

Twins-Individuality Vs. Unique Common Bond

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Robert Mark Spencer  
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Saint Meinrad College  
St. Meinrad, Indiana



### ABSTRACT

It will be the purpose of this paper to explore two areas related to the development of twins. I will be looking into both the important aspects of raising twins to be individuals as well as the importance of a unique closeness that twins develop for each other in most cases and will bring into question how both issues should be dealt with.

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## INTRODUCTION

In the beginning of my paper I would like to mention one problem that I encountered in my research. This problem is illustrated in the following statement:

"Although there are over four million twins in the United States there is precious little available in written form to help a parent raise twins. It should be obvious that the job of raising twins is not the same as that of raising two siblings who are not twins." (Dobson, 1973, p. 412).

A parent who is faced with the fact of having twins does not have a variety of sources at their disposal. Not enough research has been done on the topic of raising twins. The use of twins by researchers is, however, abundant but along different lines from the concept of child-rearing practices. Stevenson explains this in his statement:

"Although interest in the research problems presented by twins is particularly great at present, yet this circumstance is not due so much to an interest in twins per se, but rather because of their significance for the study of human heredity." (Stevenson, 1970).

In other words, if a researcher was interested in studying the relationship between the environment and heredity on creativity, twins would be an ideal way to accomplish this objective. As for material on the development of twins and the childrearing practices necessary for this, not much data is presently available.

I should also point out at this time that whenever I use the term "twins" in this paper that I am referring to identical and not fraternal twins. There is a difference in the

relationship between identical and non-identical twins as Stevenson points out in the following statement: "The attachment of identical twins is generally extraordinarily close and permanent, particularly in childhood. Fraternal(non-identical) twins on the other hand, are not more closely attached than other siblings." (Stevenson,1970). In this paper I will be dealing with the close relationships between identical twins and the affect of these relationships on psychological development.

Two particular themes seem to occur frequently in the discussion of twins. First, there is a concern among parents that the twins will not have a sense of their own identity, that they may not realize their own individuality. Second, while the importance of raising twins to be individuals is high, there also exists the awareness that twins do share a unique common bond. According to one parent, "It's nicer for the children. They always have each other through the years. They stick up for each other, even against me. There's always someone to comfort them if I holler"(Gehman,1965,p.205). The first point, of stressing the twins own individuality, will constantly be reemphasized throughout this paper. The second point is one that cannot be ignored in any discussion of raising twins. That is, they have a unique circumstance that other children do not, twins have someone with the same physique, age and environment to share their experiences and feelings while they are maturing.

In compiling this research there were several issues or ideas that kept recurring in relation to individuality in twins. The first chapter will deal with the specific areas, in the day to day living, that twins do experience. This first chapter will concern itself with the practical aspects of being a twin, and the problems they encounter. I will explain now what these specific areas are.

First, as a general overview I will show from an historical point of view that societies in general have always shown a special interest in twins. This interest will be shown to have both positive and negative ramifications. I will also present the views that exist in our own society today, including the stereotypes that many hold in their views of twins.

Second, as I pointed out earlier in this introduction, scientists have studied twins a great deal in regards to heredity. Although not much information is available on how a twin's genetic makeup affects their individuality it is definitely possible that genetics have a dramatic affect. There is some research available on the effects of genes and I will present it, since the issue does bring up some interesting questions which cannot be ignored in the study of twins.

Third, I will delve into the effect that parents have on the child's development as a twin with his/her own distinct personality. I hope to show the parent's significant role in this personality development.

In the fourth, and final, section of chapter one I will deal with some of the more practical aspects on the raising of twins. I will bring out that even though there seem to be ideas on how to raise any child, whether they are twins or singletons, twins do bring along with them their own unique problems simply by the fact that they are twins.

The first chapter will be followed by a brief discussion to bring together the main points, and to give an overall discussion of the implications that these specific areas mentioned above have on the psychological development of twins.

