

The creative component of my SDA, **GenoLife**, is an app that is set in the year 2046. The app allows prospective parents to “design” their future child through the selection and optimisation of genetic traits. Users are guided through a sleek and highly commercialised interface where they can select characteristics related to intelligence, emotional resilience, sociability, health, physical appearance, productivity, and even neurodiversity. The app resembles a combination of a fertility clinic, an online shopping platform, and a wellness application. It includes subscription plans, probability sliders, trending traits, and premium upgrades.

By using a familiar "SaaS" (Software as a Service) aesthetic—complete with pricing tiers like Elite and Premium, I am enacting the theory of Bio-informationalism. The project argues that when the genome is treated as code to be "optimised," the human subject is reduced to a "dividual"—a collection of data points to be managed through the marketplace.

The project title, *GenoLife*, and the slogan, "*Certainty over chance*," highlight the tension between following the random order of nature and the human desire for mastery. It is almost as if in the future, we are completely rejecting nature by taking over every aspect of our life, even the birth of our offspring. The medium of an app is essential here: it reflects how genetic technology is migrating from traditional birthing to clinical settings to the consumer marketplace, a shift that redefines the relationship between science and society.

The "GenoLife" interface functions as a choice architecture that subtly shifts genetic selection from a medical possibility to a social necessity. By utilising phrases such as "*Parents in your area increasingly choose...*", the platform uses language and algorithmic nudging to exploit social conformity and create this pressure to optimise your future baby, reframing the technology as an essential tool for parental responsibility. This normalisation is further reinforced by a sleek corporate design that leverages user trust in technology to mask the radical nature of germline editing behind a familiar, professional aesthetic. Beneath this polished surface, the tiered pricing models signal the onset of biological stratification, where class inequality is no longer merely economic but is hard-coded into the human genome. By directing users toward a commodified reproduction model—summarized by the finality of the "*Proceed to Payment*" button—the app effectively turns human potential into a consumer product. However, by presenting outcomes as probabilistic estimates rather than absolute guarantees, the UI maintains a thin veil of scientific legitimacy, offering a subtle critique of genetic determinism while simultaneously enticing parents to gamble on the "optimised" future of their offspring.

WHY I CHOSE AN APP FORMAT

I chose a web-based application as a metaphor to demonstrate the "Datafication of the Body." As genetic sequencing moves from clinical diagnostics to consumer-led "optimisation," the medium of the smartphone app becomes the primary site of ethical decision-making. This app allows users to build a child through genetic selection. I chose a web-based application because I wanted the form of the project to embody the argument itself. Throughout the module, particularly during discussions of gene editing technologies such as CRISPR and embryo screening, I became increasingly aware of how genetics is shifting away from purely clinical and therapeutic settings toward consumer-facing industries. During Week 2, when we explored gene editing techniques, I was struck by how many options and forms of intervention were already emerging within reproductive genetics. Then, during Week 3's discussions surrounding parental preferences and desirable traits in children, an idea

immediately came to mind: the process resembled customisation apps used in online shopping. It reminded me of selecting clothing online, where consumers tailor products according to colour, material, size, and personal preference. This connection inspired the concept of *GenoLife*. The app resembles: online shopping, subscription services, AI recommendation systems, fertility clinic websites. This reflects the commodification of reproduction.

The app format therefore became essential to my critique. I wanted to show that if gene editing technologies become increasingly unrestricted and commercialised, children themselves may become commodified products. What better representation of the commodification of human life than an app that sells personality traits, intelligence, emotional stability, and social desirability through subscription packages and upgrades?

The app format intentionally mirrors modern wellness, fintech, and biotechnology platforms to explore how controversial technologies become socially acceptable through convenience and normalisation. Apps are associated with convenience, trust, efficiency, accessibility, and everyday life. I intentionally used this familiar digital format to make genetic selection feel disturbingly normal. Users make morally significant decisions by: clicking boxes, adjusting sliders, reviewing packages, proceeding to payment. This interface design reduces emotional and ethical friction. **Corporate Language, the use of** phrases like: “optimisation” “enhancement” “future outcomes” “personalised recommendations mirrors real biotechnology and wellness marketing. I chose this medium over a traditional essay or article is because the internet is the primary space where genetic science meets society today, through Direct-to-Consumer (DTC) testing, open-source bio-banks, and digital surveillance.

