

Researcher: Genes similar in lesbians



CHICAGO (AP) — Genes appear to play an important role in determining whether women are lesbians, said a researcher who found similar results among gay men.

The study examined 71 sets of identical female twins, 37 sets of fraternal twins and 35 sets of adoptive sisters to determine if genes play a role in homosexuality.

"I would say that this is very strong evidence in favor of the argument that heredity plays a role in determining sexual orientation," lead researcher J. Michael Bailey said Thursday.

But, "Genetics or heredity can't be the whole story."

The researchers theorized that identical twins with matched genetic make-up would have a higher rate of shared homosexuality than fraternal twins, whose genes are similar but not identical. In turn, the rate of lesbianism would be greater for fraternal twins than for adoptive sisters, who are genetically unrelated, they predicted.

Forty-eight percent of the identical twins who said they were homosexual or bisexual had twins who also were lesbians, as did 16 percent of the fraternal twins and 6 percent in the adoptive sisters, according to the study, appearing in the March issue of the Archives of General Psychiatry.

The results were not unanticipated, but they raise several important questions, said Roger Gorski, an expert in biological theories of homosexuality.

"People could argue that, while 48 percent of the identical twins were both homosexual, what about the 52 percent who weren't?" said Gorski, who is doing research at the National Institutes of Health in Washington.

"I think we're dealing with something very complex, perhaps the interaction between hormones, the environment and genetic components," Gorski said Thursday.

Bailey, a psychologist at Northwestern University in Evanston, studied 56 identical male twins, 54 fraternal twins and 57 adoptive brothers in 1991.

He found 52 percent of gay men had identical twins who were homosexual, compared to 22 percent of fraternal twins.

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— J. Michael Bailey, researcher in genetics

Race gap grows in infant mortality

ATLANTA (AP) — The U.S. infant mortality rate dropped to a record low, but black babies died at more than twice the rate of whites, and the gap is growing, federal health officials reported Thursday.

For every 1,000 births in 1990, 9.2 babies died before age 1, down from 9.8 in 1989, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said. It credited most of the drop to a new way of treating the underdeveloped lungs that kill thousands of premature and underweight babies.

"That kind of technology is exciting and, yes, it saves lives," said Rae Grad, executive director of the National Commission to Prevent Infant Mortality. "But wouldn't it be better to give mothers better prenatal care so their babies are born with big lungs instead of tiny lungs?"

The rate in 1990, the most recent year for which data are available, propelled the United States up two notches — to 20th place — in UNICEF's ranking of infant mortality in 23 developed countries. Japan has the world's best rate, 5 per 1,000; the United States ranked below Italy and ahead of Greece.

From 1980 to 1989, the U.S. infant mortality rate dropped about 3 percent annually. But the 1990 rate dropped 6 percent, primarily because the new lung treatment eliminated almost one-fourth of infant deaths from respiratory distress syndrome.

Premature and underweight babies — those born

weighing less than five pounds — often have lungs that aren't completely developed. Doctors once just gave them oxygen. Now, they manufacture a chemical often missing from the lining of the babies' lungs, allowing them to breathe, said Dr. Marian MacDorman of the CDC.

Despite this technology, 38,351 babies died in 1990, down from 39,655 in 1989. The District of Columbia had by far the deadliest rate, 20.7, followed by Georgia with 12.4 and Mississippi with 12.1. Vermont had the lowest rate, 5.4.

The mortality rate for black infants was 18, compared with 7.6 for whites, and the disparity is growing, the CDC said.

The risk of dying was 2.3 times greater for black infants than whites in 1989, but had crept up to 2.4 times by 1990. The rate of black infant deaths decreased 3 percent between 1989 and 1990, and the rate for whites decreased 1 percent.

Low birth weight was the leading killer of black babies, and birth defects claimed more white babies.

Socio-economic factors probably are to blame for the high death rate among blacks, MacDorman said. Nearly three times as many black as white infants were born to families living below the poverty line in 1990, and more black women are likely to be uninsured, she said.

That means they don't have access to technology like the synthetic lung chemical, Grad said.

Waco economy profits from 'prophet'

WACO, Texas (AP) — Good luck finding a vacant hotel room or a rental car in this city.

Fast food sales are sizzling. Camping gear is going fast.

At Waco Communications Inc., manager Pam Katrycz has rented about 100 pagers to federal agents and journalists covering the standoff between federal authorities and members of the heavily-armed Branch Davidian religious sect.

"We're almost out of stock. People are still coming in," Katrycz said.

Whether it's a \$25 taxi trip to the sect's Mount Carmel compound 10 miles east of here or a \$10.26 pepperoni pizza, money

has been flowing into Waco since the siege began Feb. 28.

Hundreds of law enforcement officials, reporters and photographers have flocked to the city of 103,000 since then, waiting for the cult members to surrender to federal agents.

Gordon Rostvold, secretary of the Waco Hotel-Motel Association, credits the standoff with filling the city's 2,700 hotel rooms to about 90 percent occupancy.

Rostvold has hired temporary workers to answer phones and wash laundry at the Hilton hotel he manages. "Fax machine use has been phenomenal," he said.

Other signs of economic life show at the thriving media vil-

lage at a roadblock two miles from the Branch Davidian's compound, where scaffolding, tents and portable toilets abound.

Some reports have estimated that the army of agents and journalists are spending \$1 million a week. But local officials say they can't put a price tag on the spending.

Some business owners even downplay the boom, noting that the slaying of four agents and wounding of 16 others in the initial gun battle isn't the kind of publicity any city would want.

"It's certainly having an economic impact," said Chamber of Commerce President Jack Stewart.

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• It's not broad-based!

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Stop the meals tax!



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