While the first chapter will bring up specific areas, the second chapter will deal more with the theoretical aspects of raising twins. The first chapter is used to illustrate the problems of being a twin in the practical day to day experiences, while the second chapter will delve more into some research and overall views on the raising of twins. It will also be followed by a discussion to bring together and clarify the main points.

As I mentioned earlier, the main problem area for the development of twins is the juxtaposition of the individuality and of a unique common bond. As a hypothesis I feel that it is necessary for the proper psychological development of a twin that his/her individuality be stressed in order that they may see themselves as distinct from any other person.

To do otherwise, to allow twins to dwell on their twinning, will affect them as they mature into adulthood and assume their own independent roles.



## CHAPTER ONE

### Historical Perspective

Twins throughout history appear to have always been treated with some type of special interest by various cultures. As one researcher, Gaddis, states;

To be born a twin in many cultures is usually fortunate. The children feel a certain distinction from their fellows and often enjoy with the birthmate a close and life-long companionship. (Gaddis, 1972, p.162).

From the very beginning it becomes obvious to the twins that there is something different or unique about them.

In another statement by Gaddis, the reception of twins varied with the culture of the individual primitive tribes.

Certain primitive Indians in southern California gave twins magnificent clothing to set them apart, but other tribes in the region feared and hated them and put them to death. (Gaddis, 1972, p.163).

Even though twins have in the past been treated as different and unique, this does not imply that being a twin has always been a fortunate circumstance. The same author clarifies this point by using a specific example of the Mohave tribe who felt that twins had magical powers and were the products of the supernatural. In addition, a tribe in Southeast Africa believe, according to Gaddis, that twins have the ability to control the weather. Whenever the tribe is experiencing a drought the members will take water and pour it over the graves of twins. (Gaddis, 1972, p.165).

Twins in our culture today are obviously not treated with the same awe and respect, but this does not mean that our culture does not have its own customs about twins. Scheinfeld illustrates that our modern society still has its own superstitions, which are largely negative.

Replacing these, we now have a host of modern beliefs which plague twins' parents: That twins, unless carefully conditioned otherwise, will tend to become emotionally maladjusted, develop a morbid closeness to and dependence on each other, forfeit their sense of individuality and be retarded in their mental and social development; also, that they may be beset by either open or subconscious mutual antagonism, resentment, jealousy rivalry and even hatred. (Scheinfeld, 1967, p. 88-9).

Personal experience illustrates the existence of the stereotyping that is possible in the raising of twins. I accompanied my sister-in-law on one of her visits to the Doctor after it was known that she was bearing twins. While she was in the examining room there was a conversation involving a nurse, the receptionist and approximately five patients. The topic of discussion involved ideas on the problems of raising twins. Some of the ideas discussed were statements to the effect that twins have a tendency to be slow learners and fall behind children of their own age group, and that a mother of twins must constantly be careful to avoid such things. This points out the fact that twins can be exposed to local "customs," which are not necessarily borne out by facts. Their information was of secondhand nature, that is "I heard..." or "I believe..."

### Heredity Argument

As I stated in the introduction, any study of the development of twins must include delving into the matter of genetics. Identical twins do come with identical genes. One researcher, Dr.H.H. Newman, a biologist at the University of Chicago, attempted to study twins to see the relationship of genetics to their personality development.( Gaddis,1972,p.42). Gaddis states that Dr.Newman obtained his sample through the use of two forms of mass media. "Through radio and newspaper appeals the researchers offered trips to Chicago's Century of Progress for the ten best pairs in exchange for two days of their time"(Gaddis,1972,p.42-3). The pairs he was looking for were twins who had been sepearated at birth. In writing about one pair of twins who had been seperated at birth and found each other later in life Dr. Newman wrote;

It appears there are two levels of behavior or expression of personality. One level that seems to be largely hereditary and is not modified much by differences in experience, and another level that is not hereditary and rather readily modified by the environment(Gaddis,1972, p.42-3)

The researcher, even with this case, concluded that the issue of heredity was a complex one with no easy solution and that more research in the area was needed(Gaddis,1972,p.43).

