

The Mysterious Life of Twins

Jim Lewis was an identical twin. But he hadn't seen his brother since birth. The two boys were adopted by different families. They knew nothing about each other. Yet when they were brought together in 1979 after 39 years, something spooky seemed to be going on. For one thing, both boys had been named James. Both went by the nickname "Jim."

As children, they both had a pet dog named Toy.

But that was only the beginning. Each Jim had married a woman named Linda. Each then had a son. One named his son James Alan. The other named his son James Allen. Later, both Jims got divorced. Each had remarried—and in both cases, the second wife's name was Betty! Each Jim drove the same kind of blue car. Each had the same favorite drink. Each bit his nails, liked woodworking, and took vacations to the very same beach in Florida!

Could all of this be coincidence? Or do twins share a special connection? Scientists have long known that identical twins have the same genes. But no one believed there was a gene that tells you what kind of car to buy. So what made the "Jim" twins live such similar lives?

In the past, people thought twins were alike simply because they grew up together. They saw the same people. They learned to like the same things. But that is not the case with the "Jim" twins. They did not grow up together. They knew nothing about each other when they bought cars, named their sons, and picked out beaches.

⁵ In the 1980s a man named Thomas J. Bouchard, Jr., took a closer look at twins. He found other sets of identical twins who had lived apart since birth. Among them were Daphne Goodship and Barbara Hebert. Like the "Jim" twins, these women had not seen each other for 39 years. Bouchard arranged for them to meet in London, England. At that meeting, Daphne and Barbara showed up wearing the same kind of clothes! Both had chosen a light brown dress and brown velvet jacket.

⁶ As the two women compared notes, they found they were alike in many ways. Both had the weird habit of pushing up their noses. Both had met their husbands at local dances when they were 16. Each of them had given birth to two sons, then a daughter. Strangest of all, each had fallen down the stairs at the age of 15. These accidents had left both twins with weak ankles.

Scientists have been exploring the relationships between twins for many years. They have studied pairs of twins who grew up together and other pairs who were separated at birth. They have come up with some remarkable findings.



⁷ Then there was Jack Yufe and Oskar Stöhr. Bouchard brought them together when they were 47 years old. It turned out that both men had short, clipped mustaches. Both wore rectangular wire-rimmed glasses. And both showed up at their first meeting wearing the same kind of fancy blue shirt. Jack and Oskar soon found more "coincidences." They walked with the same kind of swinging steps. They shared the habit of keeping extra rubber bands around their wrists. Both of them read magazines from back to front. They both even had the odd habit of flushing a toilet before using it!

⁸ The twins in Bouchard's study were more alike than anyone would have guessed. None of them had been in touch with his or her twin growing up. So what led them to make so many of the same choices in life? Some people think twins can communicate with each other in mysterious ways. Ron and Rod Fuller are identical twins from Dallas, Texas. They say each can tell when the other one is in trouble. Explains Rod, "There is a certain bond that we have for one another that I think all twins have."

⁹ Other twins agree. Andreina and Andreini McPherson grew up in Chino Hills, California. They say they, too, can each tell how the other is feeling. In fact, they claim, they can feel each other's pain. When one of them is hurt, the other one can feel the injury.

¹⁰ If that is true, then maybe twins raised apart can also communicate in special ways. Did the twins from Bouchard's study send each other messages for years without knowing it? Perhaps. But it may be that the answer lies in the genes, after all. In 1988 Dr. David Teplica began to study twins. He took pictures of six thousand pairs of identical twins. He found some amazing things. These twins had freckles in the same spots. They got gray hairs at the same time and in the same places on their heads. Their faces got the same wrinkles. They even got pimples on their noses on exactly the same day! To Dr. Teplica, there was just one way to explain all this. Genes had to be controlling these events.

¹¹ It's hard to believe we are born with genes that control when and where we get pimples. But that may be the case. Thomas Bouchard says his work also points to the power of genes. He believes genes explain many of the "coincidences" among the twins he studied. So who knows? Maybe there really is a gene that tells us what kind of car to buy.

