



China's CRISPR Twins Might Have Brain-Enhanced Intelligence

The renegade scientist who edited the gene of twin girls said it was for HIV resistance, but now it is learned that the same gene is directly related to enhanced cognition. This may have been the real goal from the beginning. □ TN Editor

New research suggests that a controversial gene-editing experiment to make children resistant to HIV may also have enhanced their ability to learn and form memories.

The brains of two genetically edited girls born in China last year may have been changed in ways that enhance cognition and memory, scientists say.

The twins, called Lulu and Nana, reportedly [had their genes modified before birth](#) by a Chinese scientific team using the new editing tool CRISPR. The goal was to make the girls immune to infection by HIV, the virus that causes AIDS.

Now, new research shows that the same alteration introduced into the girls' DNA, deletion of a gene called CCR5, not only makes mice smarter but also improves human brain recovery after stroke, and could be linked to greater success in school.

"The answer is likely yes, it did affect their brains," says Alcino J. Silva, a neurobiologist at the University of California, Los Angeles, whose lab uncovered a major new role for the CCR5 gene in memory and the brain's ability to form new connections.

"The simplest interpretation is that those mutations will probably have an impact on cognitive function in the twins," says Silva. He says the exact effect on the girls' cognition is impossible to predict, and "that is why it should not be done."

The Chinese team, led by He Jiankui of the Southern University of Science and Technology in Shenzhen, claimed it used CRISPR to delete CCR5 from human embryos, some of which were later used to create pregnancies. HIV requires the CCR5 gene to enter human blood cells.

The experiment has been widely condemned as irresponsible, and He is under investigation in China. News of the first gene-edited babies also inflamed speculation about whether CRISPR technology could one day be used to create super-intelligent humans, perhaps as part of a biotechnology race between the US and China.

There is no evidence that He actually set out to modify the twins' intelligence. MIT Technology Review contacted scientists studying the effects of CCR5 on cognition, and they say the Chinese scientist never reached out to them, as he did to others from whom he hoped to get scientific advice or support.

"As far as I know, we never heard from him," says Miou Zhou, a professor at the Western University of Health Sciences in California.

Although He never consulted the brain researchers, the Chinese scientist was certainly aware of the link between CCR5 and cognition. It was [first shown in 2016](#) by Zhou and Silva, who found that removing the gene from mice significantly improved their memory. The team had

looked at more than 140 different genetic alterations to find which made mice smarter.

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As Your Phone And TV Track You, Political Campaigns Listen In

Who isn't tracking you these days? Technocrats thrive on data, without which their precious AI programs will sit there like inert rocks. National privacy legislation is desperately needed. □ TN Editor

It was a crowded primary field and Tony Evers, running for governor, was eager to win the support of officials gathered at a Wisconsin state Democratic party meeting, so the candidate did all the usual things: he read the room, he shook hands, he networked.

The digital fence enabled Evers' team to push ads onto the iPhones and Androids of all those attending the meeting. Not only that, but because the technology pulled the unique identification numbers off the phones, a data broker could use the digital signatures to follow the devices home. Once there, the campaign could use so-called cross-device tracking technology to find associated laptops, desktops and other devices to push even more ads.

Welcome to the new frontier of campaign tech — a loosely regulated world in which simply downloading a weather app or game, connecting to Wi-Fi at a coffee shop or powering up a home router can allow a data broker to monitor your movements with ease, then compile the location information and sell it to a political candidate who can use it to surround you with messages.

“We can put a pin on a building, and if you are in that building, we are going to get you,” said Democratic strategist Dane Strother, who advised Evers. And they can get you even if you aren't in the building anymore, but were simply there at some point in the last six months.

Campaigns don't match the names of voters with the personal information they scoop up — although that could be possible in many cases. Instead, they use the information to micro-target ads to appear on phones and other devices based on individual profiles that show where a voter goes, whether a gun range, a Whole Foods or a town hall debate over Medicare.

The spots would show up in all the digital places a person normally sees ads — whether on Facebook or an internet browser such as Chrome.

