

## CHAPTER

## 9

# Rogerian Argument and Common Ground

*After studying this chapter, you will be able to:*

- LO1 Define the purpose and key aspects of Rogerian argument. (p. 279)
- LO2 Create your own examples of Rogerian argument. (p. 280)
- LO3 Apply the principles of Rogerian argument to academic writing. (p. 283)



To this point, you have been studying traditional argument that has its origin in classical sources. It is the form of argument that predominates in American culture, and it is what you are used to when you listen to people argue on television or when you read arguments in current periodicals or books. In traditional argument, the arguer states a claim and proves it by drawing on various types of proofs, including reasoning and evidence. The object is to convince an audience that the claim is valid and that the arguer is right. In this traditional model, the arguer uses the rebuttal to demonstrate how the opposition is wrong and to state why the audience should reject that position. Thus, the emphasis is on winning the argument. Debate, with participants on both sides trying to win by convincing a third-party judge, is one form of traditional argument, as is courtroom argument and all other single-perspective argument in which one person argues to convince one or more people of a particular point of view.

As you know from your own experience and from reading about argument in this book, traditional argument does not always achieve its aims with the audience. Indeed, in certain situations when strongly held opinions or entire value systems are challenged, traditional argument may not be effective at all. The audience might simply stop listening or walk away. When that happens, it is useful to have another argumentation strategy to turn to, one that might work better in cases

in which there seems to be a standoff or a lack of common ground among the arguing parties.

Rogerian argument, so called because it evolved from techniques originally applied by psychotherapist Carl Rogers, is a technique that is particularly useful for reducing conflict and establishing common ground between people who hold divergent positions and who may at times express hostility toward each other. Common ground often seems impossible to achieve in such situations, but two opposing parties can almost always find something to agree on if they try hard enough.

While establishing common ground in Rogerian argument uncovers what two parties have in common, Rogerian argument also involves more than that. Rogerian argument employs rebuttal differently. Instead of using rebuttal to show how the opposition is wrong, as in traditional argument, Rogerian argument requires that the arguer spend at least some time at the beginning of the argument not only explaining how the opposition's position is right but also identifying situations in which it might be valid. The arguer cannot do this very successfully without finding some common ground with the opposition. It is almost impossible to show how any part of another individual's opposing position is valid if you disagree with it totally.

Look back at the example in Chapter 1 (page 13) about the two individuals who are seeking common ground on methods for stopping random shooters. One of these individuals advocates that private citizens arm themselves with handguns as a deterrent to shooters. Another believes that the availability of handguns is the problem and advocates that private gun ownership be abolished. Common ground exists between the two parties because of their common concern for personal safety. To use Rogerian argument in this situation, the anti-handgun party would restate the pro-handgun party's position and would emphasize the common concern they both have for protecting their safety, before they search together for a solution on which they can agree.<sup>1</sup>

You may find Rogerian argument frustrating at first, especially if you favor contention and agonistic debate in situations in which your ideas and values seem to be under threat. Because Rogerian argument emphasizes making connections with the opposition and reducing hostility in such situations, you will need to curb your instincts to launch your argument by letting the opposition know how wrong you think they are. You can learn to use Rogerian argument, even if it is not your preferred or most natural style of arguing, in situations where traditional argument is no longer effective. It is a useful strategy when other strategies are failing. Let us look at a couple of examples.

<sup>1</sup>I am indebted to Jenny Edbauer for this example.

## Achieving Common Ground in Rogerian Argument

In 2005, Cal Thomas, a politically conservative newspaper columnist, and Bob Beckel, a liberal political analyst and consultant, began co-authoring their popular column "Common Ground" that appears in the newspaper *USA Today*. In 2007, they published *Common Ground: How to Stop the Partisan War That Is Destroying America*, and in it Cal Thomas describes their collaboration.