If the relationship of heredity and environment cannot be adequately determined then the question is raised as to why this area should be included in this paper. The work of James Shields, a British Psychiatrist at Maudsley Hospital in London

points out at least one reason. In his research Shields located 44 pairs of identical twins who had been separated at birth. As a control group he used 44 pairs of identicals who had remained together, as well as a group of 32 twins of the same sex who were not identicals(Gaddis,1972,p.49). Gaddis concludes from Dr. Shields' experiment:

"Although he never states flatly that heredity is more important than environment, he does say that the genes are a blueprint. In personality, mannerisms, life attitudes, and IQs, identical twins who had seldom or never met until maturity amazed even their mates by great similarities(Gaddis,1972,p.50).

Although neither researcher makes any definite claim as to the importance of heredity there seems to be some reasons for believing that heredity is an important factor in the development of twins. In the area of raising twins, the issue of the effect of heredity is an important one that must be researched further. One reason for more research is stated by Dr. Helen L. Koch, Professor Emeritus of the University of Chicago:

"What are the ramifications of constant urging or pressuring of twins to be different, to be themselves, or conversely to be alike and devoted... May not an identical twin be best expressing his individuality when he is most like his co-twin, since the two have identical genes(Gaddis,1972,p.137).

The question she raises is a logical one. If heredity is a key factor in the determination of personality, then to force twins to be dislike may be forcing them into areas that they are not naturally inclined to.

### Parental Effect

From the time of birth the infants experience their parents as the first people they have any intimate contact with. Therefore, it follows that the importance of the parents attitudes have an extremely important affect on the development of twins.

One author takes a definitive stand on how to treat twins. He especially seems to want to stress their individuality, as indicated by his following remarks:

"Emphasis on individuality is the most important aspect of twin development. Experts in child rearing do not recommend rhyming names, identical clothes and toys, or shared classrooms. Twins will have different mannerisms, abilities, likes, dislikes, and friends, and parents need to encourage this. It is important that each child develop positive feelings of uniqueness. Parents should react to each child as a separate entity and avoid their twins as a set(Dobson,1973,p.455-6).

This statement puts a premium on accentuating the individuality with little thought to the close ties of twins. In future references in this section there will be questions raised as to whether this approach is entirely valid.

Moving onto another point, I would like to say something about the parent of any child, whether twin or not, who faces the dilemma of being possessive or trying to "live through" their children some of their own dreams and hopes. Rogers addresses this area with the statement:

"The mother is more likely than the father to assume overprotective roles. She is charged with the child's care, and his failings are adjudged to be her fault more than the father's. The latter is away at work all day

he can afford to remain more detached and objective. In closer proximity to her child, the mother feels the impact of his problems more keenly. Besides, the maturing of her children may have threatened her ego-satisfactions. For years her existence has revolved around the axis of her children. Sheer time gives Mom-in her domestic work-the axe; she is retired with no severance pay. Hence to acknowledge that her children have ceased to need her is to concede that her major function in life no longer exists. (Rogers,1972,p.276)

I would like to relate this statement to a point that was made in the "historical" section of this chapter. If a mother accepts the "customs" of society and sees that the raising of twins is much more complex than the raising of singletons, if she is concerned that they will be slow learners, but in her estimation has succeeded and overcome the obstacles, then perhaps upon graduation from school, coupled with the sudden departure of two children at once, the lack of meaning may become even more intensified. She experiences the usual feeling of loss of any parent, but if she looked upon the task of raising her twins as "extra" work that other parents did not experience it may be more difficult to deal with. In addition, from a practical point, she loses two children at once as opposed to one. Scheinfeld brings up a point which is directly related to the above discussion. He states that there are parents who overemphasizes the twinness of their children because they feel that they have gone to extra trouble and therefore do the natural thing of wanting to show off their good work. (Scheinfeld,1967,p.103).

