

**One-whole or one-half: A case study of an identical twin's exploration of  
personal identity through family perceptions**

by

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## DEDICATION

To my family:

My parents, my twin, my siblings, my husband,

And

My children, Jon, Gina and Krista

Who have loved me, and I them – as a twin and an individual.

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*Do not go where the path may lead, go instead where there is no path and leave a trail.*

*Ralph Waldo Emerson*

## **ABSTRACT**

The aim of this research was to explore my family's perceptions of identity development of my twin sister and myself. As a researcher, who is an identical twin, I have been fascinated by the perceptions that families have regarding their twins. Another important purpose of this study was to look at the perceptions of my twin sister and myself to see if they correlated with the perceptions of the family – specifically my parents and my siblings. Additionally, this study explored the phenomenon of identical twins to see if the perceptions were grounded in the context of a set or as individuals. Families with identical twins, health and educational professionals, and twins themselves face a genuine interest in this topic.

A qualitative approach was used in the research and studied through case study methodology. Interviews with family members, autobiographies, family photographs and review of annual family letters were utilized for descriptive analysis. This data was collected, coded, and analyzed. Themes emerged which offered insight into the family perceptions. My parents were concerned with making sure that individual identities were preserved, while my siblings, my sister and I were not recognizably concerned about this; constellation and birth order in my family had an impact on perceptions of identity; my sister and I were often compared; the family aligned our identity within the context of a set while we viewed our identity with individual context; and the family did not discuss our perceptions, resulting in low communication about identical twin identity development.

As a result of this study, insight was given to my family's perceptions and recommendations for future research. This is significant to navigate healthy environments and perspectives toward identity development for identical twins, from one family's perspective.



## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### Living as “The Twins” and “As a Twin”

I run down the steps flying around each corner until I reach the landing. For some reason my senses seem really alive...it strikes me that I even notice them. Is it because of the cool crisp fall air I feel as I open the door to the outside? Or is it my new sense of independence that I have felt ever since I arrived on campus as a freshman? My life has changed. I notice the cracks in the sidewalk and the unpainted bicycle rack and wonder how many times I will pass these insignificant landmarks. I notice the masses of other students walking past me and have an awareness of belonging but know in reality we all are different. I am filled with anticipation for my first class; this is a new beginning. My life prior to this has been wonderful; however, this is all exciting. Then it happens...something so ordinary but personally extraordinary...my name is being called from a distance and I turn around – quickly! I am not focused on what the caller wants but the fact that I hear my name. The caller’s intent is to obtain a walking partner, perhaps to ease the first day’s anxiety. I find the experience significant. As conversation begins to flow between us I am not focused on the words. My senses are still heightened and I now am focused on my past.

How can I flip so quickly from focusing on my new and future life to my past? I now recognize the trigger. I realize that up until this point in my life I can never remember a time that my name has ever been called from a distance! You

see I am an identical twin and identical twins are non distinguishable from a distance.

My “name calling” experience awakened me. Not as one would feel after a long sleep, but an engagement of one’s consciousness. It is not that I have never been aware of the fact that I am an identical twin. Quite the contrary; it has been my existence. How many times have I been asked, “What is it like to be a twin?”...And my favorite response is, “What is it like *not* to be a twin?” From early on I have had a partner, been a partner and I assume I will continue to be a partner. My sister and I were often referred to as “the twins,” “the girls,” and often called by other unifying names. None of this was unusual to me as it was life, as I knew it. We were looked at as a unit and often on display. People were curious, and they often stared and many times asked questions. It was not unusual to add additional time to family outings, as often more time was needed for others to examine the twinness. “Are they twins?” “Boy they sure do look alike.” “One is bigger than the other, right?” “One has smaller eyes, right?” “They really are cute!”

### **Introduction of the Problem**

In thinking about how people have identified who I am, I considered how my family has influenced my individuality. Families that have identical twins deal with issues that families with singletons do not. Parents of twins may receive twins with joy and elation or with trepidation and worry. Regardless of how parents react, the birth of twins into a family induces change in the way the family functions. In caring for twins, many parents report that greater amount of time

and attention is required. When there are other children in the family, even the most well intended parents find they must divide their attention and care. As a result, older siblings may be given extra care-taking responsibilities. Older and younger siblings may experience feelings of attention not being paid to them by their own parents and greater attention given to the twins as others are often fascinated with the mystique associated with twins. In some families, the costs associated with raising twins may create financial strain and tension. Frequently new parents of multiples wonder how their children will be able to develop individual identities when their early experiences and environment are so similar, especially if they look alike. Parents confront the worry that they might compromise their twins' individuality by regarding them as a unit, or the inverse, that they might try to exaggerate differences in disposition and appearance (Bryan, 1992; Pearlman & Gannon, 2000; Sandbank, 1999; & Stewart, 2003).

Growing up as an identical twin, one comes to understand that appearance plays a large role in the perception of an individual and in turn personal perception of identity. In my family, since my sister and I looked so much alike, there was great concern in my parents for their influence on the development of our separate identities. We were easily recognized as twins and not always as individuals. So how does a family approach this problem? What are their perceptions of their roles? Do twins recognize this role of the family?

The aim of this research was to explore my family's perceptions of identity development of my twin sister and myself. Another important purpose of this study was to look at the perceptions of my twin sister and myself and to see if

they correlated with the perceptions of the family – specifically my parents and my siblings. This study additionally explored this phenomenon of twins to see if the perceptions were grounded in the identity context of a set or as individuals. This is significant in order to make suggestions from one family's perspective as to how to navigate healthy environments and perspectives towards identity development in identical twins. Families with identical twins, health and educational professionals, and twins themselves face a genuine interest in this topic.

### **Background of Study**

Despite the popular interest and attention given to twins, the literature associated with family perceptions toward identity development of identical twins themselves is surprisingly limited. Numerous studies based on experiments involving twins have been completed to attempt to unravel the effects of heredity and environment. Some studies find that monozygotic twins (identical twins) are more similar than dizygotic twins (fraternal twins) in psychological and behavior traits (Bouchard, 1994; Gottesman & Shields 1982; Kendler, Heath, Martin, & Eaves, 1986). Bouchard, a University of Minnesota researcher who is recognized for his work on identical twins raised apart, concludes that "About two-thirds of the reliable variance in measured personality traits is due to genetic influence" (Bouchard, 1994, p. 1700). These findings have led numerous people to conclude that genetic influences are incredibly strong indicators of behavior and identity. For example, a popular twin studies book claims that,

The science of behavioral genetics, largely through twins' studies, has made a persuasive case that much of our identity is stamped on us from conception; to the extent that our lives seem to be pre-chosen and all we have to do is live out the script that is written in our genes (Wright, 1997, pp.143-44).

Others have disagreed with this one-sided approach to identity development and agree with the theory that genetics and environment each account for about half of the variance in most traits (Gilger, 2000; Plomin, DeFries, McClearn, & Rutter, 1997; Rowe, 1994). And middle ground is taken when environment or genetic cases are primarily based on theoretical slant (Horwitz, Videon, Schmitz, & Davis, 2003).

All of these viewpoints have looked at the complexity of identity development through the lives of identical twins and drawn conclusions about individuals through nature versus nurture. Parents are often at odds implementing their own assumptions about nature and nurture. This brings questions: If nature is viewed as generally an uncontrollable characteristic of identity and nurture is variable, how do parents and siblings perceive their identical twins' identities and personalities? Is this problem addressed in the family context with the twins as a set or as individuals?

Contexts affecting early identity development include the family. Recent research has focused on central issues of socialization generally studied with the family or across the multiple contexts of family, peers, school, and community (e.g., Barber & Olsen, 1997; Eccles, Early, Fraser, Belansky, & MacCarthy, 1997). Results have demonstrated that parents, first, and peers, second, appear to be the contexts of primary influence for early identity development.

## **Research Questions**

As I revisited my identity development as an identical twin, and wondered how my family navigated their perceptions of our identity development, I realized that the story of a family is important. It is important to present a qualitative approach to study my personal experience as it will add to the limited literature a descriptive experience of one family's perceptions. The practice of qualitative research, as described by Creswell (1998), "takes the reader (or researcher) into multiple dimensions of a problem or issue and displays it in all of its complexity" (p.15).