We're a good example of how common ground can work. Before we knew each other, we only knew "about" each other. I saw you [Beckel] as a liberal Democrat with "evil" ideas and positions conservatives associate with that label. You saw me as a conservative Republican with similar "evil" ideas and suspect friends. When we got to know each other and talked about politics, as well as personal and family challenges, we stopped seeing each other in stereotype and came first to respect and then (shock, shock) even to admire each other. The politics became less important than the relationship. And, most surprising of all, we found ourselves in agreement about quite a number of things, though we occasionally still differ on the best ways to achieve our common goals.<sup>2</sup>

Their purpose in writing the book, they make clear, is to encourage U.S. politicians to follow their example and make it a rule to seek common ground as part of the political process for resolving difficult and divisive issues. Indeed, Thomas and Beckel claim they are presenting "a plan that makes polarization the issue and common ground the solution." They "believe the time is right to challenge polarization and for common ground to become the next dominant strategic force in national politics."<sup>3</sup> To support this idea, they argue that the public prefers this approach: "Surveys conducted over several years have found that Americans believe even the most partisan issues—from abortion to the Iraq war—can be resolved with an honest commitment by elected leaders in Washington to finding consensus."<sup>4</sup>

Rogerian argument, with its emphasis on finding common ground and reaching consensus, can sometimes help people who differ strongly in their views find a bedrock of values and ideas that they can all hold in common. As a result, divided individuals are often able to resolve at least some of their differences. The process of seeking political common ground that Thomas and Beckel believe is beginning to occur in political discussions, and that they hope will occur more often, includes listening, understanding, and accepting points of view different from one's own, recognizing that both positions have some merit, and finally finding a way to resolve some of the differences. This process is at the heart of Rogerian argument strategy.

Let us look at another real-life example of building common ground between disagreeing parties with each side demonstrating an understanding of the other's

<sup>2</sup>Cal Thomas and Bob Beckel, *Common Ground: How to Stop the Partisan War That Is Destroying America* (New York: Harper-Collins, 2007), 257.

<sup>3</sup>Thomas and Beckel, 12.

<sup>4</sup>Thomas and Beckel, 10.

point of view. Environmentalists, who typically want to protect the environment at all costs, often find themselves in opposition to individuals who make their living by exploiting the environment. Loggers, ranchers, mill owners, and other industrialists, for example, can fall into this second category. Individuals from both groups, stereotyped as "nature haters" and "eco-freaks" by the press, met in Idaho to discuss efforts for protecting endangered wildlife in the area. The environmentalists went to the meeting with some trepidation, but "as they joked and sparred over steak and beer, they discovered that neither side lived up to its stereotype. 'We found that we didn't hate each other,' said Alex Irby, a manager at the Konkolville saw-mill. 'Turns out, we all like to do a lot of the same things. We love the outdoors.'" Timothy Egan, who wrote about the details of the meeting, makes this comment: "Loggers in the back country sitting down with environmentalists is an astonishing change."<sup>5</sup> One can infer that the common ground established in this meeting was brought about by each side describing to the other the value they placed on the environment and on outdoor activity in general. In such an exchange, both parties perceived that they had been heard, and further dialogue was then possible.

As you can see from both of these examples, understanding the rhetorical situation in general and the audience in particular by analyzing the thoughts and values of the parties involved is of critical importance in Rogerian argument. In Chapter 2 you learned how to analyze an audience as part of the planning process for writing argument papers. As you read the rest of this chapter, including the examples of Rogerian arguments written by students at the end of the chapter, pay particular attention to how Rogerian arguers analyze their audiences' dissenting opinions and values and then respond to them as part of their overall strategy.

## Rogerian Argument as Strategy

Carl Rogers was a psychotherapist who was well known for the empathetic listening techniques he used in psychological counseling. Here is how he describes the importance of listening:

I like to be heard. A number of times in my life I have felt myself bursting with insoluble problems, or going round and round in tormented circles, or during one period, overcome by feelings of worthlessness and despair. I think I have been more fortunate than most in finding at these times individuals who have been able to hear me and thus to rescue me from the chaos of my feelings. I have been able to find individuals who have been able to hear my meanings a little more deeply than I have known them. These individuals have heard me without judging me, diagnosing me, appraising me, evaluating me. They have just listened and clarified and responded to me at all levels at which I was communicating. I can testify that when you are in psychological distress and someone really hears you without passing judgment on you, without trying to take responsibility for you, without trying to mold you, it feels damn good.