In addition parents have another problem built into the raising of twins. Any parent must be careful not to show any favoritism toward their children but the problem takes on a new

dimension with twins. Scheinfeld shows how the concept of favoritism can be intensified with twins:

While the distinctions parents make between twins are seldom as marked as those they make between children born separately, the effect of parental discrimination, however subtle, is likely to be felt more by twins because of their intimate relationship (Scheinfeld, 1967, p. 90).

To return to a point made earlier, a twin has someone with the same physique, age, and environment. Therefore they are extremely close and the slightest distinction made by a parent is very likely to be noticed.

#### Practical Problems

In this section I will bring out some concerns that a parent may have toward the raising of twins and illustrate how twins, again, bring with them their own unique problems.

There is no evidence that there are any special methods of discipline that should be applied to twins. The problem of discipline is narrowed down, by Scheinfeld, to the strain that is put on parents: "It's unpleasant to hear a young child repeat dirty words. But, when you hear them from two children at the same time it's horrible-like a nasty chorus" (Scheinfeld, 1967, p. 93). This illustrates the point that problems with discipline is a matter of degree in the minds of the parents. Twins also have a unique way to get into mischief. Dr. Robert Sommers, a psychologist at the University of Alberta, Canada, refers to the pranks twins engage in when they change names and act accordingly. He brings in the idea that in cases where

this "switching" occurs, who does the parent punish. Sommers points out that this is not an unusual occurrence (Gaddis, 1972, p.129).

The next areas I wish to touch on are those which the parent has little control over. Dr. Benjamin Spock makes the following statement concerning the purchase of clothes and toys:

"Some parents point out that since there is usually only one kind of playsuit, for instance, in a store that appeals to the parents in terms of design, warmth, and price it is difficult if not impossible to dress twins differently" (Spock, 1976, p.605-6).

A parent who desires to stress individuality in his/her children may find this to be a real deterrent if they must constantly be dressed alike. From this it appears that even if parents have a strong philosophy of seeking individuality for their children that there are practical considerations from the start that they will have to accept.

Turning to another point, that of schoolwork and the placement of the twins. The question in most parents is whether their children should be put into the same or different classrooms. Dr. Spock brings out one point which discusses the matter of dependence in school: "In an occasional case, one twin becomes so dependent on the other in schoolwork that it is wise to separate them. But it seems foolish and cruel to have an arbitrary rule about separation when there is no need" (Spock, 1976, p.607).



Dr. Spock sees where, depending on the situation, it may be detrimental to have twins in the same classes, but at the same time sees no need for any specific policy concerning placement. He is content to leave it to the situation, and to determine the needs in individual cases.

Dr. Koch elaborates on this point. In regards to putting twins in the same class she states that on some occasions it can be beneficial:

"It stimulated both to achieve more, but at other times the superiority of one child overpowered the other's self-confidence. She (and other psychologists) stated that any rigid ruling by the school administration is a great error. Each case is different and should be decided separately after experiment. Separations could be traumatic and compared it to devoted wives who lose their husbands. They may spend most of the time staring out the window 'always wondering where my brother is'" (Gaddis, 1972, p. 37).

As Spock points out, to be in the same classrooms can be detrimental to twins, whereas Koch states that twins in the same class can spur each other on to achieve more. But, both agree that the placement should be decided by the individual cases.

#### SUMMARY

In this chapter several different points have been brought out in relationship to the twin as he exists in our society and some of the situations that must be dealt with which are unique to being a twin.

First, throughout time and even today societies have set twins apart as being unique. Both positive and negative qualities have been ascribed to anyone who is a twin.

In the second section the issue of heredity is brought up.

out of this section come three main points. First, there is no conclusive explanation as to exactly what effect heredity has in the development of the personality. Second, even though not conclusive, there is some evidence that heredity is important and, as one author stated, acts as a "blueprint" for personality. Third, if genetics is a factor, then there are possible negative ramifications in forcing twins to be dissimilar since they may be pushed into areas which are foreign to their nature.

