

Recent genetic findings could stir things up

In his epistle to the Hebrews, Saint Paul, described faith as "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen (11:1)."

This relays the fundamental difference between faith and logic, religion and science.

Faith — according to Paul's description — is blind, but mankind uses science to explain phenomena that was once explained by faith.

Science allows us to see. Homosexuality is one such phenomenon. In a recent article published in the journal Nature Genetics, Dr. Dean Hamer of the National Cancer Institute reported new evidence to bolster his claim of the existence of a "gay gene."

Hamer and his team found genetic material on the gene segment Xq28 may influence the occurrence of homosexuality in males.

This doesn't appear to hold true for homosexuality in women.

Since males acquire their X chromosome from their mothers, homosexuality may be inherited through maternal lineage.

Coincidentally, there is a 98-percent chance that homosexual relatives are related maternally, according to Hamer's 1993 study of this subject published in Scientific American.

In his 1993 study, Hamer and his team recruited 40 nuclear families wherein two brothers were gay.

The researchers sampled the DNA of the gay brothers, mothers, and sisters (where applicable).

After necessary corrections, the team found that preset genetic markers were randomly distributed

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over the X chromosome, except at a region identified as Xq28.

At this region of the X chromosome, 33 of the 40 pairs of gay brothers showed the same marker. The probability of this occurring by chance was less than one in 200.

To compensate for the study's small sample size, the researchers used a control group of 314 random pairs of brothers.

The markers in the Xq28 region for this group were randomly distributed.

However, Hamer's study was criticized because of replication problems.

According to Curt Suplee of the Washington Post, Dr. George Ebers of the University of Western Ontario used Hamer's method to test 42 pairs of gay brothers but found no pattern in the X chromosome's DNA.

Ebers claimed "the reason for that is not obvious. These things happen in the sciences all the time. The way to resolve them is to get more data."

Yet even Ebers remains "totally persuaded that homosexuality is biologically determined."

Hamer reconducted his 1993 study with a new group of families with gay brothers, as well as families with gay sisters.

Hamer also included heterosexual brothers

with a gay brother.

He and his group again found that between gay brothers, the same DNA markers were present 67 percent of the time in the Xq28 region; their heterosexual siblings had different markers.

Hamer's is one of a myriad of studies currently bringing to light what I and many others know to be true: People cannot do a great deal about their sexual orientation.

Since all psychological phenomena ultimately have biological links, one must expect the light of science to encroach on faith's obscure domain.

However, faith will never disappear. Humans must always have faith.

I believe, for example, that this study is nothing short of a breakthrough.

The thought of finally acquiring equal rights and

not living in fear and shame sounds fantastic.

This study appears the perfect means to that end. Or is it really the end?

When scientists ultimately find the biological factors that cause homosexuality, in the short run there will probably be drastic changes in the way America treats its gay citizens.

However, in the long run, the outlook appears pretty bleak.

Since we can find out the sex of a child or whether or not it has certain types of diseases before it is born, we will — in all likelihood — be able to determine whether or not a child will be homosexual.

If the attitudes of Americans don't change toward gays when this time comes, an increased amount of child abandonment, adoptions or abortions may result.

The key words here are "may result." Women can and should always have the right to an abortion if they feel it's necessary.

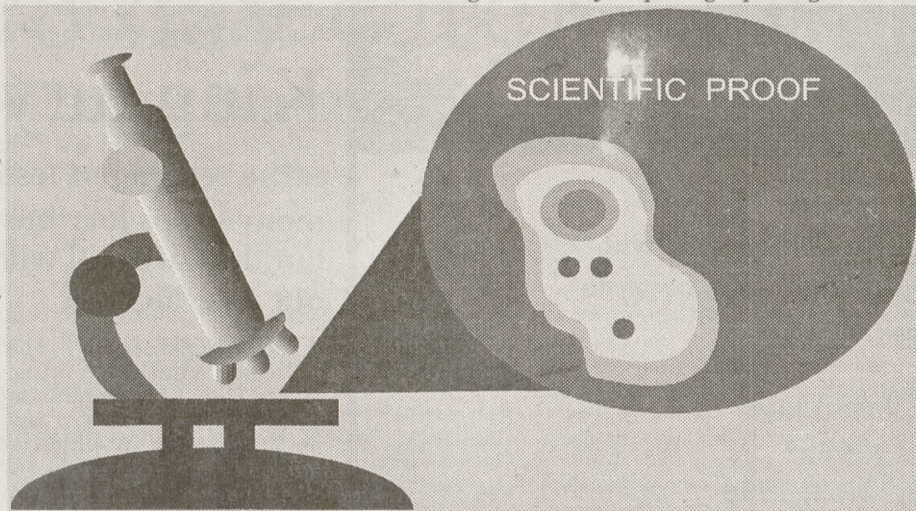
It would be terrible, however, for a woman to decide to have an abortion solely because her child may be gay.

We must accept homosexuality not as a choice that people consciously or subconsciously make, but for what it really is: An orientation that won't disappear no matter how much we wish, damn or pray it away.

After all, what we think "ought to be" is the domain of faith.

That is what some of us hope for. But the evidence presented in this study and in studies to come will challenge, and hopefully change, our beliefs.

H.L. Baxter is a junior geography and political science major



O'Leary wastes dollars, energy

Department of Energy's dubious spending reflects poorly on Democrats

At the sweet sounds of bureaucracy. Say them aloud ... the Department of Commerce, the Department of Education, the Department of Defense, the Department of Health and Human Services, the Department of Housing and Urban Development, the Department of Labor and the Department of State.

Note how each slides off the tongue like a Shakespeare soliloquy. "Labor department, labor department, wherefore art thou labor department?"

