Medicine does not take such a direct approach. Instead, it observes both pros and cons but usually comes to some sort of conclusion. Because of their knowledge in the scientific field, these medical assumptions tend to be more positive than most and hold more hope for this field of study. “Cloning of human beings is perhaps not so threatening a development as the science fiction writers of previous decades supposed” (Wade). Psychology holds a mildly strong opinion on the matter backed up by strong evidences. Its only flaw is the fact that it focuses strictly on the mental aspect of cloning instead of looking at it as a whole, causing a slightly skewed opinion. Even so, that is to be expected. “I have sought to show that cloning can enable the survival of the DNA donor. As a consequence, the identity of the clone will sometimes be compromised” (Agar). Lastly are the academics that are not strictly labeled to a field of study. Because of their lack of a strict bias, their opinions on cloning are as close to neutral as that of the scientists studying it. Both are willing to give cloning a chance. In fact, their opinions can be the most easily swayed as well. In the article “Clone Your Troubles Away,” the author begins writing the article with extremely skeptical undertones and seems completely doubtful that cloning could do any good in the world. As quoted before, he was the author that called cloning a “dumb idea” (Quammen). Interestingly, as the paper progresses, his opinion began to sway until he came to a less doubtful conclusion. The last sentence of his article is “Things happen” (Quammen). After extensive research into the topic and giving into curiosity, he decides to accept the inevitable rather than try to deny its use in
society. Another un categorized academic also tried to make sense of the matter, only ending up just as expectant of cloning’s negative usage in society as she began. Her entire article stresses the same point: “...we—we humans, that is—should be haunted, by Dolly and all the Dollies to come and by the prospect others will appear on this earth as the progeny of our omnipotent striving, our yearning to create without pausing to reflect on what we are simultaneously destroying” (Elshtain). All of this comes to show that coming to a more positive stance on the matter of cloning is difficult, whether you see it as toying with life of saving it. Middle ground is something that has yet to truly be developed; judgment has yet to be suspended.

Everybody who talks about cloning has something in common, no matter what field they come from. Although they may not be focusing on the topic itself, it somehow slips its way into every article. These few topics include: usage, consequences, and moral issues. The science of cloning itself is not even mentioned as often as they are. Thus, you are left wondering why. Perhaps it would be because the topic of cloning would be incomplete without them all included. The subject of moral issues perhaps cannot be explained without mentioning the consequences. The consequences cannot be discussed without addressing the usage. And the usage cannot be discussed without addressing the moral issues. However, when you take all three and piece them all together, it all leads back to one emotion that can easily be one of mankind’s worst enemies: guilt.

Now, think again. What exactly is the guilt over? Perhaps it is the guilt of cloning’s extensive uses that could potentially harm mankind as explained by Elshtain. “But I had my own nightmare scenario: a society that clones human beings to serve as spare parts for the feeble. Because the cloned entities are not fully human, our moral queasiness is somewhat disarmed” (Elshtain). From this quote alone we could take it a step further. When looking at this quote, one
can easily conclude that the guilt is derived from the fact that our usage of the clones could lead to our desensitization to what makes the clones human. That’s one way to look at it. The guilt could be over our desensitization to the clone’s being human, but it could also be about our guilt over labeling the clones as “inhuman” yet still using them for parts. In this case, it is an uncertain guilt. Are we hurting people or not? By hurting people, are we ourselves becoming less human than they are? There are other cases of academic writing on cloning that seek to thoroughly define such things as identity. This also goes back to the guilt issue. Because we as people have an identity, it is not okay to use us for parts or for experimental purposes. On the other hand, we are not entirely certain that a human clone has an identity. This instantly fuels the need to thoroughly define identity in order to rid ourselves of the guilt of using other people in such a manner. During the beginning of his article, Agar’s view of identity was so narrow that it could not justify the usage, consequences, or moral issues regarding cloning. “The issue of personal identity, in turn, encompasses questions both about the metaphysics of our survival over time and about our subjective senses of who we are” (Agar). There were quite a few questions that had to be answered before being free of guilt. Towards the end, Agar came to a final conclusion.

I have sought to show that cloning can enable the survival of the DNA donor. As a consequence, the identity of the clone will sometimes be compromised. By this I mean that it will often be more accurate to say of the young child conventionally borne and reared than of the clone produced with the goal of self-perpetuation, that she is a genuinely new person” (Agar).

In this article, it seems that the writer has come to accept the fact that guilt is an aspect of human cloning that we cannot get rid of, especially if it is for our own selfish purposes. Looking back at this similarity in texts regarding cloning, we can conclude that perhaps he has a point.
During my research, I managed to pick up an article that stressed responsibility in the scientific field. From here, I developed another theory. Our negative view on human cloning could be about guilt, but what about responsibility? More often than not, these two go hand in hand. Perhaps responsibility also has a place in the cloning debate as well.

When you look for guilt within articles, themes of responsibility are not too far off. In fact, most writing on cloning does not make this immediately obvious. However, Blitz goes against the norm and chooses to be perfectly direct about this issue in his article “Responsibility and Biotechnology.” “To understand practical issues it is useful, I believe, to act at first as if we are responsible for outcomes and results” (Blitz). Clearly, this author is one step ahead of the rest. He understands the huge role that exists for responsibility when it comes to human cloning. Because we have not overcome the small issues in regards to cloning, it seems that our society is at a standstill. After all, one must claim responsibility over any mistakes that may arise as a result of taking risks. Cloning is no exception. Once we overcome our guilt over the topic, cloning will gradually become much easier.