In the third section it was found that parents do exert a major role in the development of the child and that some push individuality while others do not push individuality as far. It was brought out that because of the close bond between twins, parents must be extra cautious in such areas as favoritism, and the danger of magnifying minor differences between twins which may be minor and relatively unimportant.

The fourth section dealt with practical problems in day to day living. This dealt with issues such as what kind of clothes to buy, placements in school, and discipline. With clothes as one example, sometimes the parent has to hold back somewhat on their philosophy of individuality. The placements in school should depend on the individual situation with no arbitrary rules. Finally, in discipline, there are no special rules for the handling of twins although the problems can be intensified by the fact of two children misbehaving at once. The problem here occurs with the attitude of the parent.

## CHAPTER TWO

In this chapter I will explore the more theoretical aspects in the raising of twins.

One practical issue first should be clarified. In the first chapter I mentioned that some people feel that twins have a tendency to become problem children, not only to their parents but also to themselves in regard to personal adjustment. Scheinfeld makes two points in relation to this;

"first, there actually is no evidence at this writing that twins are more likely to be problem children than are singletons; and, second, most of the parents-judging by the hundreds we've heard from directly-believe their twins are, and will be happier than, or at least as happy as, the single children in their families" (Scheinfeld, 1967, p. 96-7).

Having twins does not have to be seen as an insurmountable problem but should be viewed as a unique circumstance that can be dealt with just as parents of single children deal with the individuality of their child as he matures.

Scheinfeld brings in the idea that twins from the very beginning of their lives are placed in an unique circumstance that singleton children are not;

"At the very start of their lives twins-no matter of which type-do come up against a unique circumstance; each enters a world in which a competing baby of exactly the same age is always present, always making equal demands, and always as a rule, being given equal treatment. Each twin sees and feels that he is not the only pebble on the beach, unlike the singleton baby who is a little tyrant in a world revolving around him" (Scheinfeld, 1967, p. 89).

This aspect can be taken for granted but the possibility exists that this could have a tremendous impact since the twin is not able to realize the distinction between himself and other

children. The same author takes this theory and develops it further by saying:

"It is normal for every infant to start off intensely self-centered and that it interferes with his ego formation if he finds another infant competing for his mother's attentions. Going further, the theory holds that before a child can know he is a distinct individual, or 'somebody', he must see and feel himself as separate from any other person. With each step in attempting to imitate other persons different from himself, the child also develops his own pattern of behavior, and thus, more and more, his individuality(Scheinfeld,1967,p.99).

This statement points out that there is a definite problem with the concept of a twin feeling that he is separate and distinct since in the early years both twins are treated as one unit. They are constantly together. They are probably awakened and fed at the same time. They also play together since the mother must be able to keep watch over them. All this is most likely done for practical reasons, that is, convenience. In the early years there does not seem to be the opportunity for them to be separate and therefore to feel themselves as distinct from one another. This can inhibit the twins in their growth since the imitation of key figures can be replaced by the imitation of each other according to Scheinfeld((1967,p.101).

Dr. Sommers also shows the same concern with twins being able to distinguish themselves from each other. He states:

"More than half of the identicals he studied told him that at some time in their lives they had experienced moments of uncertainty as to which twin they were. Only half of his fraternal twins said this. Six twins were unable to tell their own voices apart on a recorder. (Gaddis,1972,p.129).

This last statement by Sommers lends some credibility to the theory of Scheinfeld that an infant needs to feel it is a separate entity and that twins may not experience this fully.

Sommers follows by explaining that in interviews with twins they did express a deep love for their twin but additionally, at times there was some deep resentment. (Gaddis, 1972, p. 130-1). While twins do have that unique common bond, perhaps with the competition they experienced with each other from the very beginning there exists some very strong negative feelings toward each other.

The information presented so far ~~far~~portrays a rather negative side to the issue of twins and their relationship to each other. There are however some very positive aspects that can occur from their uniquely close relationship.