Among all the great and wonderful departments in our vast wet dream, the poor little Department of Energy has an awful self-esteem problem.

Energy can't go screw up our relations with foreign countries — that's why we keep the State Department around.

Energy can't help poor people in bad neighborhoods get poorer in worse neighborhoods — nope, Health and Human Services and Housing and Urban Development get that job.

The energy department can't even help more American workers become unemployed — you guessed it, that is the labor department's role in life.

So what does the energy department do? Easy it rates news reporters.

I know, you thought I was going to say something really obvious like, "encourage American businesses to develop alternative fuel sources."

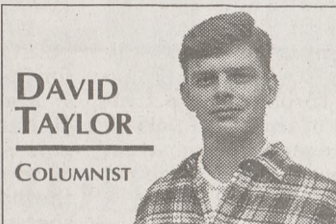
Or maybe, "oversee the allocation of energy resources through this fair land."

No, that would be too obvious for President Clinton's current Secretary of Energy Hazel O'Leary.

Apparently, O'Leary decided to exercise some individual initiative and hire a public relations firm.

In and of itself, that is not a big deal.

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Maybe the firm could help the American proletariat realize that it should turn out the lights when it leaves a room.

The idea never crossed O'Leary's mind.

Nope, she just wanted to know which reporters were nice to her and which were not nice to her.

So over the past year, O'Leary paid this public relations firm \$43,500 to make a list of all reporters who covered the Department of Energy and to rate those reporters.

Democracy in action.

O'Leary claimed she just wanted to see how her message was getting out.

What message?

If she had a message, I could almost see her point.

Unfortunately, the Department of Energy, like the Departments of Education, Labor, Housing and Urban Development and Health and Human Services, has outlived its purpose, whatever it originally was.

There is no message here.

Except maybe, "I'm neurotic and I should be fired."

O'Leary, however, will keep her job. She shouldn't.

As punishment, O'Leary will have to pay back the money out of her office's account.

OK, stay with me on this.

If the money originally came from the Energy Department's account and will now be replaced by an account within the Energy Department, aren't the people still down about \$43,500?

And didn't that money all come from the same source?

To be realistic, this is not a lot of money in the whole scheme of things.

But that's not the point.

Back in the '80s, the Democrats tried to make a big deal out of scandals within the Reagan administration. In the '84 and '88 elections, Mondale and Dukakis both referred

to it as the "sleaze factor."

From now on, I am going to refer to all of the scandals in the Clinton administration as the "cheese factor."

The Democrats have spent the past 40 years claiming to be watching out for the working man and the middle class.

Yep, just put the Democrats in charge and you'll see utopia in a matter of minutes.

This "working class" line is getting a little cheesy. O'Leary is just another example of talking the talk ("we'll take care of your money ..."), but not walking the walk ("... by spending it.")

The Democrats have spent the past 40 years claiming to be watching out for the working man and middle class.

Commerce Secretary Ron Brown is under investigation for accepting gifts from the evil empire (big business).

Hillary Clinton has that magic touch that turns \$5,000 into \$100,000 in one year.

Labor Department head Henry Cisneros is being investigated for making payments to a former mistress.

And then there is the Whitewater mess — and it is a mess.

The solution to this nation's problems does not lie in more class envy or warfare.

It does not lie in more bureaucracy. It lies with the people.

As long as government officials believe themselves unaccountable to the people, they will keep behaving this way.

Hazel O'Leary needs to be reminded of what it is like to be one of the people.

As in "... of the people, by the people, for the people."

Now that has a nice ring to it.

David Taylor is a senior management major

THE BATTALION

Established in 1893

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EDITORIAL

'I'M JUST A BILL'

The Student Senate's cultures bill is a watered-down cop out.

Well, at least it did something. But what it did wasn't much of anything.

Last night, the Student Senate sent a strong message to the administration and student body — the Student Senate is more worried about its own image than the bills it debates.

The Senate amended its American and International Cultures Proposal bill by saying that the student body as a whole does not want a cultures requirement.

However, if the administration does pass a cultures requirement, the Senate advocates a bill that would leave the decision to install a cultures course requirement up to the individual colleges.

This is pointless. If no cultures requirement is approved by the administration, individual colleges will seek to pass their own anyway.

The Student Senate passed this bill because it was under

fire for tabling a related bill earlier this semester. By passing this watered-down excuse for a bill, the Senate appears to reduce the intentions of a cultures requirement to the lowest common denominator.

It is a huge assumption to claim the majority of the student body does not want any cultures requirement. Without any student referendum on a possible requirement, such assumptions are dangerous.

Technically, the Student Senate has no power. All it can do is make recommendations. By last night's decision, students should count their blessings, because now they know why.

The Student Senate may think it has finally taken a stand on the slippery issue of multiculturalism in the curriculum, and it has — by essentially admitting its lack of power and representation on this campus.



MAIL CALL

Woman crew chief deserves respect

In Friday's (Nov. 10) Battalion, I was pictured in the AggieLife section accompanying an article discussing Women's Bonfire Committee.

As a Texas Aggie Crew Chief, not a member of WBC, I am insulted that the only contribution The Batt credited me for was through WBC.

At least, that idea was insinuated in the article.

Women assist in all elements of Bonfire and are not limited by WBC activities.

As I gave my name, title, and phone number to the photographer, I see no reason for this mistake.

I happen to be fourth female Crew Chief.

My position is a difficult one.

I am still breaking ground in the all-important areas of recognition and respect.

I appreciate your assistance in making that ground just a little rougher.

*Amy Magness
crew chief, Bonfire '95
Off-Campus Hogs
Class of '97*

The Battalion encourages letters to the editor and will print as many as space allows. Letters must be 300 words or less and include the author's name, class and phone number.

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