Using a qualitative approach, this study incorporated the methodology of case study. The three research questions that guided the study are the following:

- 1. How did my family (parents and siblings) perceive the identity development of the twins in their family?**
- 2. How did my sister and I view our identities and identity development?**
- 3. Are the family identity development perceptions of the twins grounded in the structure of a set or focused on the individuals?**

## **Significance of the Study**

This research is valuable in a number of ways. Historically, case study material on adult twins reports deficits in strong self-esteem development and personality development (Gardner & Rexford, 1952; Hill, 1968; Joseph & Tabor, 1961; Lidz, Schafer, Fleck, Cornelison, & Terry, 1962). Recently Dr. Eileen M.

Pearlman, Director of Twinsight, which offers education and support for multiples and their families, conducted research focusing on this popular notion that twins face special problems with respect to personality development. She discovered no significant difference in personality development for twins. Therefore, she recommends that currently the area of self-concept and identity development in twins deserves to be further investigated (Pearlman, 2001, p. 620). Additionally, there are few empirical studies of adult twins that focus specifically on identity development (Ainslie, 1997; Burlingham, 1949, 1952; Cirillo 1976; Zazzo, 1976).

Significant and interesting as the above opposing information is, a sense of the identity development of identical twins, as they experience it as individuals and as a set, is limited. There is very little research that gives the experience of being an identical twin a voice. With the exception of McEvoy's (1985) study of female fraternal twins that described the ways in which the participants had achieved their own sense of identities separate from their twin (Fotheringham, 2000, p.164) and research conducted on self-concept of the siblings of twins (DeCiotto, 2004), there is limited literature on the topic of family perceptions of twin identity. Pearlman (2001) recommends that currently the area of self-concept and identity development in twins deserves to be further investigated (p. 620). The contradiction in the limited literature is grounds for further investigation. Bacon (2006) states: more research needs to focus on twinship, taking account of the important role that twins themselves take in shaping their own life trajectories and the 'twin situation' itself. Parents, siblings and twins all have a role to play in constructing twin identity in shaping the social context that

surrounds twins. So what is this family perception of the twin identity? If identity development is explored using theory presented by Erik Erickson's stages (Erickson, 1950) of development, how do these stages transpire for identical twins? Does the structure of a set play into this structure of development? Is there delineation of characteristics? Can they be separated into characteristics experienced by each individual and those experienced as a set?

Family and Consumer Sciences (formerly known as Home Economics) is an area that can benefit from a focus on twins and their family context. Historically, Home Economics focused on improvement of daily home life in the environment of a family.

Home Economics in its most comprehensive sense is the study of the laws, conditions, principles and ideas which are concerned on the one hand with man's immediate physical environment and on the other hand with his nature as a social being and it is the special study of the relations between these two factors. (American Home Economics Association, 1902, pp.70-71)

The processes involved in the daily routine of home life and the home and family were seen as a primary human environment, with moral, social, and intellectual qualities, as well as physical characteristics and influences. Actions were addressed to free women from unnecessary work and to make their actions more efficient and effective. This focus evolved from a scientific approach to daily life to a profession that focuses on improving the daily life through a reflective contextual viewpoint (Bubloz, 2002).

To fulfill this mission home economists engage in the provision of services (directly or indirectly) to families. These services involve the solution of (practical) problems of families....and these services change over time with new insights in the profession. Such insights come from critical



reflection about human needs and the human condition and about the field and from new knowledge. (Brown & Paolucci, 1979, p. 23)

Currently, the American Association of Family and Consumer Sciences, the national professional organization for FCS professionals, highlights a focus on empowerment:

The mission of the American Association of Family & Consumer Sciences is to provide leadership and support for professionals whose work assists individuals, families, and communities in making informed decisions about their well being, relationships, and resources to achieve optimal quality of life. (AAFCS, n.d.)

So how do family and consumer sciences professionals benefit from this study? Family and Consumer Sciences professionals include people who are educators and specialized professionals that focus on areas of child development and/or families.

Educators are commonly found working with parenting programs, child care settings, and middle and secondary schools. Examples of related classes taught in Family Consumer Sciences include: Child Development, Family Life, Relationships, and Parent Education. All of these arenas need expertise and knowledge in dealing with twins from various perspectives – especially family perspectives. This information will aid them in working with parents, other educators who deal with twins and siblings of twins as they look for answers to empower their own context in dealing with identical twins. Teachers and parents need to be aware of particular issues that may affect the physical, intellectual, personal, social and emotional development of multiple birth children (Hay & Preedy, 2006, p.397). With approximately 260,000 twins estimated currently to

be in the three- to four-year-old age group and the number growing, educators will greet more and more doubles into educational programs (Arce, 2008).

Examples of specialized family and consumer sciences professions are found in community programming, social services, counseling, and family therapy. These professionals will not only encounter identical twins in their work, but additionally may work with parents and families of the identical twins.

Now that there are more sets of identical twins than ever, interest in them is very high. Never before have there been so many clubs, books, festivals, and events world wide dedicated to twins and other multiples (Jackson, 2001). With this dramatic increase in identical twins' births, it is imperative to revisit identity development in twins. It is of interest to societal groups such as families, parents, and schools that have a psychosocial influence on identity development. By gaining description of an identical twins' experience of identity development, professionals such as teachers, doctors, and mental health professionals may be better equipped to deal with issues pertaining to this unique relationship. This description may assist parents in their quest to raise psychologically healthy children. This research provides descriptive in-depth data about one set of identical twins' experience of identity development. This may provide direction for future research in identical twin identity development and family perceptions. It is my hope that other identical twins and scholars of twin research will consider this case study as enrichment into the complexity of the "family experience" of the identity development of identical twins.

Accounts of twin socialization are important in helping us to understand how twins' social experience may be structured by parents; however, they only provide one part of the picture. We also need to take account of the contributions that child twins make to shaping their own and each other's lives and, more specifically, their identities. This requires that we listen to twins' own perspectives on what it is like to be a twin. (Bacon, 2006, p. 141)

Finally, the research is of interest since the researcher is one of the twins in the set that is studied. This is significant in the fact that since identity is personally experienced – a personal case study that focuses on twin and family perceptions would provide insightfully rich, reliable data. Personal case study methodology can be used as a creative alternative to traditional approaches to description, emphasizing the individual or individual's perspective as being central to the process. The personal case study allows the researcher to be insightful and reflective as the researcher and subject are one. This is very useful for studying hidden or sensitive topics, such as individual and family well being. This is because the researcher as subject can delve into such topics with relative ease, thus providing invaluable insider knowledge not accessible when subjects may be unwilling or afraid to discuss sensitive personal information. However, a limitation to the researcher as subject is that the researcher must develop heightened sensitivity and sympathetic understanding in working with subjects. It is important that the researcher also engage in evaluative introspection so as to maintain checks and balances on feelings, motives, and judgments (Philaretou & Allen, 2006). It is this researcher's intent to provide a deeper understanding of identity development in the social world of twins. This research conceptualizes twin identity as a social identity. Jenkins (2004) conceptualizes social identity as

a relational process: All identities are the result of an ongoing synthesis of (internal) self-definition and (external) definitions of oneself offered by others:

Identity is our understanding of who we are, and of who other people are, reciprocally, other people's understanding of themselves and of others (which includes us). The outcome of agreement and disagreement, at least in principle is always negotiable, identity is not fixed. (Jenkins, 2004, p.5)

Identity, therefore, emerges as we define ourselves alongside and against others and having these definitions validated or rejected by others. Capturing a sense of process, this 'internal-external dialectic' (Jenkins, 2004) helps to situate both parents, siblings and child twins as social actors who each have a contribution to make in constructing, performing, resisting and reforming twin identity. Narrative approaches have become increasingly popular in studies of identity, for such analyses emphasize the whole person and how he or she integrates life experiences, rather than the understanding of isolated values, accomplishments or other personality features (Kroger, 2000, p. 22). These processes of integration are often difficult to examine through traditional research. It is against this backdrop that this research builds toward illuminating one family's perception. In retrospect, I still find it a little amazing that I cannot remember questioning my twin existence prior to my first week in college. I think I was focused on *not* being a twin and concentrating on who I was as an individual. I just happened to have a sister that looked just like me. Others recognized her as my twin. I knew she was my twin, but I never gave much thought to the issue of identity perceptions of my life as a twin.