As a result, if you have been to a political rally, a town hall, or just fit a demographic a campaign is after, chances are good your movements are being tracked with unnerving accuracy by data vendors on the payroll of campaigns. The information gathering can quickly invade even the most private of moments.

Antiabortion groups, for example, used the technology to track women who entered waiting rooms of abortion clinics in more than a half dozen cities. RealOptions, a California-based network of so-called [pregnancy](#)

[crisis centers](#), along with a partner organization, had hired a firm to track cell phones in and around clinic lobbies and push ads touting alternatives to abortion. Even after the women left the clinics, the ads continued for a month.

That effort ended in 2017 under pressure from Massachusetts authorities, who warned it violated the state's consumer protection laws. But such crackdowns are rare.

Data brokers and their political clients operate in an environment in which technology moves much faster than Congress or state legislatures, which are under pressure from Silicon Valley not to strengthen privacy laws. The RealOptions case turned out to be a harbinger for a new generation of political campaigning built around tracking and monitoring even the most private moments of people's lives.

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China's Social Credit System

Now Bans Millions From Trains, Planes

When China said that it was 'turning on' its social credit scoring system, it poured on the coal. Already 17 million are banned from flying and 5.5 million cannot purchase high-speed train tickets. Offenders are shamed by exposing their data to the public. □ TN Editor

Millions of Chinese individuals and businesses have been labelled as untrustworthy on an official blacklist banning them from any number of activities, including accessing financial markets or travelling by air or train, as the use of the government's social credit system accelerates.

The annual blacklist is part of a broader effort to boost "trustworthiness" in Chinese society and is an extension of China's social credit system, which is expected to give each of its 1.4 billion citizens a personal score.

The social credit system assigns both positive and negative scores for individual or corporate behaviour in an attempt to pressure citizens into behaving.

Human rights advocates, though, worry that the arbitrary system does not take into account individual circumstances and so often unfairly labels individuals and firms as untrustworthy.

Over 3.59 million Chinese enterprises were added to the official creditworthiness blacklist last year, banning them from a series of activities, including bidding on projects, accessing security markets, taking part in land auctions and issuing corporate bonds, according to the 2018 annual report released by the National Public Credit Information Centre.

The centre is backed by the National Development and Reform Commission, China's top economic planner, to run the credit rating system.

According to the report, the authorities collected over 14.21 million pieces of information on the “untrustworthy conduct” of individuals and businesses, including charges of swindling customers, failing to repay loans, illegal fund collection, false and misleading advertising, as well as uncivilised behaviour such as taking reserved seats on trains or causing trouble in hospitals.

About 17.46 million “discredited” people were restricted from buying plane tickets and 5.47 million were restricted from purchasing high-speed train tickets, the report said.

Besides restrictions on buying tickets, local authorities also used novel methods to put pressure on untrustworthy subjects, including preventing people from buying premium insurance, wealth management products or real estate, as well as shaming them by exposing their information in public.

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Climate Change 'Heat Records' Are A Huge Data Manipulation

Global media continues its hysterical coverage of 'catastrophic' global warming predictions. The only solution ever offered is Sustainable Development, which is specifically designed to replace Capitalism and Free Enterprise. □ TN Editor

The idea that climate change is producing heat records across the Earth is among the most egregious manipulations of data in the absurd global warming debate.

Americans receive a daily barrage from the fake news media and climate "experts" reporting that each and every day, week, month or year is the hottest on record due to global warming. On Feb. 7, several major newspapers carried stories of the declaration by NASA and NOAA that the past five years have been the warmest on record.

Sadly, these supposed experts use mathematical equations that do not jibe with reality over the past 140 years.

The same climate experts warn that record heat is just the tip of the iceberg. We are constantly told that global warming is the root cause behind any and all weather events that are extreme, destructive, unusual or uncomfortable.

Many of these fear mongers also say we should stop burning fossil fuels that are causing this mayhem.

Is the Earth truly experiencing the hottest weather on record?

Absolutely not.