The choice of a digital application was deliberate and theoretically significant. The smartphone app is one of the most familiar interfaces in contemporary society. Apps structure everyday life through convenience, efficiency, personalisation, and algorithmic decision-making. Whether ordering food, finding romantic partners, tracking health, or shopping online, apps increasingly mediate how individuals experience the world. By placing reproductive genetics within this familiar digital framework, I wanted to demonstrate how extraordinary ethical issues can become normalised through technological design.

The app acts as a metaphor for what scholars describe as the “datafication of the body.” Rather than understanding human identity as complex, socially shaped, and unpredictable, the body becomes translated into measurable genetic information. Traits become selectable data points that can be optimised according to consumer preference. In this context, the child is no longer viewed primarily as an autonomous future individual but as a project to be managed before birth.

The sleek interface and polished branding were intentionally designed to feel aspirational and trustworthy. I deliberately avoided making the app visually dystopian because I believed that a realistic and aesthetically pleasing design would make the critique more effective. If the app looked overtly sinister, the audience would immediately reject it as unrealistic science fiction. Instead, I wanted viewers to feel uncomfortable precisely because the app resembles real fertility clinic advertising, wellness branding, and subscription-based technology companies.

I have utilized **Jasanoff's (2015)** theory of Socio-technical Imaginaries. *GenoLife* represents a collective vision of a better social order achieved through technology. However, my project suggests that this imaginary is actually a nightmare of inequality. This can be explained by the

use of pricing tiers such as “Premium” and “Elite” further reinforces this critique. These subscription structures mirror contemporary capitalist systems in which health, education, and wellbeing are increasingly commodified. In *GenoLife*, wealth determines access not only to resources but also to biological advantages. Elite plans offer enhanced intelligence, creativity, leadership, and longevity, implying a future where socioeconomic inequality becomes biologically embedded. This mirrors our real life society today, where all the people do not have the same access to all technologies, the more you pay, the better services you can access: like discussed in week 2, previous gene editing technologies were expensive, however, the introduction of CRISPR cas9, a cheaper technology may allow people to access it easily. And if in the future, other technologies are introduced, it is probably going to be exclusive to the elite, creating a sort of internal eugenics based on social class. By introducing the "Elite Plan" at £49,999, I am enacting **Silver's (1997)** theory of the Gen-Rich. If cognitive and physical traits become purchasable, we enter a state of Genetic Stratification, where social class is hard-coded into the germline.

At the same time, the project explores broader themes including genetic determinism, soft eugenics, neoliberalism, disability ethics, bio-informatism, and the increasing datafication of the body. By presenting reproduction through the language of convenience, optimisation, and consumer choice, the app critiques how future societies may begin to redefine what it means to be human.

The app's normalisation of genetic optimisation also reflects the increasing role of consumer biotechnology companies in society today. Existing genetic testing services already market DNA information directly to consumers, often promising empowerment, self-discovery, and personalised health insights. My project extrapolates this trend into a future where reproductive decisions are similarly commercialised.

Although *GenoLife* is satirical, it is grounded in real scientific developments explored throughout the module. One important scientific influence was CRISPR-Cas9 gene editing technology. CRISPR has revolutionised genetics by allowing scientists to edit DNA sequences with unprecedented precision. While current applications are largely therapeutic and experimental, CRISPR has raised major ethical debates regarding germline editing and designer babies. The project also draws on developments in preimplantation genetic testing (PGT), where embryos created through IVF are screened for genetic conditions before implantation. Although current practices primarily focus on preventing serious disease, some scholars argue that these technologies could gradually expand toward enhancement. (**Green, 2007; Juengst, 1997**)

Additionally, polygenic risk scores influenced the app's probability-based structure. Polygenic scoring attempts to estimate the likelihood of certain traits or conditions by analysing multiple genetic variants. However, behavioural and psychological traits are extremely complex and heavily influenced by environmental factors. I intentionally used probabilities rather than guarantees because I wanted the app to remain scientifically plausible. Traits such as intelligence, creativity, sociability, and productivity cannot currently be engineered in straightforward ways. However, the project imagines a future where these probabilistic technologies become commercially exploited and socially exaggerated. The scientific ambiguity is important because it demonstrates how limited scientific findings can be transformed into powerful consumer narratives. Companies may oversell certainty while downplaying complexity and uncertainty. This tension between scientific possibility and commercial exaggeration forms a major part of the project's critique.