## Vocabulary

Amnion: The inner membrane surrounding the embryo, developing on about the seventh day after conception. Amniotic fluid cushions the developing embryo.

Chorion: The outer membrane surrounding the embryo, forming on the fourth or fifth day after conception. It nourishes the embryo until the placenta develops.

DNA Profile: Each individual's unique DNA banding pattern. DNA profiles are used to establish twin type, as well as paternity by comparing DNA characteristics of twins, or fathers and children. Identical twins have the same banding patterns.

Fraternal Twins: Twins resulting from the fertilization of two eggs by two spermatozoa. These twins share half their genes, on average, by descent; also called dizygotic twins.

Identical Twins: Twins resulting from the splitting of a single fertilized egg during the first two weeks after conception. These twins share all their genes; also called monozygotic twins.

Mirror- Imaging: Reversals in physical features observed in some identical twin pairs, such as hand preference, hair whorls and fingerprint patterns.

Nature-Nurture: A long-standing, debate over the extent to which behaviors are influenced by genetic and environmental events.

Placenta: Organ in the uterus which provides nutrition, eliminates wastes, and exchanges respiratory gases for the fetus.

Zygote: A fertilized egg that will develop into an embryo, a fetus and eventually a mature organism.

### **Summary**

This chapter provides a brief introduction to the research study. A background to the study, research questions, significance of the study and vocabulary have been offered. The study focuses on the identity development perceptions of one family, with identical twins, theorizing that the family recognizes these perceptions and the systematic impact they have on the twins.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

#### **Twin Sister, Sister Twin**

Oh, she is just like me and yet she is not  
 Like two pieces of rope tied in a knot.  
 Sometimes they say it's because we are two,  
 But sometimes I forget and then remember her too.  
 Like words on paper called homonyms,  
 One whole or one half...I live as a twin. (Conlon, 2003)

#### **Identity Factors for Twins**

As complex as it would be to group all humans together and effectively describe the context of life as a human, it is just as impossible to convey the multifaceted environment of identical twins. In establishing groundwork for this research, this literature review will focus on literature relevant to the volatile identity factors that are often present in a family with identical twins and understanding foundations of identity development. The factors reviewed for this study include realities and perceptions of identical twins, appearance, naming, secrecy of twinship, and twin relationships.

#### **Realities and Perceptions: What We Know and What Others See**

I feel a great deal of irony in looking the same as another. It seems so incredibly simple but yet so incredibly complicated. I don't remember consciously thinking of myself as a twin very often. It seemed as though others took care of that for me. People's reactions served as constant reminders and were the driving force that strengthened my perception of my twinness more than anything else. A twin would describe it like this:

The only person who does not treat me like a twin is my twin. My twin treats me like an individual, never thinking about the fact that I am her twin. To my twin, I am a singleton! I am a playmate, a friend, a confidante, a rival, a side-kick, a constant companion – but never a twin. My twin is the only person who does not at some time or another react to me as a twin. Not calling me ‘twin’; not confusing me with her; no staring and pointing; I am just me. (Sipes & Sipes, 1999, p. 67)

It has been stated that twins’ identity formation is different from identity formation of singletons because twins are frequently thought of as a unit, as in “the twins”. The self-concept that twins have, not only involves their sense of identity, but a sense of sharing of each other’s identities (NOMOTC [National Organization of Mothers of Twins Clubs], 1999).

All forces seem to work to push twins together as one. However, inside; twins are not different from you. Each one wants to know who he or she is as a person. A twin’s search is more complicated by virtue of having a built-in mirror – someone who reflects his or her life. As a result, many things are happening inside the twin bond. (Sipes & Sipes, 1999, p. 68)

Origination of twins is important to understand. Torrey (1994) describes twins the following way:

There are predominately two kinds of twins. Two-thirds of all twins are fraternal (dizygotic) twins, which begin when two eggs are fertilized by two sperm. Such individuals share an average of 50% of their genes and, except for sharing a uterus for nine months, are genetically not more alike than other brothers and sisters. They may be either the same sex or different sexes. The other one-third of twins are identical (monozygotic) twins, which result when one egg is fertilized by a sperm but then divides into two (or more) separate fetuses. These individuals are the same sex, share 100% of their genes, and are therefore genetically identical (p.18).

Some identical twins share distinguishing features with certain other pairs, but not with all. It is recognized that there are four varieties of identical twins:

- identical twins with two placentae, two chorions and two amnions



- Identical twins with fused placentae, two chorions and two amnions
- Identical twins with one placenta, one chorion and two amnions
- Identical twins with one placenta, one chorion and one amnion

These four identical twins types have been organized according to when the fertilized egg divides. Chorions develop by day four or five after conception, and amnions develop by day seven. It is, therefore, reasoned that twins with two sets of membranes and placentae are “early-splitters” and twins with shared membranes and placentae are “late-splitters.” (Segal, 1999, p. 23)

Some believe that in addition to fraternal and identical twins there may be a third type of twin, although medical opinion is still divided. It is proposed that the egg splits in two, and each half is then fertilized by a different sperm. This theory is an attempt to explain why some fraternal twins look identical.

In appearance, identicals are very similar; however, they are not exactly the same. Identical twins always are the same sex and have the same blood type. They have the same hair color and hair texture, eye color, complexion, shape of ears, nose, and mouth. Even impressions left by their teeth are similar. Their fingerprints are similar but not identical.

In approximately 23 percent of identical twins the egg splits later than usual, most often day seven or beyond. The original right half of the egg becomes one individual and the original left half becomes the other (NOMOTC, 1999). Late-splitting (splitting after day seven) is a common explanation of twin partner reversals in some physical traits (Burn & Corney, 1988). Examples of

physical traits often found to be reversed are handedness, fingerprint patterns, hair whorls, size of hands or feet, and the appearance that twins look more alike facing each other (as though in a mirror) rather than standing side by side. This is often referred to as “mirror-image” twins.

There are many perceptions as to why there are twins. The old wives’ tale about skipping generations is simply not true when it comes to identical twins; however, there are some characteristics that contribute to the possibility of twin conception (NOMOTC, n.d.). They include:

- Advancing age of the mother - women in their 30s and 40s have higher levels of the sex hormone estrogen than younger women, which means their ovaries are stimulated to produce more than one egg at a time.
- Number of previous pregnancies - the greater the number of pregnancies a woman has already had, the higher her odds of conceiving twins.
- Heredity - a woman is more likely to conceive fraternal twins if she is a fraternal twin, has already had fraternal twins, or has siblings who are fraternal twins.
- Race - Black African women have the highest incidence of twins, while Asian women have the lowest.
- Assisted reproductive techniques - many procedures rely on stimulating the ovaries with fertility drugs to produce eggs and, often, several eggs are released per ovulation.

Twins make up the bulk of all multiple births (95 percent in 2004). The overall proportion of multiple births has continued to rise steadily (NOMOTC, n.d.), reaching an all-time high of 33.9 per 1000 births for 2004. Multiple births have risen for women of all ages over the last few decades, but the largest growth has been among older mothers, especially those age 35 years and over. For example, among women age 20-24 years the twin birth rate increased 31 percent between 1980 and 2004, compared with an increase of 133 percent for women age 40-44 years.

### **The Essence of Two Bodies, One Body**

What is the fascination with the biological likeness in appearance? Why am I so aware of this fascination that people have in looking at twins? Is this something only twins recognize? Am I not just another human body? I come to question whether my existence as a twin is my conscious thinking, my existence through my body, or is it merely an existence totally based on the fact that I look exactly like another individual? It strikes me that twins who do not look alike, as most fraternal twins exist, live differently, as they do not have to reveal their association with twinning...unless they choose too. I am stricken by the fact that my appearance has been such an important vehicle for my life.