Actual weather records over the past 100 years show no correlation between rising carbon dioxide levels and local temperatures.

However, climate change alarmists always find somewhere on Earth where temperatures are higher than ever. The focus is always on

isolated temperatures that have reached all-time highs while the same reports ignore all-time record lows. These zealots would like you to believe that due to fossil fuel emissions, summers are now longer and hotter while winters are shorter and milder.

Yet, the actual temperature records tell a very different story. Did the Earth experience its highest temperature ever this year? The answer is no.

The highest temperature ever reported was 136 degrees Fahrenheit in Libya in 1922. The record high temperature for the United States was 134 degrees Fahrenheit in Death Valley, California, in 1913. Fossil fuel emissions in 1913 and 1922 were negligible compared to today.

The coldest temperature ever reported was 129 degrees below zero Fahrenheit in Vostok, Antarctica, in 1983, when Carbon dioxide emissions were five times higher than in 1913. The coldest temperature in the lower 48 states of minus 64 degrees Fahrenheit was recorded in 1996 in Embarrass, Minnesota. Did the media and climate scientists warn that this low temperature indicated that we are headed for another Ice Age?

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American DNA Scanning Technology Helps China Track Citizens

Technology transfer between West and East goes back as far as the Bolshevik Revolution, as proven definitively by the late Professor Antony Sutton. This is just a continuation of this pattern of collusion. □ TN Editor

The authorities called it a free health check. Tahir Imin had his doubts.

They drew blood from the 38-year-old Muslim, scanned his face, recorded his voice and took his fingerprints. They didn't bother to check his heart or kidneys, and they rebuffed his request to see the results.

"They said, 'You don't have the right to ask about this,'" Mr. Imin said. "If you want to ask more,' they said, 'you can go to the police.'"

Mr. Imin was one of millions of people caught up in a vast Chinese campaign of surveillance and oppression. To give it teeth, the Chinese

authorities are collecting DNA — and they got unlikely corporate and academic help from the United States to do it.

China wants to make the country's Uighurs, a predominantly Muslim ethnic group, more subservient to the Communist Party. It has [detained up to a million people](#) in what China calls "re-education" camps, drawing condemnation from human rights groups and a threat of sanctions from the Trump administration.

Collecting genetic material is a key part of China's campaign, according to human rights groups and Uighur activists. They say a comprehensive DNA database could be used to chase down any Uighurs who resist conforming to the campaign.

Police forces in the United States and elsewhere use [genetic material from family members to find suspects and solve crimes](#). Chinese officials, who are building a broad nationwide database of DNA samples, have cited the crime-fighting benefits of China's own genetic studies.

To bolster their DNA capabilities, scientists affiliated with China's police used equipment made by Thermo Fisher, a Massachusetts company. For comparison with Uighur DNA, they also relied on genetic material from people around the world that was provided by Kenneth Kidd, a prominent Yale University geneticist.

On Wednesday, Thermo Fisher said it would no longer sell its equipment in Xinjiang, the part of China where the campaign to track Uighurs is mostly taking place. The company said separately in an earlier statement to The New York Times that it was working with American officials to figure out how its technology was being used.

Dr. Kidd said he had been unaware of how his material and know-how were being used. He said he believed Chinese scientists were acting within scientific norms that require informed consent by DNA donors.

China's campaign poses a direct challenge to the scientific community and the way it makes cutting-edge knowledge publicly available. The campaign relies in part on public DNA databases and commercial technology, much of it made or managed in the United States. In turn,

Chinese scientists have contributed Uighur DNA samples to a global database, potentially violating scientific norms of consent.

Cooperation from the global scientific community “legitimizes this type of genetic surveillance,” said Mark Munsterhjelm, an assistant professor at the University of Windsor in Ontario who has closely tracked the use of American technology in Xinjiang.

Swabbing Millions

In Xinjiang, in northwestern China, the program was known as “Physicals for All.”