<sup>5</sup>Timothy Egan, "Look Who's Hugging Trees Now," *New York Times Magazine*, July 7, 1996, 28.

At these times it has released the tension in me. It has permitted me to bring out the frightening feeling, the guilt, the despair, and the confusions that have been a part of my experience. When I have been listened to and when I have been heard, I am able to re-perceive my world in a new way and to go on. It is astonishing how elements which seem insoluble become soluble when someone listens, how confusions which seem irremediable turn into relatively clear flowing streams when one is heard. I have deeply appreciated the times that I have experienced this sensitive, empathic, concentrated listening.<sup>6</sup>

Rogers later became interested in how listening techniques could be used to improve communication in other difficult, emotionally charged situations. Richard Young and his colleagues Alton Becker and Kenneth Pike built on Rogers's ideas to formulate Rogerian argument, a method for helping people in difficult situations make connections, create common ground, and understand one another. The object was to avoid undue conflict or, even worse, a mutual standoff.<sup>7</sup>

According to Young, Becker, and Pike, written Rogerian argument reduces the reader's sense of threat and conflict with the writer so that alternatives can be considered. Four goals are met with this strategy.

*Goal 1. Writers let readers know they have been understood.* To accomplish this purpose, the writer restates the opponent's position in summary form by using dispassionate, neutral language. The writer demonstrates that the reader has been heard and that the writer understands the issue exactly as the reader does. The loggers and the environmentalists listened and understood one another in the example cited earlier.

*Goal 2. Writers show how readers' positions are valid in certain contexts and under certain conditions.* The writer demonstrates to the reader that at least part of the reader's position is both valid and acceptable and thereby makes it easier for the reader to reciprocate and accept part of the writer's position. Both the loggers and the environmentalists discovered validity in each other's positions since neither group wanted to destroy wildlife.

*Goal 3. Writers help readers understand that both of them share the same values, types of experience, attitudes, and perceptions and are thus similar in significant ways.* The loggers and environmentalists made it clear to each other that they shared a love of the outdoors, held some of the same values, and enjoyed the same types of experience.

*Goal 4. Writers propose solutions made up of elements from both sides that can be agreed to by both parties.* At this point, environmentalists discovered that loggers were quite willing to pursue ways to preserve wildlife.

The most important feature of Rogerian argument is listening empathetically and nonjudgmentally. Rogers perceived that people usually listen judgmentally

<sup>6</sup>Carl R. Rogers, *A Way of Being*, Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1980, 12-13. I thank Barbara Ciarello for calling this to my attention.

<sup>7</sup>Richard Young, Alton Becker, and Kenneth Pike, *Rhetoric: Discovery and Change* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, 1970), 7-8, 274-90.

and evaluatively. They are eager to jump in, point out what is right or wrong, and make corrections or refutations, whereas Rogerian listening requires that insight into the other's position precede evaluation. Thus, a writer of Rogerian argument takes the reader's place, and this is achieved by requiring that the writer provide neutral summaries of the reader's position that show sympathetic understanding of it and its context. In doing this, the writer encourages a continued and open exchange of ideas with the reader. In Rogers's words, the writer "listens with" as opposed to "evaluating about."

In real life, Rogerian argument is used frequently, particularly in business and perhaps increasingly in politics, where agreement is indispensable. Some people in business claim they could not get anything done if they did not use Rogerian strategies on a daily basis. William L. Ury, one of the founders of the Program on Negotiation at Harvard Law School, claims that in business now, the best way to compete is to be able to cooperate. Cooperation is necessary because of the numerous mergers and cooperative ventures between companies. Many companies now work with the same markets and the same customers, and they cannot compete, as in former times, without weakening themselves as much as their competitors.<sup>8</sup>

Box 9.1 ■ contrasts Rogerian argument, as explained by Young, Becker, and Pike, with the traditional model of argument.

