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Book review

Nancy Segal, *Indivisible by Two: Lives of Extraordinary Twins*

Following the well-deserved success of her critically-acclaimed *Entwined Lives: Twins and What They Tell Us about Human Behavior* (Plume, 2000), Nancy Segal has written another gem of a book about twins: *Indivisible by Two: Lives of Extraordinary Twins* (Harvard University Press, 2005).

Indivisible by Two tells the stories of ten pairs of twins, one set of triplets, and one quadruplet set (which itself consists of two pairs of identical and four pairs of fraternal twins), organized into four main categories: twins who were *separated at birth* (including the well-known pair Oskar and Jack, one of whom was raised as a Catholic in Hitler's Germany and the other who was raised a Jew in Trinidad), twins (or multiples) who exemplify *variations on common themes* (this section describes twins and triplets with striking similarities and differences: for example, the identical triplet men two of whom are heterosexual and one who is homosexual), twins who have undergone *extraordinary circumstances* (such as Stepha and Annetta, who survived Auschwitz and being forced to be participants in Mengele's experiments), and twins whose stories are *everyday wonders* (including the story of identical twin men who married identical twin women, all four of whom insist they could not have married anyone other than their particular spouse).

All of the stories in this book are fascinating and thought-provoking, and Nancy Segal is well-qualified to write about them. Not only is she herself a twin (seven minutes older than her fraternal twin sister); not only has she conducted extensive research with twins (including studying 70 of the 135 reared-apart twins in the Minnesota study); and not only has she discovered a new kind of twin ("virtual twins" – see *PAID*, 2005, 39, 1061–1073) but Segal very likely personally *knows* more twins and knows as much as or more *about* twins as anyone else. To research the stories in *Indivisible by Two*, Segal traveled as far afield as Melbourne, Australia to Cobourg, Ontario in Canada to visit and spend time with the twins and their families, gaining first-hand exposure to their lives and experiences.

A brief review such as this cannot do justice to the diversity of the engrossing narratives that Segal has collected in this book; it is definitely a "must read" for anyone interested in twins or, as in the title of her first book, what twins can tell us about human behavior. Moreover, Segal takes *Indivisible by Two* beyond a simple recounting of interesting anecdotes as, for example, when she discusses the surprisingly small effects that Oskar and Jack's radically different rearing environments had on their personalities, or when she describes the turmoil and family dynamics that can occur when two adults raised as fraternal twins suddenly discover that they are, in fact,

completely unrelated to one another and that one of them has an identical twin that he never knew. Throughout the book, Segal takes the stories to a more profound level with her insights as to how the twins' stories can inform us about topics such as sexual orientation, selective mutism, and people's capacity to cope with tragedy. A concluding chapter discusses cloning and how the results of twin studies can address many of the misplaced criticisms that have been directed toward clone-research.

Indivisible by Two combines literary non-fiction with science and is one of only a few books that I literally couldn't put down until I had read it in one sitting.

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