

New study backs theory homosexual life inherited

By PAUL RECER
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Researchers have identified a gene pattern linked to male homosexuality, adding powerful new evidence to the scientific theory that sexual orientation can be inherited.

The finding does not prove homosexuality in males is genetically compelled, but it does show that the sexual orientation is powerfully influenced by inherited genes, said Dean Hamer, principal author of the study appearing today in the journal *Science*.

Evidence was found by studying the X chromosome in 40 pairs of homosexual brothers. Thirty-three pairs shared the same pattern variation in the tip of one arm of the chromosome, a region that may have 100 or more individual genes. Hamer said his lab at the National Cancer Institute is now trying to pinpoint the gene in question.

A similar study searching for a genetic basis for homosexuality in females is now under way, he said.

The study is at least the fourth in recent years to identify possible biological explanations for sexual orientation. It strengthens the argument that homosexuality is not a matter of choice, but of biological destiny.

In the other studies of biological bases for homosexuality, Simon La-Vay found in 1991 that a specific brain structure was smaller in homosexual males than in heterosexual males.

Studies in 1991 and 1993 of separated identical twins found a commonality of sexual orientation that suggested a genetic origin of homosexuality in both men and women.

Hamer said he and his colleagues searched for the gay gene by first studying the family histories of 114 gay men. They found that male homosexuality was more common than average on the maternal side of the gay men's families.

This suggested that if homosexuality had a genetic basis, it likely would be on the X chromosome, the sex-linked chromosome males inherit from their mothers.

The researchers then studied the X chromosomes from 40 pairs of homosexual brothers and searched for a genetic variant that they shared. A shared variant was found in the same chromosome region in 33 of the pairs.

Hamer said the results show with 99 percent certainty that a genetic variant contributes to the homosexual orientation of males.

"This means that the possibility of obtaining our findings by chance is extremely unlikely," he said.

The absence of the gene variant in seven pairs of gay brothers suggests that other genes could independently influence sexual orientation or that there are environmental or social factors that can play a deciding role, said Hamer.



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Members of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force gathered yesterday at the Lincoln Memorial to lobby President Clinton.

Gays-in-military plan being refined, aides say

By ANN DEVROY
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WASHINGTON — President Clinton has accepted the broad outlines of a proposal by Defense Secretary Les Aspin that would allow homosexuals to serve in the military so long as they do not reveal their sexual orientation, but has asked for further refinements, senior officials said yesterday.

The officials said Clinton is especially concerned about the practical implications of the proposal and has raised a number of specific questions, such as the circumstances under which service members would be investigated for homosexual conduct.

Last night, Aspin delivered a final draft of his proposal incorporating the refinements, but it was not clear whether the changes met the president's concerns.

Continued confusion over the shape of the final policy was reflected in comments by White House officials, who first told reporters yesterday that Clinton would announce the plan today, then cautioned hours later that such an announcement was unlikely.

The intensive 11th-hour negotiations reflected the agonizing nature of a debate that has mobilized homosexuals and stirred intense opposition from the military leadership.

In their search for an acceptable middle ground, senior officials from the White House, Pentagon and Justice Departments have spent much of the past few weeks wrestling with seemingly trivial language changes that nonetheless carry great symbolic and legal weight.

Senior Justice Department officials, including Attorney General Janet Reno and Solicitor General Drew Days, have expressed concern that the Aspin proposal may be difficult to defend in court, according to sources familiar with their views. The policy, dubbed "don't ask, don't tell," would end intrusive investigations into orientation but still would prohibit public or private disclosures of sexual status.

Gay-rights activists continued to hold out hope yesterday that Clinton would overrule Aspin, but admitted they faced an uphill battle.

On Wednesday, Aspin delivered to Clinton what officials called a "first draft" of the policy and spent nearly two hours with him discussing possible changes. One official said the president asked only for "refinements and implications, more in the way of elaborations."

A second official said that "all the energy" in the discussions over the past 48 hours has been over the circumstances under which gay service personnel would be allowed to disclose their homosexuality and when they would be investigated.