In Chapter 4 you learned about the Toulmin model for argument. The Toulmin model and Rogerian argument have one extremely important feature in common. Even though the Toulmin model includes rebuttal, it also provides for the creation of common ground in the shared warrants between arguer and audience. Rogerian argument provides for common ground as well, but this is accomplished through the shared values and assumptions established through the summary and restatement of the opponent's position.

## ROGERIAN ARGUMENT ONLINE

While the emergence of the Web has fostered greater public engagement with issues, it has, in many cases, also led to a greater polarization. Extreme viewpoints, those that evince no interest in hearing, let alone accepting, the views of the other side, are found throughout writing online. Choose an example of an online argument that, in your view, is especially polarizing. What does this debate look like? What views does it pit against each other? Moreover, what is it about these views that makes this debate so polarizing? Then, using the goals of Rogerian argument outlined above, write an explanation of how these differences might be bridged. How and where, within this debate, is it possible to find common ground? What values, views and goals could these opposing sides actually be said to share?

<sup>8</sup>William L. Ury, "Getting Past No . . . to Yes! The Art of Negotiation." Workshop, Dallas, October 12, 1999.

**Box 9.1****Traditional and Rogerian Argument Compared.****What Is Rogerian Argument?**

	<b>TRADITIONAL ARGUMENT</b>	<b>ROGERIAN ARGUMENT</b>
<b>Basic strategy</b>	Writer states the claim and gives reasons to prove it. Writer refutes the opponent by showing what is wrong or invalid.	The writer states opponent's claim to demonstrate understanding and shows how it is valid.
<b>Ethos</b>	Writer establishes own character by demonstrating fair-mindedness, competence, and goodwill.	Writer builds opponent's <i>ethos</i> and enhances own character through empathy.
<b>Logos</b>	Writer appeals to reason to establish a claim and refute the opponent's claim.	Writer proceeds in an explanatory fashion to analyze the conditions under which the position of either side is valid.
<b>Pathos</b>	Writer arouses emotions with evocative language to strengthen the claim.	Writer uses descriptive, dispassionate language to cool emotions on both sides.
<b>Goal</b>	Writer seeks to change opponent's mind and thereby win the argument.	The writer creates cooperation, the possibility that both sides might change, and a mutually advantageous outcome.
<b>Use of argument techniques</b>	Writer draws on the conventional structures and techniques taught in Chapters 4–7 of this book.	Writer throws out conventional structures and techniques because they may be threatening and focuses instead on connecting empathetically.

## Writing Rogerian Argument

To write Rogerian argument, according to Young, Becker, and Pike, the writer proceeds in phases rather than following set organizational patterns or argumentation strategies. These phases are as follows:

1. The writer introduces the issue and shows that the opponent's position is understood by restating it.
2. The writer shows in which contexts and under what conditions the opponent's position may be valid. Note that the opponent is never made to feel completely wrong.
3. The writer then states his or her own position, including the contexts in which it is valid.
4. The writer states how the opponent's position would benefit if the opponent were to adopt elements of the writer's position. An attempt is finally made to

show that the two positions complement each other and that each supplies what the other lacks.

## Rogerian Argument in Academic Writing


Rogerian argument as described by Young, Becker, and Pike is rarely, if ever, written exactly according to their format. You can learn more about Rogerian argument, however, by using their format as practice. The "Exercises and Activities" section of this chapter provides four examples of Rogerian argument papers written by students who followed Young, Becker, and Pike's formulations. You also will be invited to write a Rogerian argument paper using this format.

As you read professionally written argument, however, you are much more likely to find elements or variations of Rogerian argument rather than arguments that include all of the parts of the Young, Becker, and Pike model. Here are some variations of Rogerian argument that you may encounter in your academic reading.

