

When You Find Out You Married Your Sister

You knew it had to happen sometime. A husband discovers that he and his wife have the same sperm donor father. (Both of them were raised by lesbian parents.) That means he married his half-sister, who is now the mother of their three children. What should they do?

Although the story has not, to my knowledge, been verified, it was the subject of a question submitted to Emily Yoffe, author of the Dear Prudence advice column. The husband explained that when he met his wife in college, “the attraction was immediate, and we quickly became inseparable. We had a number of things in common,” and so, he writes, “everything was very natural between us.”

Of course, thousands of other couples have experienced an immediate attraction that turned into a lasting relationship, but there’s an added factor here. Did this couple experience genetic sexual attraction?

According to the Genetic Sexual Attraction website, “Genetic sexual attraction or GSA occurs between two adults who have been separated during the critical years of development and bonding and are reunited years later as adults. When these ‘strangers’ finally meet, the brain struggles to associate each other as family. Instead, they become captivated with one another, sharing similar physical features, likes and dislikes.”

Is that what this couple experienced? And what does this do to the “born that way” argument commonly used by gay activists to support their case that “gay rights” equals “black civil rights”? In the case of homosexuality, there remains no reputable scientific evidence that anyone is born gay

(although there are certainly genetic contributions—as opposed to genetic causes—to homosexuality).

In the case of GSA, there could really be deeper genetic factors at work, yet there is only one viable response when it comes to separated siblings who meet later in the life and are attracted to each other: They must resist what their genes want them to do.

But what about this couple? The wife was raised by two lesbians and had learned who her donor dad was when she turned 18. The husband, raised by one lesbian, was never interested in learning the identity of his donor dad until this year, when, for their anniversary, he decided to find out who his biological father was. To his utter shock, he learned that it was the same as his wife's donor dad. (For the common traumas experienced by children of sperm donors, in particular anonymous sperm donors, see my article, "The Kids Are Not Always Alright.")

Unsurprisingly, this is not the first time such a thing has happened—or, at least, was feared to have happened. A 2008 article reported that lesbian couples in South Australia were "'at risk' due to prolific sperm donors." The article noted that, "There have been reports of one man impregnating 30 lesbian women, whose children now socialise together. Unless they are aware of their shared parentage, there is concern some of them could commit incest."

Yes, this is another tragic consequence to the breakdown of the family in our generation. Not just fatherless kids, but married couples produced by the same father. Are we really so bigoted to stand for natural, organic marriage?

Returning to this particular incestuous couple, the husband wrote: "On the one hand, I love my wife more than I can say, and logically, done is done, we already have children. I have had a vasectomy, so we won't be having any more, so perhaps

there is no harm in continuing as we are. But, I can't help but think, 'This is my sister' every time I look at her now. I haven't said anything to her yet, and I don't know if I should or not. Where do I go from here? I am tempted to burn everything I got from the sperm bank and just try to forget it all, but I'm not sure if I can. Please help me figure out where to go from here."

Without a doubt, this is a difficult, painful situation, and I can understand that "Prudence" could be faulted for any answer she might give. (She counseled him to tell his wife, get counseling as a couple and move on with life, never telling the kids.)

What's shocking, though, is her overall attitude: "I think there's way too much emphasis put on DNA. Yes, you two will have had a shock, but when it wears off you will be the same people you were before you found out. Shocking news has the effect of making people feel as if the waves it sends out will always rock them. But I think you two should be able to file away your genetic origins and go on."

In other words, incest might not be so bad after all. But fear not. There's no slippery slope, and only homophobic bigots want to preserve the natural family. Right.

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