Dr. Helen Koch found that twins do not always find their situation to be one that is necessarily a handicap. Often, in early school years twins will emphasize their own twinness in order to gain extra attention (Gaddis, 1972, p. 137).

Dr. Charlotte Taylor points out that twins, because of their closeness have to learn early to share, something important in later years. In her work she studied the success rate of twins in marriage. She studied fifty pairs of twins and came up with some significant results. The divorce rate for the twins was only twelve percent in California where the survey was conducted. The average rate of divorce for the

state was fifty percent. She attributed the result to the fact that twins are used to a close relationship and sharing from early experiences (Gaddis,1972,p.138-9).

Also, in referring back to the Historical Perspective section of chapter one, twins do not necessarily develop at slower rates than singleton. Scheinfeld states that it is very possible for the twins to compete, in a healthy way, and actually speed up their development(Scheinfeld,1967,p.106). Dr. Koch,while saying that competition in the same classroom can be detrimental, she also states that it can achieve the purpose of encouraging them to do productive work(Gaddis,1972,p.137).

Despite the previous statements concerning the possibility that twins can be retarded in the development of their own sense of individuality it is stated that:

"Even among identicals, it is rare when some definite trend toward individuality does not soon become apparent ...there almost always are some differences in appearance and mannerisms which enable parent and immediate family members to distinguish quite easily between identicals and make them aware of this distinction"(Scheinfeld,1967,p.107).

From this it appears that despite the pressure to conform to being one that the twins in the normal course of events will tend to develop their own characteristics.

Finally, to return to a point I made earlier one definite advantage to being an identical twin is that throughout the years there will always be someone they know intimately to share their thoughts and feelings with. (Gehman,1965,p.205).

### SUMMARY

Chapter Two dealt with the theoretical aspects of being a twin as well as some of the research that has been done in the field of the psychological development of twins.

One of the main points in this chapter dealt with the fact that twins from the day they are born are never alone. There is always someone else there competing and sharing with them. This other person has basically the same physique, as well as identical age and environment. As a result there is evidence which suggests that it is difficult for a twin to conceive of itself as being a separate and distinct unit, which may have consequences in later life.

In addition, even though it is brought out that identical twins are extremely close there is the possibility that through the early competition in their lives that some deep resentment can exist between twins.

The point was also made of the distinct advantages to being a twin. In school twinning can serve as an attention getter which is important, particularly in adolescence. It was also brought out that because of the close sharing in twins that this can lead to success later in interacting with others. This was shown in the one study which showed a significant percentage of success in marriage.

### CONCLUSION

My hypothesis stated that it is necessary for the proper psychological development of a twin that his/her individuality be stressed in order that they may see themselves as distinct from any other person. To do otherwise, to allow twins to dwell on their twinning, will affect them as they mature into adulthood and attempt to assume their own independent roles. From the research of this paper I feel that this hypothesis is justified.

From the very beginning the individuality of twins is threatened. They are never alone, always sharing their life with another individual who is just like them.

In the process of maturing they are constantly being compared, even in differences that are minor but are enlarged due to their intimate relationship. This is related to the fact that society, even today, pays special attention to twins and sets them apart as something unique.

Heredity also plays a part, even if only as a "blueprint". Even though the full story of the effect of genetic makeup is not in, there is some evidence to suggest it is a factor in personality.

I must make one clarification in regards to the stressing of individuality. It has been shown that there are some very positive aspects to the unique intimacy that twins do share. In the process of maturing twins are fortunate in that they



have someone so close to them to share their feelings with. Through a healthy relationship among twins they are able to learn at a young age how to love and share with others in a close way. There is no evidence to point out that most twins do not accomplish this or that they are generally maladjusted.

The main point is, that through the factors I have mentioned above the unique common bond is one that twins through birth and their maturing process develop naturally. The concept of individuality is one that can be constantly threatened through the very same factors mentioned above.

Therefore, in order for twins to develop into mature, healthy adults, their concept of themselves as separate and distinct individuals must be stressed.

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