Even though rumors exist of cloned humans existing, that still doesn’t make it any easier for the public to accept. In fact, as stated by Edwards, human cloning took almost no time to become a concept much less a goal. “An imaginative leap from cloning a sheep to cloning a human was made almost immediately. In fact, a leap was hardly necessary, bridges were rapidly built” (Edwards). The writer goes even further in stating that human clones are something we should be expecting within the next ten years. Interestingly, ten years are up and we have yet to see these human clones emerge. Moral issues alone could not have held us back from such an achievement and curiosity.

What could have gone wrong? There could have been some “freak accident” in the lab.
Perhaps supplies are scarce which has been prohibiting the scientists from continuing their work. One thing that is definitely holding us back is the government. This is mentioned in many of the articles. “For a change, there was no waffling. The president acted decisively and boldly, and, what's more, rightly, when he called for a moratorium on all cloning experiments involving humans” (Elshtain). Yet, Edwards chooses to look deeper into the matter when confronting a professor or reproduction.

Roger Pederson, professor of reproductive science at the University of California, San Francisco, was concerned that regulation would hinder research but agreed that a ban on using government money was probably necessary (for the moment) in order to 'calm people's fears'. It would, be said, 'quell the sort of mob hysteria that attends this issue' (New York Times, 5 March 1997)” (Edwards).

Aha! This quote alone helps us to piece together both guilt and responsibility. We can even go further as to use it to explain why cloning has avoided advancement and is past due to emerge as a useful technology in society. Until we can quell the public's hysteria over human cloning, we will have to hold it at a hiatus. First, we need to rid ourselves of the guilt we may or may not feel over what happens to the clone, be it human or not. We need to more clearly define what makes a human, human. Until then, cloning holds too many possible risks that will most likely not be worth the advancement. Second, we must mature as a society and be ready to fully accept the fact that many of these issues with cloning will not be able to be answered until we have managed to clone a human being. Because of this, we need to be ready to fully accept the consequences and take responsibility for anything that may or may not go wrong. Only then will we be able to calm people's fears and quell the hysterical mob that seems to follow the topic of cloning wherever it goes.
Is there any hope for cloning if we cannot even find reason to not feel guilty over any harm that may come to these possible human beings? This is where the academic debates spark and catch fire. As mentioned before, without testing out the action of human cloning, many questions will remain unanswered. Academics simply like to argue over whether it is worth taking the risk or not. After all, it is a 50-50 chance. Unfortunately this will be a difficult question to answer because of how different morals of opposing sides can be. There are many that hold a strict opposition while many others can be entirely opposite. Until the issues of usage, consequences, and moral issues have been solved, we will not be ready to take a step in the right direction. In this case, only time will tell what the future has in store for human cloning.

So, why should this matter to us? After all, academics debate all of the time. Everybody has his own opinion and likes to be heard. Perhaps, sometimes there is an important reason why academics debate topics so heavily. One of the reasons could be that it could spark world change of some sort. This topic of argument could someday affect you as a member of society in ways that you could never have expected. One day, you may even have a say in whether this reproductive science becomes a widely accepted technology. Since the very beginning, human cloning has not been a science that will likely be strictly kept hidden in top-secret laboratories. Even from its humble beginnings as animal cloning, there has always been a high expectancy of use for cloning as a science.

At first, animal cloning was an experiment of curiosity. Animal cloning began, back in 1951, with frogs. Robert Briggs and Thomas J. King were embryologists, based at a cancer-research institute in Philadelphia, with a medical interest in understanding how genes are turned on and off during embryo development” (Quammen).
From there, it has even managed to evolve into a useful science that could perhaps bring old pets back to life and reunite them with their families. Thus, the immortality concept was born. From here, it took a more useful form. Animal cloning could help bring back extinct species. This progression did not take long to turn into human cloning, which could hold even more possibilities, but will most likely affect a wider range of lives. Because of this, the topic has spread out from science, medicine, to psychology, to religion, and even to history. When it comes to experimentation on potential humans, we will realize that we will not be the only ones affected. This is a widespread technology with widespread consequences, leading to widespread debate. Elshtain, with a rather exaggerated example, manages to convey this point. “...a veritable army of Hitlers, ruthless and remorseless bigots who kept reproducing themselves until they had finished what the historic Hitler had failed to do: annihilate us. It occurred to me that an equal number of Mother Teresas would probably not be a viable deterrent, not if the Hitler clones were behaving like, well, Hitler” (Elshtain). Just from the academic conversation, we noticed that this is not an issue that can be solved overnight. There are too many reasons to be skeptical, too many reasons to be sensitive, and too many reasons to be genuinely concerned. This does not mean that we should immediately give up on the concept of cloning as a general scientific achievement. One day, the time will come where we will have overcome the fears and troubles that come alongside such a new technological concept. However, that time is not quite yet. Cloning does indeed hold a place in this world. Perhaps we are not quite ready for it yet. There could even be a better way of achieving it that does not involve such controversial methods. That is why we must not give up. After all, only time will tell. Who knows? Someday, the issue may even work to solve itself. In the meantime, those with the most expectations of the topic will continue to
debate in hopes of breaking the hiatus and paving the way for the medical advances that cloning has to offer to society. All we can do is wait.
Works Cited


