**"Identical Strangers" Exploring Nature vs. Nurture**

By stenz047 on October 9, 2011 8:06 PM |

I consider Nature vs. Nurture to be a very interesting topic. I have heard about it in several places, but never had to opportunity to explore it as much as I have in PSY 1001. I now know that the big debate is about if either our DNA or our life experiences make up who we are as individuals. The debate might have generally agreed that both factors influence the uniqueness of each person, but it is far from over. This is especially true when you find sources like, "Identical Strangers." I knew that Nature vs. Nurture was a topic that I wanted to research more on, and this source popped up in my search. I immediately clicked on it and was interested throughout the whole article (which can be difficult nowadays). The article is about two identical twins, Paula Bernstein and Elyse Schein, who were separated as infants and adopted by two different families that had no clue another sibling was out there upon adoption. Paula received a phone call from the adoption agency she was adopted through saying that there was a person looking for her... and that person was her twin.

Now, as crazy as that already is, the story is even more perplexing. The way that these two were separated was by no means ethical, or at least in my opinion. It seems great that the two found each other and now admit that they love each other, but the way that they were separated for 35 years is appalling to me. The sisters found out that they were in a specific study for Nature vs. Nurture. The article states that, "Neither parents nor children knew the real subject of the study -- or that the children had been separated from their identical twin." This takes me directly back to what we learned in lecture and if we wanted to participate in additional studies to get extra credit points. In all studies, we would know before partaking in the study, we would know what we were about to do. In no circumstances would we be unaware, and if we felt uncomfortable, we could back out at any time.

Apparently, these two sisters did not have that opportunity, or if there was a parent in the picture, they didn't either. Unfortunately, I was a little confused on the role of the biological mother, which may have been a bigger factor in the decision making process behind why these two were chosen for the study. Were they abandoned and then separated at adoption after the study? Or, was the parent participating the study unaware that her/his children would be separated? Nevertheless, the fact that the doctor, Peter Neubauer refused to apologize is interesting. He might think that the results are useful, and maybe they are, but the processes taken to get the results not changed the lives of two sisters, but the families that they have also. I read that in some cases, people are not told about things so the outcome of the study won't be skewed. These babies obviously had no say in the outcome, but could they have if they were 10, 15, 20, and so on? Now this is an illegal thing to do, separate siblings at adoption agencies. I presume that more ethical decisions have been made in the Psychological world too since this study was given, but this goes back to the idea of what is ethical and what is not. For the most part, Psychological practices seem to have changes for the better since the past. However, we always make mistakes. Just because we did it then, doesn't mean that more unethical decisions won’t be made now. My question is, how do we avoid these kinds of situations for the future?