1. *Report on past research at the beginning of an academic argument.* Authors of academic argument, as a matter of convention, often begin with a review of what previous writers have contributed to the subject. They identify the writers by name and summarize their contributions before identifying and developing their own contribution to the subject. Thus an ongoing chain of conversation is established that acknowledges what has gone before the new material that is the actual subject of the article.
2. *Research proposal.* Research proposals that request funds and resources from granting agencies typically begin with a positive summary of the contributions of past researchers. Only after this former work has been acknowledged does the researcher explain how the new proposed research will build on what has gone before.<sup>9</sup>
3. *Rogerian response paper.* This paper is written in response to an essay written by another person with whom the author disagrees. The author of a response paper typically rejects the position that the author of the other essay presents but hopes to create common ground and understanding with that person to keep a dialogue on the issue going. The goal is to make a connection with the author of the other essay and thus create a context of understanding so that both authors can continue exploring the issue. Such papers usually begin with a restatement of the other author's position along with an acknowledgment of what is valuable about that position before the author goes on to present a different view of the matter. You will be invited to try writing a Rogerian response paper yourself in Exercise B (page 287).

As you read arguments written by other authors, look for elements of Rogerian argument. The three examples just cited by no means exhaust the possibilities.

<sup>9</sup>I am indebted to Mary Stanley for alerting me to this use of Rogerian argument.



## Using Rogerian Principles to Argue Like a Citizen

One criticism sometimes leveled at Rogerian argument when it is first encountered, is that it can be perceived to be manipulative. Though it can be used in this way, it is not inherent to this form of argumentation. People who use Rogerian argument in unethical ways to manipulate other people may exhibit a condescending attitude or fake sincerity. They may also use some of the same tactics that unethical arguers use in traditional argument: for example, hiding the real purpose of the argument by misrepresenting the issue; using inappropriate emotional appeals, including emotionally loaded language; manufacturing evidence; or the use of inaccurate evidence, exaggerations, or lies.

Individuals who practice ethical Rogerian argument, on the other hand, make a genuine attempt to understand an issue and its consequences from a range of different perspectives. Participants in Rogerian argument have to sincerely believe that the position they propose is in the best interests of both parties and, possibly, the larger society as well. They need to be able to answer the questions, *Who are benefited by what I want?* and *Who are burdened or hurt?* and to scrupulously consider the consequences of their answers to those questions. They need to listen and hear nonjudgmentally; they need to seek genuine agreement with at least part of the opponent's position; and they need to develop some unconditional positive regard for the individuals with whom they are engaged and show that regard in all that they say. In other words, participants in Rogerian argument need to think, argue, and act like a citizen.

In order to test out this premise, return for a moment to the online issue you analyzed above. Now that you have explained how Rogerian argument can help overcome the polarization we so often see in online debates, build upon this work by exploring how this same framework can help us connect argument to citizenship. To do this, answer the following questions: Where in my community is this particular issue of greatest importance? Who are the participants with the greatest stake in this debate? What concrete action could be taken with this community to achieve the common ground revealed by Rogerian argument? What action, decision or policy would most likely enable a Rogerian solution to this debate?

## Review Questions

1. What are the four goals of Rogerian argument, and how do they differ from those of traditional argument?
2. What are some of the advantages and disadvantages of Rogerian argument?
3. In what type of argumentation situation do you think you might find Rogerian argument more productive than traditional argument? Describe an issue, along with the rhetorical situation, which might prompt you to resort to Rogerian argument.
4. In what type of argumentation situation do you think you might find traditional argument more productive than Rogerian argument? Describe an

- issue, along with the rhetorical situation, which might prompt you to use traditional argument instead of Rogerian argument.
5. What difficulties, if any, do you personally contemplate in using Rogerian argument? How do you feel about using this strategy?

## Exercises and Activities

### A. Class Discussion: Understanding Rogerian Argument as a Strategy

The excerpt below is taken from Edward O. Wilson's book *The Future of Life*. Read the passage, analyze the Rogerian strategy, and answer the questions at the end.

