

three identical strangers questions and answers

Three Identical Strangers Questions and Answers

The documentary "Three Identical Strangers" explores the incredible and disturbing story of triplets separated at birth and reunited by chance. This true story raises numerous questions about identity, ethics, and the implications of psychological experimentation. Below, we delve into some of the most pressing inquiries regarding the documentary, the triplets' experiences, and the moral dilemmas surrounding their separation.

Overview of the Documentary

"Three Identical Strangers," directed by Tim Wardle, premiered at the Sundance Film Festival in 2018 and quickly gained acclaim for its gripping narrative. The film tells the story of Bobby Shafran, David Kellman, and Eddy Galland, who were born in 1961 and adopted into different families as part of a secret study. Their reunion in 1980, when they were 19, sparked media frenzy and questions about their upbringing and the intentions behind their separation.

The Triplets' Journey

1. Reunion: The triplets were reunited after Bobby, who had just started college, was mistaken for David. The two immediately recognized their striking resemblance and soon discovered Eddy, who had also been adopted into a different family.
2. Media Sensation: Their story captivated the public, leading to appearances on talk shows and documentaries, highlighting the joy of their reunion.
3. Psychological Experiment: As they began to investigate their past, they uncovered a disturbing truth about the circumstances of their separation and the psychological study conducted by the Louise Wise Services adoption agency.

Key Questions About the Documentary

1. What was the purpose of separating the triplets?

The triplets were part of a controversial study conducted by psychiatrist Peter Neubauer. The goal was to investigate the effects of nature versus nurture on personality and behavior. Neubauer believed that by studying identical siblings raised in different environments, he could gain insights into genetic predispositions versus environmental influences.

This experiment was ethically dubious, as the triplets were not informed about their siblings or the nature of the study. The research aimed to collect data on their development and was never published, leaving many questions unanswered.

2. How did the triplets feel about their reunion?

Initially, the triplets experienced an overwhelming sense of joy and excitement upon their reunion. They shared similar interests, mannerisms, and even tastes, which made the bond feel almost surreal. However, as they delved deeper into the implications of their separation, this joy became intertwined with feelings of betrayal and confusion.

The documentary captures their emotional rollercoaster as they grapple with their identities and the realization that their lives had been manipulated for research purposes. The triplets expressed feelings of anger and sadness, particularly regarding the lost opportunities to grow up together.

3. What ethical issues does the documentary raise?

The story of the triplets brings several ethical concerns to the forefront:

- **Informed Consent:** The triplets were not informed about their siblings or the study, raising questions about the ethics of conducting research without participants' knowledge or consent.
- **Psychological Impact:** The long-term psychological effects on the triplets and their families were not considered. The trauma of separation and the subsequent reunion led to significant emotional distress.
- **Manipulation of Lives:** The decision to separate the triplets for research purposes suggests a troubling disregard for their autonomy and well-being. The notion of treating human lives as data points in a study raises fundamental ethical questions in psychological research.

4. What were the findings of the study, and why was it never published?

The findings of Peter Neubauer's study remain largely unknown, as the research was never published. After his death in 2007, the records of the study were sealed for 75 years, which means that the triplets and the public may never know the full extent of the conclusions drawn from their lives.

The secrecy surrounding the study has fueled speculation and frustration among the triplets and their families. They have consistently voiced their desire to understand what the researchers learned and how it applied to them.

5. How did the reunion affect the triplets' lives in the long term?

The initial joy of reunion eventually gave way to complex emotional challenges.

- **Personal Struggles:** Each brother faced personal struggles, including mental health issues. Eddy, in particular, battled with depression and ultimately took his own life in 1995, which deeply affected Bobby and David.
- **Relationships:** Their relationships with their adoptive families were also strained, as the reunion forced them to confront the reality of their separate upbringings and the implications of their shared identity.
- **Advocacy:** The triplets have become advocates for ethical standards in adoption and psychological research, aiming to prevent future cases of similar exploitation.

Broader Implications of the Triplets' Story

The story of the three identical strangers transcends their individual experiences and raises broader questions about identity, family, and the ethics of scientific research.

1. Nature vs. Nurture Debate

The documentary reignites the age-old debate of nature versus nurture. While the triplets shared identical DNA, their distinct upbringings led to variations in their personalities, interests, and life choices. This complexity illustrates that while genetics play a significant role in shaping who we are, environmental factors also profoundly influence our development.

2. The Importance of Ethical Standards in Research

"Three Identical Strangers" serves as a cautionary tale regarding the potential for abuse in psychological research. The ethical breaches evident in the triplets' story highlight the necessity for strict guidelines and oversight in studies involving human subjects.

1. Informed Consent: Researchers must ensure that participants are fully aware of any studies they are involved in.
2. Psychological Well-Being: The potential psychological impact on participants should be prioritized in research design.
3. Transparency: Openness about the aims, methods, and findings of research is crucial to maintaining ethical standards.

3. The Search for Identity

The triplets' journey underscores the profound human need for connection and understanding of one's identity. Their story resonates with anyone who has grappled with questions of belonging, family ties, and the impact of circumstance on life's trajectory.

Conclusion

"Three Identical Strangers" is more than just a story of reunion; it is a complex exploration of identity, ethics, and the consequences of scientific inquiry. The triplets' experiences prompt critical questions about the nature of human relationships and the moral responsibilities of researchers. As society continues to navigate the intricate interplay between genetics and environment, the lessons from this documentary remain deeply relevant, urging us to reflect on the ethical implications of our actions and the importance of empathy in understanding the human experience.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the central premise of 'Three Identical Strangers'?

'Three Identical Strangers' tells the true story of triplets who were separated at birth and reunited by chance at the age of 19, uncovering a complex web of adoption and psychological experiments.

How did the triplets find out about each other?

The triplets discovered each other when one of them, Bobby Shafran, enrolled in college and was mistaken for his brother, David Kellman, leading to a reunion that brought in their third brother, Eddy Galland.

What ethical issues are raised in the documentary?

The documentary raises serious ethical concerns regarding the separation of the triplets and the secretive nature of the study conducted by the adoption agency, which aimed to study the effects of nature versus nurture.

What impact did the reunion have on the brothers' lives?

The reunion initially brought joy and excitement, but it also led to emotional struggles and identity crises as they grappled with their separation and the implications of their shared past.

What role did the adoption agency play in the triplets' separation?

The adoption agency facilitated the separation of the triplets, placing them in different families without informing the adoptive parents about the existence of the other siblings, as part of a controversial study.

How did the public react to the story of the triplets?

The story garnered significant media attention, with many people expressing shock and outrage over the unethical practices of the adoption agency and the psychological experiments conducted on the triplets.

What are some of the psychological effects experienced by the triplets?

The triplets experienced feelings of confusion, loss, and betrayal, as well as struggles with mental health issues, stemming from their unusual upbringing and the trauma of their separation.

What was the significance of the title 'Three Identical Strangers'?

The title emphasizes the profound irony of the brothers being identical in appearance yet strangers to each other, highlighting the complexities of familial bonds and identity.

How did the documentary explore the concept of identity?

The documentary delves into how the triplets' identities were shaped by their separate upbringings and the psychological effects of being raised apart, prompting viewers to consider the influence of genetics versus environment.

What lessons can be learned from the story of the triplets?

The story teaches important lessons about the importance of ethical practices in research, the impact of family and environment on personal identity, and the need for transparency in adoption processes.

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