From 2016 to 2017, nearly 36 million people took part in it, according to Xinhua, China’s official news agency. The authorities collected DNA samples, images of irises and other personal data, according to Uighurs and human rights groups. It is unclear whether some residents participated more than once — Xinjiang has a population of about 24.5 million.

In a statement, the Xinjiang government denied that it collects DNA samples as part of the free medical checkups. It said the DNA machines that were bought by the Xinjiang authorities were for “internal use.”

China has for decades maintained an iron grip in Xinjiang. In recent years, it has blamed Uighurs for a series of terrorist attacks in Xinjiang and elsewhere in China, including a [2013 incident](#) in which a driver struck two people in Tiananmen Square in Beijing.

In late 2016, the Communist Party embarked on a campaign to turn the Uighurs and other largely Muslim minority groups into loyal supporters. The government locked up hundreds of thousands of them in what it called job training camps, touted as a way to escape poverty, backwardness and radical Islam. It also began to take DNA samples.

In at least some of the cases, people didn’t give up their genetic material voluntarily. To mobilize Uighurs for the free medical checkups, police and local cadres called or sent them text messages, telling them the checkups were required, according to Uighurs interviewed by The

Times.

“There was a pretty strong coercive element to it,” said Darren Byler, an anthropologist at the University of Washington who studies the plight of the Uighurs. “They had no choice.”

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AI Targets Takeover Of Fast Food Drive Thru Windows

If AI has its way, the drive-through job is headed for mass extinction. Technocrats see no problem in displacing workers and potentially pushing them into a new class of unemployables. □ TN Editor

The drive through window is often considered the most harrowing

assignment inside a fast-food restaurant.

A nonstop whirlwind of multitasking, the gig involves organizing multiple orders, communicating with the kitchen, counting money and negotiating with an endless stream of customers who range from polite and coherent to angry and inebriated — all for a minimum wage reward.

If that juggling act wasn't hard enough, a giant timer hangs in many drive through kitchens, adding urgency to each task, former workers say.

Though the drive through gantlet has broken many a fast food worker, the newest employee at Good Times Burgers & Frozen Custard in Denver will not be feeling the heat anytime soon. That's because she's an artificially intelligent voice assistant — emotion-free and immune to stress — with the ability to operate a drive through window without fatigue, bathroom breaks or compensation.

She fills a classically American job nearly a century in the making, a rite of passage for generations of teenagers that could be in the very early stages of a mass extinction. But first Rob Carpenter, the CEO and founder of Valyant AI, an artificial intelligence company that designed the customer service platform, will have to prove that his model works as well as he says it does.

The AI assistant has endured months of testing, but officially began handling the restaurant's breakfast orders at last week. If the fledgling assistant runs into any technical issues, the transaction is handed off to a human employee inside the restaurant.

"The system takes a lot of friction out of interactions between customers and employees," Carpenter said, noting that the AI was designed to sound like an amiable woman's voice. "The AI never gets offended and it will just keep talking to you in a very calm and friendly voice."

There's an immediate benefit for employees as well, Carpenter maintains.

"Over the course of an eight-hour shift, they don't have to repeat the

same welcome language hundreds of times,” he said.

Intelligent, interactive machines, once the stuff of sci-fi movies and futuristic fantasy, are quickly becoming a reality, especially in the fast food dining world, where repetition rules and improvisation is limited. In restaurants around the globe, machines are already taking orders, flipping burgers, preparing pizzas, pouring stiff drinks and cooking entire meals in full view of hungry customers.

Fast food restaurants like Starbucks, Wendy’s, Panera and McDonald’s encourage customers to order using self-service kiosks or a mobile app. But Valyant AI appears to be one of the first companies to create a platform for taking orders via an interactive AI voice assistant - one who also happens to be the first company representative many customers will encounter.

Carpenter said the assistant’s conversational cadence — which sounds like a more fluid version of Amazon’s Alexa — was designed to replicate human interactions, with limited pauses and a menu-based script that varies depending on the exchange.

In a video demonstrating the AI assistant, a woman’s voice can be heard saying:

“Hi, I’m your automated order taker. Take your time, order when you’re ready.”

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