**BEFORE YOU READ:** What is your present attitude about preserving the environment? Do you know of anyone who holds a different view? What is it?

### ESSAY #1 THE FUTURE OF LIFE\*

*Edward O. Wilson*

Wilson, a well-known scientist and Harvard professor, has been called the father of the modern environmental movement. His book *The Future of Life* provides plans for conserving earth's biodiversity.

1 Everyone has some kind of environmental ethic, even if it somehow makes a virtue of cutting the last ancient forests and damming the last wild rivers. Done, it is said, to grow the economy and save jobs. Done because we are running short of space and fuel. *Hey, listen, people come first!*—and most certainly before beach mice and louseworts. I recall vividly the conversation I had with a cab driver in Key West in 1968 when we touched on the Everglades burning to the north. Too bad, he said. The Everglades are a wonderful place. But wilderness always gives way to civilization, doesn't it? That is progress and the way of the world, and we can't do much about it.

2 Everyone is also an avowed environmentalist. No one says flatly, "To hell with nature." On the other hand, no one says, "Let's give it all back to nature." Rather, when invoking the social contract by which we all live, the typical people-first ethicist thinks about the environment short-term and the typical environmental ethicist thinks about it long-term. Both are sincere and have something true and important to say. The people-first thinker says we need to take a little cut here and there: the environmentalist says nature is dying the death of a thousands cuts. So how do we combine the best of short-term and long-term goals? Perhaps, despite decades of bitter philosophical dispute, an optimum mix

\*From *The Future of Life* by Edward O. Wilson. Copyright © 2002 by E O Wilson. Used by permission of Alfred A. Knopf, a division of Random House, Inc.

of the goals might result in a consensus more satisfactory than either side thought possible from total victory alone. Down deep, I believe, no one wants a total victory. The people-firster likes parks, and the environmentalist rides petroleum-powered vehicles to get there.

**For Discussion:**

What is the issue in this passage? What two groups of people are identified? Why might

they feel hostile? What are their differences? How does Wilson create common ground between the two groups? How does Wilson use Rogerian strategy? Summarize the two positions and describe the Rogerian elements in the passage. Why do you think Wilson uses Rogerian strategy in this part of his book? How do you think Wilson might describe his audience for this passage?

**B. Writing Assignment: Write a Rogerian Response**

Read the following essays that appear in other chapters and select the one you disagree with the most: "A' Is for 'Absent'" (pages 44–45); "The Latest From the Feminist 'Front'" (pages 232–234); "Calling Blue: And on That Farm He Had a Cell Phone" (page 138). As an option, find a letter to the editor in a newspaper that you disagree with and write a Rogerian response to it. Use either essay or personal letter format. Your paper should be from 300 to 500 words long.

**Prewriting**

Write a brief summary of the position taken by the author of the essay you have selected. Then write a brief summary of your position. Make certain you understand both positions clearly.

**Writing**

Do all of the following in your paper:

1. State the opposition's position as presented in the article (or letter) and describe in what instances this position might work or be acceptable. As you write, imagine that the individual who wrote the article or letter will be reading your response. Write so that that person will feel "heard."
2. Write a clear transition to your position on the issue.
3. State how your position would also work or be acceptable.
4. Try to reconcile the two positions.

**C. Class Discussion: Creating Images for Visual Rogerian Argument**

Creating images to support visual arguments, or creating stand-alone Rogerian visual arguments, can be challenging because not one, but two positions need to be portrayed as equal and potentially correct. Further, the idea of consensual agreement needs to be part of the picture as well. Images 1, 2, and 3 can be used as images to represent Rogerian argument. No detailed captions appear with these images. They speak for themselves. Look at each of them, and then answer the "For Discussion" questions.

4. State your own position and describe the context in which it is valid.
5. Show how the opposing position would be strengthened by adding elements of your position. Then try to reconcile the two positions.

### Examples

Here are three examples of Rogerian argument written by students.

