

DELIBERATELY DIVIDED

Inside the controversial study of twins and triplets adopted separately

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In her latest book, Segal discusses a thorny subject: the willful separation of twins and triplets upon adoption in the 1960s-80s. Eleven identical multiple babies, 4 twins and 1 triplets, grew up alone. The adoptive parents were not told that their baby was one of multiple births. However, they were expected to participate in a study into the development of their child, a condition for adoption. The children were followed until the age of 12. In fact, the nature-nurture relationship was studied, the question of what influences our behavior most: genes or nurture.

How could this experiment take place? That twins were separated and their parents deceived? Why were fraternal twins also separated that were not studied (6 pairs)? How many more twins suffered this fate? These are the questions Segal asks. She herself is a dedicated twin studies researcher for whom the scientific rigor is above all else. In addition, she is one of twins herself, so her involvement is professional and personal.

Segal does a thorough investigation of all the possible factors that led to this happening and she interviews everyone who has been involved in one way or another, directly or indirectly, in search of answers. She barely finds it. The investigation is shrouded in mystery.

Louise Wise Services (LWS), led by psychiatrist Viola Bernard, was the adoption agency that arranged the placement of the children and partnered with New York University psychiatrist Peter Neubauer. This study is known as the LWS-CDC study. The Child Development Center conducted the research. Were they blinded by the "perfect" opportunity to track from the very beginning identical twins who didn't grow up together? An investigation perfect in theory, but immoral in practice, in the words of Segal. Was that also the reason that nothing has been published, that Neubauer's planned book never saw the light, and that the data is locked in Yale University until 2065? Probably. Bernard was convinced that twins can develop their identity better if they grow up separately from each other. In addition, she believed that raising twins was stressful for parents. These arguments justified the study at a time when sibling splitting upon adoption was not yet properly regulated. So what happened was not legally punishable, but absolutely unacceptable morally and ethically, a violation of family ties.

Segal describes a number of cases of twins finding each other, often through recognition of third parties. This event turned the lives of everyone involved upside down, parents, siblings, uncles, aunts and above all that of the twins themselves. There was almost always an immediate click between them. Most of them formed a beautiful bond and never lost sight of each other. What bound them was the sadness of not growing up together. But not all twins managed to bond. When disagreements arose, they lacked the experience of arguing and making amends, which twins normally learn in childhood. They lost each other for the second time. They had become 'Identical Strangers' for each other because of what had been done to them, such as the title of the book written by the reunited twins Paula and Elyse and the title of the movie about the identical triplets (Three identical strangers). Three of the 23 people

involved committed suicide. This is a high number, as science shows that twins are less likely to commit suicide than singletons, precisely because of their bond. But that has been taken from these twins.

The collected data has still not been released in its entirety, despite efforts by the families' lawyers. That means that this black page in the history of science is not closed. The secrecy continues. Segal's latest book, 500 pages long, is a bold attempt at transparency, concluding that this event primarily teaches us not to do research.

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