Human beings are creatures of the flesh. What we can experience and how we make sense of what we experience depend on the kinds of bodies we have and on the ways we interact with the various environments we inhabit. It is through our embodied interactions that we inhabit a world, and it is through our bodies that we are able to understand and act within this world with varying degrees of success. (Johnson, 1999, p.33)

Is my identity based on looking like someone else? Is this different for singletons? However, as Leder states,

The body is not simply a thing in the world, but an intentional entity which gives rise to a world. Yet to be the latter is not to negate the former. While the body has a subjective role, it is also a body-object, a material thing. (Leder, 1992, p.124)

So what makes a twin? Is it the consciousness of being created simultaneously in one womb? Or is it merely society's identification of the identical appearance of two bodies? As Merleau-Ponty states:

Transcendent things exist because I can touch them, see them, and hear them. But most importantly, I never know things in their totality, but always from an embodied perspective. Because I am a body, I can only see things from a certain perspective, and yet, because I am a body, I can also experience the thing as being more than that partial perspective. (as cited in Robbins, 1999, p.3)

The appearance of the similarity of bodies is a major factor. We are not identical machines but living organisms by which we go forth in the world. Does my twin experience the world the same way that I do because her body is a replica of mine?

### **Naming Us, My Name**

The exploration of identical twins should begin with the origination of the word twin from the Old English word Twin, "consisting of two, twofold, double" (Harper, 2001, b). What is in a name? Why do many twins have names that resonate together and others do not? Is this a reflection of how parents want their twins to be viewed? It seems as though the twins that were born during the era that I was born were named with similar sounding names or with names with

the same beginning letters. Currently, twins more often have names that sound different. Is this reflective of parents' previous thinking of wanting their children recognized as a set and contemporary parents wanting their children recognized as individuals?

Often, the public perception is that twins are very much alike - in terms of appearance, personality and in their names or nicknames. But the latter assumption doesn't hold true anymore - the art of naming your twins has become as unique and imaginative as the twins themselves. Twins whose names both start with the letter 'J' are far and away the most popular combination of same-initial twins. While same-letter twins seem very popular, rhyming twin names and sound-alike twin names show up much less frequently. (Sanders, n.d.)

This popularity is interesting since we were named with first names that begin with "J". Joan Lynn and Jill Louise were the names for us selected by our parents. They liked the "J" sound with our last name of Jacobs and our middle names were selected because our father's middle initial was "L". We were told that since we probably would get married and not keep the name of Jacobs that they wanted us to keep some name connected to our father.

The contribution of "naming" to the social construction of twinship is important in society. In some social structures it is clearly indicated by the link between the "naming" process for twins and class differences. Higher socio-economic groups tend to choose more separate, less "twinsy" names for their children, emphasizing value of and possibility for individuation and autonomy. The greater tendency for lower-class groups to actively emphasize and encourage unitary names may reflect values of familial solidarity and fewer opportunities for social advancement (Stewart, 2003, pp. 151-152).

As one studies the idea of twinship it is apparent that in exploring this phenomenon that numerical or relationship descriptors are often used; just as the origin of the word twin is connected to "two" or "double". For example, in my early childhood days, our next-door neighbor often referred to us as "Check" and "Double-Check". He said that he could definitely tell us apart but could never remember who Jill was, and who was Joan, so he was just going to call us his "names". It never occurred to me until I was much older that he never could tell us apart but his name calling was a way for him not to reveal to us that he could not tell us apart. I find it rather amusing that many people do not want to admit

they could not tell us apart or even try to tell us apart. Other names used over the years for us have included: “Peat and Repeat”; “Twin 1 and Twin 2”; “Jack and Jill”; “Knick and Knack”; “Copy and Cat”; “Twice as Nice” and “Trouble and Double Trouble”. It stills amazes me that as each person would come up with their “unique” names, the names all had a sense of commonality – words that “showed a relationship” or indicated “more”. So is that simply what twinship is? – more of a relationship?

Our physical resemblance is often commented on by observers: close friends, relatives and complete strangers. As can be expected, family members can easily tell us apart and others put forth a great deal of effort to be able to tell us apart. Over time, I have noticed that we have developed “coping mechanisms” for handling these situations. When we are together and run into acquaintances, I have noticed that we instinctively align our initial conversations to survey their ability to tell us apart. This programming has been developed over time and it amazes me how quickly and instantly we now react to this. We listen to the first verbal responses and look for body language presented to us. For instance, it is very obvious to us if the person or people that we are talking to can’t tell us apart. For example, if our names are *not* used or if when our names *are used* they do not establish eye contact – but instead their eyes tend to focus on some “lost” space. They may also have uneasiness in their body language and tend to appear nervous, as if they are afraid that one of us will actually say, “You can’t tell us apart, can you!” I know many times people have called us by the wrong name. I wonder if they actually think they can tell us apart and are

simply wrong, or if they initially assigned the wrong name to the wrong person, or if they are simply guessing. On numerous occasions people have addressed us by the wrong name and Joan and I will just go along with the inaccuracy because we want to avoid the confrontation. If corrected, people are almost always either embarrassed or defensively try to explain why they mixed us up. We have discussed this and both agree that for us, we do not care if people can tell us apart if they are occasional acquaintances; however, if it is people who we recognize that we will be forming a foundation for future interaction we will slowly work on developing their ability to tell us apart. I often wonder how we developed this sense of personal responsibility to train others to tell us apart. I do not think that people who are not twins feel such a responsibility. Common social skills involve etiquette for introductions and accepting personal responsibility for remembering a name with a face. Why do I as an identical twin think in a different dimension? In fact, I find myself flipping between dimensions. When introduced to someone without my twin, I focus just on the new one-on-one interaction; however, when I meet someone new and I am with my twin, I realize that I not only introduce myself and her; but I add an additional introduction to the hints or clues as to how to tell us apart. How did this become important to me? How did this become important to us? Does it really make a difference?

### **The Secret Life of Twins**

There is something about the appearance of identical twins that is very mystifying and intriguing to others. Twinship is often perceived as being a relationship, which at times borders on the supernatural (Ainslie, 1997). Many

people believe twins have special powers such as telepathy, feeling each other's pain, and secret languages (Jackson, 2001). It stimulates conversation, garners attention, is visually noticeable, and is questioned over and over... so as to try and open some door into a secret world. What does this secret world mean to me as a twin? Is this secrecy a condition for my own identity?

The experience of secrecy is always simultaneously an experience of self, or personal identity. Secrecy gives us a sense of depth of self. And the variety of the experience of secrecy points to different layers and domains of meaning and to the understanding of identity. In order to come to terms with those different layers and dimensions of meaning, it may be helpful to ask: "How is the self concealed or revealed in the practice of secrecy?" "What are the consequences for the formation and shape of identity?" (van Manen & Levering, 1996, p.100)

Can the secret status be shared? Am I the only one who can truly know my twin?

But, of course, every person is, in this sense, a secret to us. No two people can ever be completely open to each other. It is in the nature of human relations that the other is ultimately experienced as mystery, as an

existential secret that can never be completely revealed or unrevealed. (van Manen & Levering, 1996, p.11)

It sparks instant conversation loaded with questions. Don't they know that it can only be experienced by birthright? I often think that one may never experience the level of intimacy with any other person as one does with their twin.

### *A Sense of Harmonious Rivalry*

Now that there are more sets of identical twins than ever, interest in them is very high. Never before have there been so many clubs, books, festivals, and events worldwide dedicated to twins and other multiples (Jackson, 2001). Some twins have used this public fascination to their advantage. Mary-Kate and Ashley



Olsen, first identical twin American actresses on Hollywood's Walk of Fame are entrepreneurs who are estimated to be worth a combined \$300 million (Breznican, 2004). Their identical looks have been their entry into the entertainment world and popularity. Other popular culture twins include Barbara and Jenna Bush, daughters of former United States President George W. Bush; Ann Landers and Abigail Van Buren, American advice columnists; Ross McWhirter and Norris McWhirter, compilers of the Guinness Book of Records; Robin and Maurice Gibb, British-born Australian musicians, two of the three Bee Gees (Encyclopedia: List of twins, n.d.) and Joan and Jayne Boyd, the original Doublemint twins (Kohl, 2001). Would these individuals be as popular as singletons? Can being born a twin be an instant formula for success or perhaps even failure? Can one twin have failure and one have success? Can the outcome be formulated? Is competition a perpetual existence of identical twins?