**Example 1 (Option 1).** “Human Cloning: Is It a Viable Option?” was written by a student in an argument class who had also written an exploratory paper on this subject. The student conducted research for that paper, and items from her annotated bibliography appear on pages 350–352. In writing this paper, the student began with the position she had researched that was most unlike her own and rewrote it until she thought it would satisfy the individuals who hold that position. Notice that she was able to use the research for her other paper to add support for this paper as well. The marginal annotations make it easier for you to distinguish the parts of her paper.

Following the student’s paper is a Rogerian argument evaluation sheet that has been filled out to show how her argument conforms to the recommended parts of a Rogerian argument. The requirements for the Rogerian argument paper are described in the left column, and the right column shows how well this paper met those requirements. When you have finished reading the papers in Examples 2 and 3, see if you can identify and describe the parts of those papers well enough to complete evaluation sheets like the sample. These analyses will help you understand how to write your own Rogerian argument.\*

**STUDENT PAPER #1** Angela A. Boatwright  
Professor Thorne  
English 1302  
30 April 2011

#### Human Cloning: Is It a Viable Option?

Introduction to issue  
and summary of rhetorical situation.

1 Well, hello Dolly! Although research in animal or human cloning is not new, the technology has never had as much potential as it does today. Interest in what is and is not considered ethical in cloning research has surfaced since the historic announcement in Scotland of the existence of a cloned sheep named Dolly. Scientists were able to create a cloned sheep by taking the genes from a six-year-old sheep and putting them into an enucleated egg from another sheep. This egg was then implanted in the womb of yet another sheep, resulting in the birth of an identical twin that is six years younger than its sister (Bailey). This is the first known asexual reproduction of a mammal.

\*For all the student papers in Chapter 9, see the Appendix to Chapter 12 for the actual MLA format guidelines.

It seems a reasonable assumption that a human clone is the next logical step down this technological pathway.

- 2 Those who support unregulated human cloning experimentation justify their position by citing the medical gains and potential benefits the technology has to offer. They believe that the possible benefits of this technology far outweigh the risks and, furthermore, that it is an ethical practice because of its potential benefits. Some of these benefits include the generation of skin grafts for burn victims and bone marrow for patients undergoing cancer chemotherapy (Butler and Wadman 8). Cloning also shows promise for treating infertility and could become an option either for infertile couples or for people who have genetic defects and fear passing these defects on to their offspring.
- 3 Supporters of cloning believe that the arguments against cloning are vague and speculative and that they simply do not justify a ban. It is not the technology that frightens people so much as it is a lack of understanding. When people picture the result of an attempt at human cloning, they see images of Frankenstein or an army of Hitlers. Researchers believe that given time to digest the information, the public will one day regard cloning with the same openness and sense of normalcy that it now regards blood transfusions and organ transplants. They also reason that a ban on cloning could drive the technology underground, leading to a greater potential for unsafe, unregulated, and exploitative misuse.
- 4 Everyone would probably agree that technological advances have changed our lives in positive ways, and cloning research is not likely to be an exception. The fear held by cloning supporters, that the sensationalism created by this issue has clouded the judgment of the public and lawmakers who support a ban on cloning, is certainly a valid concern. Although it is not clear that human cloning will offer any great benefits to humanity, no one has yet made a persuasive case that it would do any real harm either (Macklin 64). It would be an injustice to completely abandon the possibilities that could enhance the lives of so many people based solely on hypothetical applications of a technology that may never be realized. Each disease we are able to eradicate is another huge step for humankind.
- 5 I agree that we should do everything in our power to improve the longevity and quality of life of all people, but I do not believe it should be at the expense of the dignity of human life. Many people who oppose cloning view it as an "invasion of personality." Even Dr. Ian Wilmut and his colleagues, the creators of Dolly, hold the position that cloning of humans would be unethical (64). He points out that it took 277 attempts to produce one live lamb. Of the 277 "reconstructed" embryos, 29 were implanted into recipient ewes, and 3 out of 5 lambs showed developmental abnormalities and died soon after birth. He believes similar tests with humans would not be acceptable.
- 6 Those of us who advocate anticloning measures believe that the potential abuse of such power could have disastrous consequences. The fear of the creation of human clones for the sole purpose of harvesting them for "spare parts" is too great to ignore. Another concern is that cloning will lead to

Explanation of opposing position to create common ground.

