

BOOK REVIEW

Accidental Brothers: The Story of Twins Exchanged at Birth and the Power of Nature and Nurture

Nancy L. Segal and Yesika S. Montoya (2018), St. Martin's Press, 352 pp., hardcover ISBN 9781250101907, ebook ISBN 9781250101914

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This amazing true story is told from the viewpoint of Professor Nancy L. Segal, a renowned psychologist and twin researcher, who is currently a Professor of Developmental Psychology and the Director of the Twin Studies Center, California State University. This is one of several of Nancy Segal's books about twins, which include the recent *Twin Mythconceptions: False Beliefs, Fables, and Facts About Twins* (published by Elsevier in 2017) and the award-winning *Born Together-Reared Apart: The Landmark Minnesota Twin Study* (published by Harvard University Press in 2012). In this and her previous books she describes a wealth of twin case studies researched over her career. As part of her self-described 'twin tracking adventures', she has even set a new Guinness world record for reuniting twins who had been apart for 78 years.

Accidental Brothers documents the story of two sets of identical twins separated at birth, who are reunited as adults. It begins in 1988 in a rural district of Colombia, South America, with Ana Delina embarking on a treacherous 8-hour journey to a hospital to deliver her twin sons. Here an oversight results in the switching of one of her babies with one of Luz Marina Castro Chavez, who had given birth to her own twin boys. The detailed description of events and characters, and the attention to detail, gives credence to this fascinating true story, which at its heart is a riveting family saga.

The book goes on to detail the lives of the two sets of misplaced identical twins brought up as fraternal twins 150 miles apart. William with Wilber was raised in an iso-

lated rural farming community in La Paz, and Jorge with Carlos was raised in the vibrant capital city of Bogotá. The differences and similarities between the boys are described as we explore the genetic and environmental effects on their physical attributes, personality traits, and behavioral characteristics. William and his twin Jorge are spontaneous and charming, while Wilber and Carlos are more reserved. When finally reunited at the age of 25 through a series of chance encounters by mutual friends, together with their families they must deal with the realization of their accidental lives.

This popular science book uses this story and additional case study examples to give a comprehensive insight into how twin research illuminates the origins of human traits and behavior. Other described examples of genetic similarities include reared-apart identical twin fire-fighters who both drink only Budweiser holding the can in the same positions, or the 'giggle twins', who were sisters reared apart but would laugh uncontrollably with the same humor when they were together. Environmental influences are observed in identical reared-apart Korean twins where one is highly outgoing, being raised in an ethnically diverse community, but the other is reserved after growing up in a homogeneous Paris suburb as an only child where she was an outsider. More complex scientific concepts are touched upon, including genetics, mitochondrial DNA and epigenetics, explained in an interesting way suitable for the lay audience. In addition, we explore the parent–infant relationships, and the psychological impact of these chance circumstances. Two of the boys were raised in families where they did not

look as similar to their relatives, and then learnt that they never really belonged.

The chatty flow of the book is highly engaging, although at times the many characters from the two families and inclusion of additional twin case studies as examples can be quite confusing. This is helped by referring to the open-

ing pages, which list the Columbian twins and their family members. With a combination of human interest and science, which is also highly entertaining, this book will appeal to a wide-ranging audience.