If there is competition, a hankering to stand apart, among all siblings, between twins the heat is turned up, the stakes higher and the connection between competition and intimacy more pronounced. After all, the closer two people are, the more likely they are to be standing in each other's shadows. (Levoy, 1989, p. 67)

I remember that people were very concerned with this competition thing. Teachers, friends, curious strangers, and my parents brought this topic up many times. "Just make sure you are yourself"; "You don't have to do this just because your sister is doing it"; "Don't forget to be true to yourself and don't compete with each other" – was frequent advice. I remember thinking; "I am being true to myself and to her". If she is my twin, then how is it even possible to "do my own

thing” when “my thing is her thing”? Why does it appear as competition to others? I have also thought that there should be another word in the English dictionary for twins to use besides “competition”, an alternative form just for twins to use. Competition is too broad...too negative...some twins may compete but I feel as though my competition was not with my twin but with others. I struggled in trying to get others to see that it did not matter to me what my twin did because more than likely I was right along side her. We seemed to often score almost the same on tests and evaluations and many times we did the same things because that is what we both liked. What is wrong with being like each other if we want to, or if we want to, can't we compete? I never really looked at it as competition but more like an expected component of being a twin. How can one compete against a replica of oneself? Is it really competition or just part of life as a twin?

Twins often have to work at getting others to recognize them as individuals. Because they look alike, the visual impact promotes the concept of a couple or set. As identical twins, my sister and I made daily efforts for others to recognize us as individuals and not as a tandem. It is interesting that as humans we strive for belonging, but yet we want individual separateness.

By degrees, though, we conspired to step away from each other's shadow, and this, I think, is the task of twinship: While most people begin life separate and must learn intimacy, my twin and I began life intimate and had to fight for separateness. (Levoy, 1989, p. 67)

Athletics is another arena where twins have excelled and appearance may contribute to this success as suggested by Dr. Nancy Segal (1999). She states

that identical twins might intimidate athletes competing in events where appearance counts. She tried an experiment, covering one identical twin's face in a photograph. The remaining twin was still appealing, but the allure of the matched set was lost. I wonder if this phenomenon enhances identical twins' athletic performance in judges' minds (Segal, 1999)? Famous twin athletes include: Karen and Sarah Josephson, synchronized swimming (Segal, 1999); Paul and Morgan Hamm, Olympic gymnasts; and Ronde and Tiki Barber, National Football League players (Encyclopedia: List of twins, n.d.).

### **Birth Order**

Studying the relationships among siblings and family members represents a complex task since relationships are dynamic. Just as one individual is unique in comparison to another (even among identical twins) one family is not the same as another, and families with twins are different from families without twins. When looking at the effects of birth order on personality development, one must be careful not to stereotype individuals. However, professionals can use the suggested characteristics associated with birth order as tools for understanding both themselves and others. Additionally, birth order is an area where one can help to analyze family structure and relationships as everyone has an ordinal position. Alfred Adler (1956) presents one of the earliest theoretical conceptual models of individual psychology. Adler describes positions of siblings in the context of sibling rivalry, competition, and conflict. Firstborns occupy an advantaged position and attempt to defend this superior position in relation to other siblings. Younger siblings try to upset this position and compensate for

feelings of inferiority. Adler's work was not attempting to create an empirical foundation for understanding birth order and sibling differences. Rather he made observations and interpreted them in terms of his own theory of personality (DelCiotto, 2004). Konig (1963) made an attempt to describe differences among siblings that could be attributed to birth order. He advocated that personality differences and development were affected by four sibling positions (only child, firstborn, second born, and third born). These theories led Toman (1993) and Sulloway (1996) to continue research on birth order and sibling relationships. Toman (1993) identified eleven basic types of sibling position in families: the oldest brother of brothers, the youngest brother of brothers, the oldest brother of sisters, the youngest brother of sisters, the male only child, the oldest sister of sisters, the youngest sister of sisters, the oldest sister of brothers, the youngest sister of brothers, the only female child, and the multiple and middle position. Toman's research mainly focused on two-sibling family constellations; however, he believed that the basic sibling positions can also be applied to sibling groups that are larger than two persons. More complexity is introduced as the size of the sibling group increases. For example, Toman describes middle-born children as ones whose role in the family is less distinctive than the role associated with other positions. A middle-born is likely to adopt the role of the sibling closest in age. With more than three siblings, the children in the middle-born positions may possess a combination of characteristics from as many sibling position types as can be used to describe their relationship to each sibling. Each child has a unique position in the hierarchy of the family system. This position establishes

particular rights, responsibilities, privileges, and roles. Each unique position influences both the quantity and the quality of relationships with others within the family. Age differences and changes in the family constellation can influence sibling roles as well.

Birth order is recognized as a factor that helps to mold relationships between twins, between twins and their parents, and between twins and the outside world. Birth order, age, and status within the family are important determinants of role expectations and patterns of behavior - the elder/younger distinction may become significant for all concerned (Stewart, 2003, p.151). To establish themselves as independent individuals, children must mentally separate themselves from their mothers. This process is called separation and individuation (Harter, 1983; Mahler, 1975). Twins have a unique scenario to enact because they simultaneously develop two early symbiotic ties - one with the mother, the other to the twin (Sater, 1979). Therefore, the early separation-individuation process must occur on two fronts rather than only one. Parents may inadvertently delay this process because they bond to the twin unit before they can bond to each twin separately (Gromada, 1981, p. 129). The dynamics between the twins additionally affects separation. Identical twins tend to develop complementary interactional patterns, with one twin gradually assuming more dominance in the relationship (Collier, 1980). Parents without realizing it may reinforce the outgoing behavior of one twin and the dependent behavior of the other one. Whether you're a singleton or a twin, everyone needs time to himself beginning in early childhood. When young twins have a chance to discover life on

their own they're free to get a sense of themselves within the context of other children, an important step to developing emotional autonomy. It's during separation, for instance, that twins are able to build a positive self-concept. They learn self-motivation, too. But, more importantly, if twins successfully individuate on their own when they're young, once adolescence and the second phase of autonomy begins, it will be a lot calmer for all (Tinglof, 2004).

### **Relationships of Identical Twins**

As individuals are viewed from the perspective of others, many times twins are viewed from the perspective of others. They are often used in scientific studies to explain the nature vs. nurture debate. However, what is it like from the inside perspective of identical twins? What does it mean to live as an identical twin? How do they develop their own identities?

The literature recognizes that the matter of establishing a sense of separate identity may be complicated for twins. With the exception of McEvoy's (1985) study of female fraternal twins that described the ways in which the participants had achieved their own sense of identities separate from their twin, there is limited literature on the topic. (Fotheringham, 2000, pp. 165-164)

Although twins are a highly researched population, researchers (Adelman & Siemon, 1986; Ainslie, 1997) recognize that there is relatively little literature that analyzes twins and describes their experience of twinship. In research of psychological development of adult twins, identical and fraternal, Schave and Cirello (1983) describe six types of twinship relationships. These include: Unit Identity, Interdependent Identity, Split Identity, Idealized Identity, Competitive Identity, and Sibling Attachment Identity.

Unit Identity occurs in twins who have merged aspects of their personalities. Schave and Cirello (1983) identified two types of Unit Identity, one where each twin functioned as half of a whole personality, and another where both twins did everything the same way.

Interdependent Identity occurs in twins who have a relationship in which they look to each other for various assistance and support. These twins may live close to each other or be in daily telephone contact. While their professional and personal lives may be quite separate, these twins depend on each other for their primary emotional support. Twins with an Interdependent Identity have difficulty identifying differences between themselves. For these twins their relationship with each other is as important, or more important, than their relationship with their parents.

