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# The handedness of Kerrs and Carrs

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The surnames Kerr and Carr have been claimed on the basis of folkloric and

handed, presumably to the advantage of the defenders. Tangentially it should also be

~~noted that it has been reported that K... along with Mr Donald M J~~

grandparents, children and grandchildren. If they were married then similar questions were asked about their spouse's family, either indirectly or directly from the spouse if they were available to talk on the telephone.

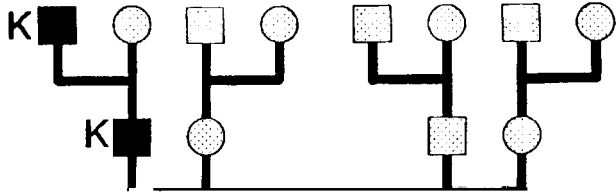
A written proforma was used to ensure that telephone interviews were as uniform as possible. Handedness was assessed by asking 'Do you regard yourself as naturally-

right- or left-handed?'; in the event of any query respondents were asked about the hand they used for writing, with account being taken if they had been forced to

probands' generation ( $N = 290$ ), 7.1 per cent in children ( $N = 85$ ), and 0.0 per cent in grandchildren ( $N = 28$ ); the differences are not statistically significant ( $\chi^2(34) = 8.24$ , n.s.).

The relationship of handedness to the cohort of birth of family members was assessed by assuming that the proband, their spouse, and their siblings were in the same age range as the proband themselves, that parents were on average 25 years older, and that grandparents were 50 years older, that children were 25 years younger and

-2:



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K



to the subjects themselves, so that a response bias was likely from left-handed Kerrs or Carrs. Our study, with a sample size some  $3\frac{1}{2}$  times larger than the original study has not only failed to replicate the finding, but has found a result that is significant in the opposite direction. We must therefore conclude that there is no convincing evidence, despite a wealth of historical, folkloric and etymological evidence, that

modern-day Kerrs and Carrs have an increased likelihood of sinistrality.

The validity of the data obtained by our study are suggested by the overall estimate of the incidence of left-handedness, which is well within the limits reported in other studies (Bishop, 1990; McManus, 1991; Seddon & McManus, 1991), and the evidence of a significant difference in incidence of left-handedness in males and females, which is also compatible with other studies (Beaton, 1985; McManus, 1991; Seddon & McManus, 1991). The incidence of left-handedness in the probands ( $N = 98$ ; 15.3 per cent, 95 per cent CI = 8.17–22.42 per cent) is highly compatible with the overall incidence of 7.79 per cent found in the meta-analysis of handedness

handedness in families would be very different from that which is actually found