

# GATTACA ESSAY

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March 2014

Humanity is inherently paradoxical. We strive for what we think is perfection, but are defined by our faults. The movie GATTACA explores a future where accurate genetic manipulation has become commonplace, where most people are born free of defects. To have a child without the aid of science has become so faux pas that the child is labeled a de-gene-erate, a clever display of cruel word play. This society is characterized by a general lack of happiness and vitality though the cause of this is only ever implied. The society portrayed in GATTACA has felt a great shift in culture; people are now discriminated against based on their genes not their race or sexuality. People believe they know the form of a perfect human and they have become so devoid of imperfections that they have lost a good deal of their humanity.

The world portrayed in GATTACA has seen gene therapy become so affordable that only the poorest of people do not use it. People have become so focused on genetic makeup that anyone who is not engineered is labeled an “invalid”. However the gene manipulation can occasionally overlook some faults, as displayed by Uma Thurmon’s character Irene Cassini’s heart problem. The depth of influence that this has is underlined by Cassini’s reluctance to mingle with someone who has considerably better genetics, to the point where she gives him a strand of hair to test before deciding if he wanted to pursue her romantically. Invalids have also become societies’ target for prejudice as shown by the police immediately assuming an invalid was to blame for the director’s death simply because his DNA was found near the man.

Some people have always believed they knew what the perfect person looked like and while even the concept of a “perfect” person is hilariously naive they have striven to influence others with their ideas. The ability to enforce a perfect image has never been easier than in GATTACA where most of a person’s life could be determined while they were still embryos. Parents used science to shape their children to their liking, leaving almost nothing to

chance. Besides the issue of irresponsible parents this process also effectively stops evolution, as every child is born without mutations of any kind. Evidently people still have some idea of individuality as there was still a reasonable variety of hair and eye colour but overall it is plain to see that any dramatic abnormalities have been scrubbed from the general population.

It is ingrained in every human to strive towards betterment. The issue with this drive is that we all too often misinterpret this as striving towards perfection despite it being anything but. Humans are born with faults, but the human spirit often overcomes these issues so absolutely that they can become our greatest strengths or most defining feature. An example of this is my own experience with Obsessive Compulsive Disorder. While it has limited certain aspects of my life, such as my ability to focus under certain stresses, it has strengthened my will and sharpened my mind. My mental issues have also shaped my future as they have instilled in me a desire to learn all I can about human psychology. There are many more stories like mine, some much more dramatic, that will also attest to this point. Humans strive to better themselves, but are defined by their abnormalities.

The world of GATTACA is comprised of a genetically engineered upper class and a naturally conceived lower class. The lower class are discriminated against and are given no opportunities while the upper class are given access to nearly everything they could want. This social dynamic has made life nearly joyless, as upper class citizens are even suspicious of each other having defects to the point where they get potential mates DNA tested. While the upper class is endlessly focused on genetics the lower class is forced into utter poverty with its most successful members holding menial jobs. This society has been poisoned by an obsession with perfection. People believe they have found it and now judge each other and themselves for not matching up to it. In reality perfection was conceived for the purpose of being unobtainable. It was designed to be something that inspired us to better ourselves but forever be out of reach. The world portrayed in GATTACA believes that it can force perfection when all it has done is flatten the human experience into an intolerably dull form.