Split Identity occurs in twins who define themselves as opposites. These twins have been labeled by their parents, either consciously or unconsciously. For example, twins may be known as the “good” twin or the “bad” twin or the “attractive” one or the “unattractive” one. This situation results in one twin being idealized while the other one becomes the scapegoat. The idealized twin becomes self-focused while the scapegoat twin develops a low self-concept. The result is a relationship filled with anxiety and conflict which is difficult for these twins to resolve.

Idealized Identity occurs in twins who view their twinship as the most significant part of their experience. They feel special having been born twins. Twins with an Idealized Identity find it difficult to identify any problems in their

twins. When these twins are separated they experience a great deal of anxiety.

Competitive Identity occurs in twins who, both consciously and unconsciously, set standards for each other. They encourage each other in the development of their talents. Twins with a Competitive Identity have a caring and empathic relationship. They bring out the best in each other. While maintaining close relationships with their twin, they have a clear sense of their own identity.

Sibling Attachment Identity occurs in male-female twins who have a relationship that resembles that of close siblings. Each twin experiences the other as he or she might a non-twin sibling. Male-female twins, although sometimes close, display none of the characteristics of the other twinship patterns.

In her search to discover how twins experienced their twinship, Case (1991) found virtually no published material on adult twins' feelings about their twinship. As a result of her research, Case (1991) found that identical twin women tended to form the closest emotional bonds and gave their twinship greatest priority throughout their lives. She found identical twin men to be next in the hierarchy. Later on Case (1996) extended this initial research and discovered that all twins in general, who were not threatened by competition, comparison, expectations, and favoritism, and who felt in tune with their twin, have enjoyed their twinship experience. The twins who reflected back and recalled how they felt when they were being compared tended to reinforce their belief that they should have been recognized for who they were as an individual



first, then as twins. Case found that resentment often surfaced when they were seen as one instead of being two separate individuals.

It is through involvement with significant people in one's life that a sense of identity develops. In infancy, one depends on an older person or people to identify and fulfill needs. However, as one matures and becomes more capable, one ideally should become a separate and independent person who is able to enter and maintain meaningful, supportive relationships. This is known as a state of psychological individuation (Smilansky, 1992).

### **Foundations of Identity Development**

Limited literature reveals that identity development may be an area where twins have more difficulty than singletons, particularly during adolescence. Ainslie (1997) used reports of twins themselves to conclude that twins may struggle with developing a positive self-concept. Collier (1980) acknowledges that issues of identity development and self-image tend to be highlighted during adolescence even for non-twins, but for twins these issues can present unique challenges. Bryan (1992) states that identical twins are faced with having to develop a separate identity and self-image distinct from one's twin. She agrees that this is a greater challenge for identical twins who may frequently be mistaken for one another and may be treated by others as a pair rather than as individuals. Sandbank (1999) similarly argues that the attention paid toward twins can negatively affect their self development when others accent their identity as multiples rather than their identities as individuals. Pearlman and Ganon (2000)

on the other hand, agree that the process of development may be complicated by twinship, but not necessarily disruptive of psychological well-being.

So what is identity and what does it mean? When does identity form? Do aspects of identity change over time and what stay the same? Identity is a complex entity that is not easily understood; therefore, it has been approached from various perspectives.

The depth and quality of a person's identity has significant consequences for the individual, the family, and for society. An individual benefits because identity achievement is associated with an array of healthy and well-developed psychosocial qualities (Adams & Archer, 1994). There are benefits for the family and society because high-functioning, mature, self-actualized individuals are necessary to realize the potential of society and to address the problems that challenge family life. Identity outlines an individual to others and themselves. An identity includes a sense of continuity, a sense of uniqueness from others and a sense of affiliation.

### **Identity**

Psychologists most commonly use the term "identity" to describe personal identity. This would include self image, self-esteem and individuation - or the things that make a person unique. In cognitive psychology, the term identity refers to the capacity for self-reflection and awareness of self.

Sociologists often use the term "identity" to describe social identity or the collection of group memberships that define the individual through personal experience. A family influence would be conceptualized as a social identity.

Jenkins (2004) conceptualizes social identity as a relational process. All identities are the result of an ongoing synthesis of internal self-meaning and definitions of oneself offered by others.

Identity is our understanding of who we are and of whom other people are, and, reciprocally, other people's understanding of themselves and of others (which includes us). The outcome of agreement and disagreement, at least in principle is always negotiable, identity is not fixed. Identity therefore emerges as we define ourselves alongside and against others and have these definitions validated or rejected by others. (Jenkins, 2004, p. 5)

However, psychology and social theory are not uniquely aligned and each discipline may use concepts from either one.

## **Ego**

The development of ego identity involves forming a sense of self as a distinct and separate individual. The emergence of ego in a child sets a pattern for future relationships and is affected by interactions with others and attitudes toward that child expressed by others. Twins who resemble one another enough that other people have difficulty telling them apart have a unique relationship with the world which affects the way they relate to each other and the social interactions they have. Relationship bonds appear closer between identical twins than between fraternal twins. Segal (1999) referred to the closer bond seen between identical twins as a "friendship extraordinaire" (p. 97).

## **Self-Concept**

Self-concept (DelCiotto, 2004) refers to an individual's view of himself or herself. When people describe themselves by referring to characteristic attributes and report upon their image of self across their roles and relationships they are

depicting their self-concept. Essentially, they are answering the question, “Who am I?” Self-concept differs from self-esteem because self-esteem refers specifically to how individuals feel about themselves (Fitts & Warren, 1996).

There are many aspects to self-concept. This is apparent when considering the many different ways in which the question “Who am I?” can be answered.

According to Fitts and Warren (1996), self-concept is comprised of one’s view of self and includes physical attributes, morality, personal life, family relationships, social contexts, academic and work performance, identity, behavior, and overall satisfaction.

### **Identity Formation**

The process of the development of the personality of an individual by which one is recognized throughout a particular stage of life is referred to as identity formation. A stage is a distinct phase in an individual’s development. Many theories in developmental psychology characterize development in terms of stages. A theoretical foundation of identity formation used in this research is Erikson’s stages of psychosocial development (Erikson, 1950), an improvement on Freud’s psychosexual developmental stages. Erikson agreed with Freud on many of his theories; however, he rejected Freud’s attempt to describe personality solely on the basis of sexuality. Erikson criticized Freud for his concept of “originology” (Hoare, 2005). This belief aligns with the idea that mental illness can be traced to early experiences in childhood. According to Erikson, experience in early childhood was important, but the individual also develops with a social context (Erikson, 1982). Human personality develops according to

stages predetermined in the growing person's readiness to be pushed toward, to be conscious of, and to interact with an expanding social radius (Erikson, 1950). He identified eight stages that describe how individuals relate to their social world.

### **Erikson's Stages of Identity Development**

The first stage is "Trust Versus Mistrust" and includes birth to 18 months. The concept of trust versus mistrust is present throughout an individual's entire life. Developing trust is the first task of the ego. Infants develop a sense of trust when caregivers provide dependability, care and affection; therefore, if the concept is not addressed, taught and handled properly during infancy, the individual may be negatively affected and never fully immerse themselves in the world.

The second stage is "Autonomy versus Shame and Doubt" and includes 1 and 1/2 to 3-year-olds. Children need to develop a sense of personal control over their physical environment while maintaining self-esteem. Success leads to feelings of autonomy; failure results in feelings of shame and doubt. Shame develops with the child's self-consciousness. Doubt has to do with having hesitation or disbelief. Extra doubt may become paranoia.

The third stage is "Initiative versus Guilt" and includes 3 to 6-year-olds. Preschoolers need to begin asserting control and power over their environment. Success in this stage leads to a sense of purpose. Children who try to exert too much power experience disapproval, resulting in a sense of guilt.

The fourth stage is “Industry versus Inferiority” and includes 7 to 12-year-olds. Children need to cope with new social and academic demands. Play is often overshadowed by bringing a productive situation to completion. Success leads to a sense of competence, while failure results in feelings of inferiority.