Description of context in which opposing position is valid

Transition to author's view

Explanation of author's view.

efforts to breed individuals with perceived exceptional genetic qualities, eliminating the diversity that makes the human race what it is. There is a widespread belief that parents might create unrealistic expectations for cloned children, believing they no longer have the potential limitations of their genetic ancestors (Pence 135). Cloning is really a major step toward regarding our children as acceptable only if they conform to the choices of our will (Carey).

Personal example to introduce idea of reconciliation of the two opposing positions.

7 Many of us are also bound by the religious ideas we have been brought up with, telling us that only God has the right to create life. It is sinful to think of removing that sovereign right from an omnipotent God and placing it in the hands of mere mortals. Like the majority of Americans, I believe that human cloning experimentation should be banned before it can become an out-of-control reality.

8 I am fortunate to be the mother of a wonderful and beautiful baby girl. If I had been given the opportunity to choose her characteristics, would I have elected to change my child? I absolutely would not. I would not trade any of her personal traits for something "better." I love her just as God gave her to me. Yet with absolute certainty, I can admit that if she developed a life-threatening ailment, I would not hesitate for a second to utilize any cloning technology available to cure her. This is not to say I would sacrifice another life for hers, only that I would employ any and all resources available short of that alternative.

Reconciliation of positions

9 If we can agree that human life should always be held in the highest esteem, we have the basis for reconciling our positions. Cloning should not be used to pick and choose the type of people who are allowed to exist, but we should explore the potential medical benefits of cloning technology research. Many of the medical procedures we take for granted every day were once as controversial as cloning is at this very moment. Most of these procedures became successful at the cost of testing on live beings, but with their consent. We must never allow human beings to be the subjects of experimentation without their knowledge or permission. We may not impose conditions on human beings that they might not have consented to if allowed to make the decision for themselves.

10 A moratorium might be a better solution than an outright ban. A moratorium would authorize a temporary delay of human cloning research and allow us the time to sort out the details and ensure that an educated decision is made. It is easier to make an intelligent decision when there is not a feeling of impending doom hanging over our heads. "In a democratic society we don't usually pass laws outlawing something before there is actual or probable evidence of harm" (Macklin 64). This statement can serve as a guide for future policy on human cloning.

#### Works Cited

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### For Discussion:

Describe a rhetorical situation in which it would be better to write this paper about cloning in this form, using Rogerian strategy, than it would be to write it as a position paper, using traditional argument. Describe the readers, constraints, and, in particular, the exigence as you imagine the rhetorical situation for this paper.

## Evaluation Sheet for Rogerian Argument Paper

### REQUIREMENTS OF ROGERIAN ARGUMENT

1. Introduce the issue and state the opposing position to show that you understand it.
2. Show how the opposition might be right.
3. Write a clear transition from the opposing position to your position.
4. Give your position and show how you might be right.
5. Reconcile the two positions.

### WHAT THE AUTHOR DID

1. Introduced the issue in paragraph 1 and presented the opposing view accompanied by good reasons in paragraphs 2 and 3.
2. Showed the contexts in which the other position might be valid in paragraph 4.
3. Wrote a transition in the first sentence of paragraph 5 to move from opposing to own position.
4. Presented own position in paragraphs 5, 6, and 7.
5. Reconciled the two views in paragraphs 8, 9, and 10.

**Example 2 (Option 2).** "Let Those Who Ride Decide!" was written by a student who depends on his motorcycle for all of his transportation. When you have finished reading this paper, see if you can identify and describe its parts and complete an evaluation sheet like the sample above. This analysis will help you understand how to write your own Rogerian argument.