

CASE STUDY

FAITH AND HOPE

Two identical twin girls, Faith and Hope, were born to a poor, teenage, single mother from Chicago's South Side. Their mother smoked and drank heavily throughout the pregnancy—somewhat due to stress and frustration at the father of the babies, who was completely absent (both physically and financially), and also ignorance regarding the damage she was doing to the babies. When the twins were born, they both had relatively low diagnostic scores on breathing, responsiveness, color, and so forth (i.e., Apgar scores). Still, their mother wanted to do her best to raise the twins.

After only a month, their mother realized she could not handle the burden of two babies, so she gave Hope up for adoption. This realization came after she accidentally dropped Faith on her head while changing the girls' diapers on a bathroom counter. Hope was adopted relatively quickly by an upper-middle-class family living in the affluent northwest side of Chicago. Their mother readily signed off on this adoption, because she knew Hope was going to a good environment. Faith stayed with her mother and grew up without knowing she had an identical twin.

Faith showed many problems in early development, with low scores and grades in virtually all topics in school. School-mandated medical checkups found that she had a significantly lower heartbeat than most children her age. Furthermore, in middle school—with her mother working two full-time, minimum-wage jobs to support them—Faith ate an unhealthy diet of fast food and gained far more weight than normal for her age. This led to her becoming obese by age 11, at which time she also entered puberty, largely due to high levels of fats and proteins in her system. Faith developed breasts and quickly caught the attention of teenage boys at school. Following her mother's guidance, she avoided these boys' advances until she was in high school. When she was a freshman, a junior asked her to the junior prom, and she was so flattered and infatuated that she had sex with him in his car after the event.

Faith made him wear a condom, but as their relationship continued, she grew less cautious. She was pregnant by the end of her sophomore year. Once he found out, the father of the baby broke off all contact with Faith, so she explored other options to finance the cost of keeping the baby. She realized she would likely have to quit school and find a job

because her mother's two minimum-wage jobs were not bringing in enough. Faith began stealing small items from local department stores and selling them online or to people she met. Not only did this not raise enough money, but she was caught by local police and arrested. The charges were dismissed because this was her first offense.

One of Faith's friends told her that she could make more money in one day distributing drugs than in an entire week at a minimum-wage job, so she met with a local gangster and he put her to work. She quickly began making some money, but she also ended up taking some of the methamphetamine

they were selling so she could stay awake for the calls from her "boss" and "customers" who came at all times of the night. At

one point, she got into an altercation with a customer who tried to take the drugs without paying. Because Faith knew she would have to pay her boss if she didn't get the money for the meth, she hit the customer in the head with a tree branch. The customer then called the police. Faith was arrested and charged with aggravated assault. Once the police interviewed the customer, she dropped the charges because she realized she had much to lose in the eyes of the court. Still, being charged with aggravated assault weighed heavily on Faith, because she never saw herself as a violent person.

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After a couple of months, Faith realized that her baby was in jeopardy and that she had become addicted to methamphetamine. She aborted the child and then tried to go back to high school through a continuation program. She graduated and is currently living with a relatively steady boyfriend and one child in an apartment in Chicago. We will revisit Faith at the end of this chapter as well as apply various theoretical concepts and propositions to her situation. We will also hear what happened to Hope, her twin sister.

THINK ABOUT IT:

1. How did very early physiological experiences lead to different developmental paths between the two sisters?
2. How did the social environment further compound the effects of such physiological differences between Faith and Hope?