The fifth stage is “Identity versus Role Confusion” and includes 12 to 19-year-olds. Adolescents are newly concerned with how they appear to others. Ego identity is balanced between the past and the promise of a future career. Teens need to develop a sense of self and personal identity. Success leads to an ability to stay true to self, while failure leads to role confusion and a weak sense of self. An underlying question that may be asked here is: How do I appear to others and what is my future?

The sixth stage is “Intimacy versus Isolation” and includes 19 to 34-year-olds. Young adults need to form intimate, loving relationships with other people. Success leads to strong relationship, while failure results in loneliness and isolation.

The seventh stage is “Generativity versus Stagnation” and includes 35 to 60-year-olds. Adults need to create or nurture things that will create a positive change that benefits other people or establishes and guides the next generation. Simply having or wanting children does not achieve generativity. Success leads to feelings of usefulness and accomplishment, while failure results in shallow involvement in the world.

The eighth stage is “Ego Integrity versus Despair” and includes 60-year-olds and beyond. Older adults need to look back on life and feel a sense of

fulfillment. Success at this stage leads to feelings of wisdom and order, while failure results in regret, bitterness, despair, and possible fear of death.

### **Summary**

This chapter has provided a review of selected literature which pertains to the volatile factors of development that families with identical twins deal with as well as the literature that addresses the foundations of identity. The examination of the literature has revealed that growing up as an identical twin is different from growing up as a single born child. This difference has led to families thinking about “proper” identity development such as Freud’s theory suggests, but being confronted with factors specific to identical twins that they may or may not perceive. The main questions of this case study address those perceptions. Compared with research that uses twins to explore the relative contribution of genetic and environmental factors to a variety of behaviors, dispositions and traits, there is relatively little literature that studies families of twins and their perceptions towards their identical twin’s identities.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **The Making of My Case, Our Case**

If I am to find answers to perceptions of identity development as an identical twin and shed light onto this subject for other identical twins, parents of identical twins, families members of identical twins and others who affect identity development in twins, is it not important for voices to be heard...a story to be told...the layers of identity development perceptions to be separated?

This research will be presented using the qualitative case study methodology. This methodology was used to gain a greater understanding of the individual perceptions of the twins; (b) an understanding of the individual perceptions of the other family members; and (c) insight into the context of the family throughout the time period bounded by the birth of the twins through age eighteen (1960-1978). This chapter outlines the attributes of qualitative research, a family theory framework, and the reasoning behind investigations using case study methodology. Data collection methods which included a written autobiography by my twin and me, interviews with two brothers, one sister and both parents, review of family context through annual Christmas letters and analysis of family photographs are described. Finally, data analysis and theme identification strategies are reviewed.

#### **Foundations for Qualitative Research**

As in any process in which one is trying to find answers, it is important to establish a method of study. Qualitative research is an umbrella concept covering



several forms of inquiry that help us understand and explain the meaning of social phenomena with as little disruption of the natural setting as possible (Merriam, 1998). These conditions are critical: 1) understand the phenomenon of interest from the participants' perspectives; 2) researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis; 3) usually involves fieldwork; 4) primarily employs an inductive research strategy building abstractions, concepts, hypotheses or theories. A key component of qualitative research is that the reality is defined by interpretations of individuals based on their experiences of interaction with their social worlds. Merriam (1998) reveals qualitative research is focused on this meaning that has been created by the individuals. Qualitative researchers support the idea that human behavior is usually bound to the context in which it occurs; therefore behavior must be studied holistically, in context, rather than being manipulated. In order to reflect and accurately account for one family's experience of identity perception, it is imperative that in studying the case, one must employ an "insider's perspective.

### **Family Theory**

The term "family theory" consists of two broad conceptual terms, "family" and "theory." Doherty, Boss, LaRossa, Schumm, and Steinmetz (1993) have defined the process of theorizing as "formulating and organizing ideas to understand a particular phenomenon as a theory is the set of interconnected ideas that emerge from this process" (p. 20). The concept of family is more difficult to define and can include elements of shared genealogy, close proximity, emotional intimacy, and cultural definitions.

Families are alive and dynamic organisms. Understanding their complexities and how they function over time requires an investigation from various perspectives. No one theory is sufficient to explain the many complex dynamics. The discipline of studying families utilizes the scholarly work of many different fields. It draws upon the scholarly work of various disciplines including Sociology, Psychology, Child Development, Economics, and Education. However, this research will take a sociological focus in looking at the family. The Family Systems theory perspective is supported while looking at the perceptions of the family, of the twins' identity development, through the psychological perspective of Erickson's theory of child development.

Basic concepts of systems theory are recognized in ancient societies. In modern times Herbert Spencer (1880s) provided the foundation of the theory. He believed that the continual process that forms and dissipates structures in the universe also applied to biology, psychology, and sociology (Klein & White, 1996). In the late 1950s, systems theory was applied to the family through the work of Gregory Bateson, an anthropologist, and Don Jackson, a psychiatrist (Klein & White, 1996).

Children do not develop in isolation but in the context of a family system. Like the various interconnected moving parts in a complex piece of machinery the child impacts, and is impacted by, the family. Any change in one part of the machinery inevitably changes the entire working operation. To fully appreciate how the machinery works, one must look at and understand the whole device, not just one part. This analogy applies to the Family Systems perspective of the

family. Family Systems theory believes that members of a family are interconnected and can only be understood by looking at the many interactions among the members. The family, when viewed as a system, is seen as affecting the environment it lives among (Williams & Williams, 2005).

This theoretical framework partly explains why it is important to take a look at the perceptions of identity of family members. It is important to understand how the “family machinery” influences the dynamics of identity formation for their twins. This research supports the theory that identity development in identical twins is not just experienced by the twins themselves but experienced by the whole family. Therefore, when family perceptions of identity are viewed similarly and/or differently by individual family members, the development of the twins will be affected. Additionally, the family members should recognize if their perceptions are directed toward the twins as a set or as individuals.

### **Case Study**

I will use the case study methodology through the focus of my identical twin sister and myself and the perception of our “twinsip” by our family. Case studies are different from other types of qualitative research in that they are intensive analyses and descriptions of a unit of focus or a system bounded by space and time. Topics examined in case studies include individuals, events or groups. The case study method often involves simply observing what happens to, or reconstructing ‘the case history’ of a single participant or group of individuals. Case study methodology is chosen based on the fact that the “case” has clear boundaries, has contextual material available, and there is a wide

variety of data collection techniques available to provide an in-depth picture. The focus of the study is looking at the family's perceptions of the identity of their twin's identity formation by addressing the following research questions:

**1. How did my family (parents and siblings) perceive the identity development of the twins in their family?**

**2. How did my sister and I view our identities and identity development?**

**3. Are the family identity development perceptions of the twins grounded in the structure of a set or focused on the individuals?**

These are the questions that have brought me to research in a qualitative context, specifically focusing on my identity development using the focus of a case study. This section reveals the significance of the methodology, the perspective of the research and how it is executed.

The use of case study methodology provides an in-depth account of family members looking at their perceptions of identical twin personal identity development and establishing meaning for those involved (Hancock & Algozzine, 2006). Merriam (2001) indicates that insights gleaned from case studies can directly influence policy, procedures, and future research. This research is not intended to generalize my experience to all identical twins, all families, or others but rather enrich the data and continuum of the exploration of identity perceptions of identical twins.

The human condition can not be studied using the same methods appropriate for science. Understanding and explaining the human condition is

very complex and can not be reduced to a series of techniques. Rather, it must be seen as understanding an event that we live in our experiencing of our life environment.

### **Advantages of the Case Study Method**

1. Stimulating new research. A case study can sometimes highlight extraordinary behavior, which can stimulate new research.
2. Contradicting established theory. Case studies may sometimes contradict established theories.
3. Giving new insight into phenomena or experience. Because case studies are so rich in information, they can give insight into phenomena, which we could not gain in any other way.
4. Permitting investigation of otherwise inaccessible situations. Case study gives researchers the possibility to investigate cases, which could not possibly be engineered in research laboratories. Some created situations would be totally unethical and not possible but the use of case-study methodology permits much deeper insights into the mechanisms, processes and consequences of an experience (Hayes, 2000).