The "Trait Selection" interface is a direct engagement with the debate on Eugenics. As explored in our Week 4 lectures and by **Agar (2004)**, the modern eugenic impulse is not state-mandated or coercive; it is driven by informed choice and parental love. GenoLife critiques this liberal freedom. By including "Popular Choice" badges and "Trending Traits" (e.g., +41% Anxiety Reduction), I am illustrating how market pressures and social competition coerce parents into selecting "standardised" traits. This mirrors **Sandel's (2007, p.27)** critique in *The Case Against Perfection*. Sandel's impulse to control genetic outcomes through engineering compromises the appreciation of life as a "gift." By purchasing specific traits like "Competitive Drive" for £8,250, the child ceases to be a person to be discovered and becomes a project to be managed.

A pivotal section of the app is the Neurodiversity Optimisation tab. This section was designed to provoke a critical reflection on the Medical Model of Disability. In our lectures, we analyzed the Social Model, which suggests that disability is a result of a society that fails to accommodate difference.

By offering to "Reduce markers linked to Autism," GenoLife adopts a consumerist medical stance that views neurodivergence as a "susceptibility" to be minimised. This raises a profound ethical question: *By "optimising" for focus and sociability, are we erasing the very cognitive variations that drive human creativity?* The irony of the app offering a "Creativity" trait while simultaneously reducing "Autism markers" highlights the scientific and social ignorance of commercial biotech firms.

PURPOSE AND AUDIENCE

When designing *GenoLife*, I carefully considered the intended audience and how they might interact with the project. In simulation, the app is for prospective parents in the year 2046, when they choose to have a baby. However, in real life, the app is aimed primarily at students and general audiences familiar with digital consumer culture. I wanted the interface to feel believable enough that users could imagine such a platform emerging within their lifetime. The emotional effect I hoped to create was discomfort through familiarity. Rather than shocking viewers with overt dystopian imagery, I wanted them to gradually realise how normalised the commodification of reproduction had become within the app. Features such as subscription plans, testimonials, monthly payment options, and personalised recommendations are all drawn from contemporary digital platforms. This familiarity is crucial because many ethical concerns surrounding technology emerge gradually through normalisation rather than dramatic transformation. I also intentionally included emotionally persuasive language often used within biotechnology marketing. Phrases such as "Every child deserves the best start" frame optimisation as moral responsibility. This reflects how reproductive technologies may increasingly become linked to ideals of good parenting. At the same time, the app subtly reveals the dangers of this logic through escalating enhancement options and social pressure mechanisms. The final checkout screen was especially important because it transforms a future child into a purchasable package. Seeing human traits listed alongside prices and financing plans was intended to create a disturbing contrast between commerce and humanity.

Creating *GenoLife* significantly changed how I think about genetics and society. Before studying this module, I primarily associated genetics with medical treatment and disease prevention. However, through exploring topics such as reproductive genetics, behavioural genetics, and bioethics, I began to recognise how genetics also raises profound social and

philosophical questions. One major shift in my thinking involved the relationship between scientific progress and social inequality. Initially, technologies such as genetic screening appeared overwhelmingly positive because they offered opportunities to reduce suffering and prevent disease. However, engaging with critical literature made me realise that technological advancement is never socially neutral. Who has access to enhancement technologies? Which traits become valued? Who gets excluded? These questions became central to my thinking throughout the project. I also became increasingly aware of my own assumptions regarding intelligence, productivity, emotional stability, and success. Designing the app forced me to reflect on how deeply optimisation culture already shapes society today. Many of the app's features felt disturbingly plausible because contemporary culture already emphasises self-improvement, efficiency, and competitiveness. The project therefore became not only a critique of future genetics but also a reflection on present-day values. I also learned the importance of medium in shaping argument. Choosing an app rather than a traditional essay allowed the ethical critique to emerge visually and interactively. The polished interface communicates ideas that written analysis alone could not fully capture. At the same time, creating a satirical but believable platform was challenging. I had to balance realism with critique. If the app became too exaggerated, the argument would lose nuance. If it became too subtle, the ethical critique might not be obvious. This balance between realism and satire became one of the most intellectually engaging aspects of the project.

CONCLUSION

Ultimately, GenoLife serves as a warning about the Commodification of the Genome. By presenting these ethical dilemmas through a glossy, user-friendly interface, I have forced the "user" (the marker/audience) to participate in the moral weight of embryo selection. The form of the app is inseparable from its meaning: it shows that when genetics becomes a service, humanity becomes a product.

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