### **Disadvantages of the Case Study Method**

1. Replication not possible. Uniqueness of data means that they are valid for only one person. While this is a strength in some forms of research, it is a weakness for others, because it means that findings cannot be replicated and so some types of reliability measures are very low.

2. The researcher's own subjective feelings may influence the case study (researcher bias). This may appear both in the collection of data and its interpretation. In unstructured or clinical case studies the researcher's own interpretations can influence the way that the data are collected, i.e., there is a potential for researcher bias.

3. Memory distortions. The heavy reliance on memory when reconstructing the case history means that the information about past experiences and events may be notoriously subject to distortion. Very few people have full documentation of all the various aspects of their lives, and there is always a tendency that people focus on factors that they find important themselves while they may be unaware of other possible influences.

4. Not possible to replicate findings. There may be problems in generalizing the results of a unique individual to other people (Hayes, 2000).

Case study research methods allow researchers to capture multiple realities that are not easily quantifiable (Hancock & Algozzine, 2006). There are three approaches or designs that case study structure can be based on. These include function, characteristics and disciplinary perspective. Historically, there are numerous research studies that incorporate the case model. Within the past few decades, three researches have emerged with significant literature that focuses on disseminating the process of conducting a case study: Sharon B. Merriam, Robert E. Stake and Robert K. Yin. Merriam (2001) suggests that case study research may be discovered in ethnographic, historical, psychological, or *sociological* orientations. According to Stake (1995), case study research designs

may also be classified as intrinsic, instrumental or collective. Yin (2003) describes types of case study research designs as exploratory, explanatory, and descriptive.

### **Ethnographic, Historical, Psychological or Sociological**

Merriam (2001) states that ethnographic designed case studies originate in anthropology; therefore, ethnographic case study research is used when one wants to explore the observable and learned patterns of behavior, customs, and ways of life of a culture-sharing group. Ethnographic case studies usually involve the researcher to have extended immersion with the group. This research orientation combines the views of group members and the researcher's perceptions and interpretations of the group's operation.

Historical case studies are often descriptions of people, organizations, programs, or events as they have evolved over time. Historical case study research typically includes direct observation and interviews of key participants. It employs more than a chronological listing of events; it includes rich descriptions of the researcher's interpretation of factors that result from the events.

Psychological case study research typically examines human behavior as individuals, organizations, events, programs as to alignments with psychological theories, concepts and perspectives that have been generated over time. The discipline of Psychology typically looks at influences on *individuals* and their function as they interact with others.

Sociological case study research includes families, gender, race, status, aging, politics, health care, demographics, urbanization and other social science

issues. Sociological case study research, with its focus on society, social institutions, and social relationships, examines the structure, development, interaction, and collective behavior of organized groups or individuals (Hancock & Algozzine, 2006). Sociologists utilize various theories to explain the many social influences on the family. They view human beings as social creatures functioning within multiple social groups and institutions.

### **Collective, Instrumental, and Intrinsic**

Stake (1995) writes that case study research design may be classified as collective, instrumental or intrinsic in addition to the researcher's disciplinary orientation. Collective case study research design tries to add to the current literature base or substantiate theory through review of several instrumental cases to enhance the ability to theorize about some larger collection of cases.

Instrumental design is used to better analyze a theoretical question or problem. This design is more focused on gaining an insight of the theoretical explanation that underlines the issues rather than understanding the particular issue being examined. Instrumental case studies constitute exemplars of a more general phenomenon. They are selected to provide the researcher with an opportunity to study the phenomenon of interest. The research question identifies a phenomenon (e.g. stress, bereavement, fame etc) and the cases are selected in order to explore how the phenomenon exists within a particular case.

Intrinsic case study research is used when researchers want to know more about an individual, group, event, or organization. Intrinsic case studies represent nothing but themselves. The cases in intrinsic case studies are chosen



because they are interesting in their own right. The researchers want to know about them in particular, rather than about a more general problem or phenomenon. These researchers are not necessarily interested in examining or creating general theories or in generalizing their findings to broader populations, but rather to reveal specifics about the particular case to enrich theories or meaning.

### **Exploratory, Explanatory and Descriptive**

Yin's (2003) types of case study research designs include exploratory, explanatory, and descriptive. Case studies that are used to determine the feasibility of research procedures or seek to define research questions of a subsequent study are exploratory designs. These are often a precursor to additional research efforts and involve fieldwork and information collection prior to the definition of a research question. Explanatory designs look to examine cause-and-effect relationships. The primary purpose is to determine how events occur and which ones may influence outcomes. Descriptive designs target presenting a complete description of a particular event, situation, program or activity to be observed in its context.

### **Research Orientation**

This case study will focus on two individuals (one is the researcher) who are identical twins and explore how they and their family perceived their early years of identity in the context of their family setting. It will have a sociological orientation and will engage a descriptive, intrinsic research design (Merriam, 2001; Stake, 1995; & Yin, 2003).

Different designs or approaches to case study research represent different general assumptions about methods and sources of data. Of course, any method can be used in any type of research and multiple methods are often used when doing case study research, but relationships between design and method are a foundation for planning a successful investigation. (Hancock & Algozinne, 2006, p. 34)

### **Study Design**

As important as it is to articulate the purpose of the research, and correctly align methodology, it is just as important to gain approval for the study and to identify and secure the resources to garner information. Prior to this data collection, Human Subjects approval was sought and granted from the Iowa State University Institutional Review Board (Appendix A). In addition, I secured permission from the members of my family to secure the family letters and photographs for review and investigation.

### **Autobiographical Information**

Initially, my twin and I each prepared individual autobiographies. My instructions were to “Write about what you have been told and heard over time using a focus of memories that you feel have been the foundation for your identity and personality development until age 18”. The purpose of having a written account completed versus doing a face-to-face interview is that a written autobiography would be less biased as it would be more “influential” to have myself as the researcher interview my twin. These accounts were done prior to other interview work to establish an initial context to compare and contrast.

## **Interviewing and Observations**

Secondly, the technique of personal face-to face interviews with family members were used to collect data. The interviews were semi-structured and questions were guided based on the theoretical framework of the study (Appendix B). Three sets of questions were used: one for parents, one for twins, and one for siblings. The unstructured, open-ended interviews were audio taped to reduce researcher bias as well as to allow the researcher to note the body language and facial expressions of the interviewees. The data were transcribed very carefully using all wording and other language cues such as: pauses, voice inflections, and body language. After the data were transcribed, interviewees were given a copy of the transcription to check for accuracy and comprehensiveness. At this point in time, family members provided additional data, not only for clarification and accuracy but to be able to add dimensions that did not come up in the interviews. The transcription was kept in a secure computer and filed by interviewee's name and date.

## **Photographs**

Next, a third set of written reflections was produced by the family members from analysis of pre-selected family photographs (Appendix C) of my twin and me. My family is not known for taking many pictures; however, the ones selected were chosen based on the fact that they represented various ages. Photographs from the family life sub-sets were used for us twins and each family member that was interviewed. Using photographs created additional descriptions

triggered by visual analysis. These descriptions were transcribed as well, and family members reviewed them for accuracy.

Finally, family Christmas letters were obtained for the years beginning the year we were born. These were studied and provided family history and insight into highlighted events.

### **Family Profile**

My family members were asked if pseudonym names were desired when writing this case study and all members did not feel that it was necessary. They felt using their real names were important in telling their stories and revealing their perceptions. The first two profiles presented are the autobiographies written by my twin sister and myself. The subsequent profiles are of my parents and siblings compiled from information garnered in the interviews, the photo analysis and from the family letters.

#### **My Twin, My Sister (written by Joan)**

I was born as an identical twin into a family of parents with two other siblings; Kathy, the oldest and then a brother, Steve. My twin sister's name is Jill. We were born three minutes apart in a hospital in Crookston, MN and lived in a small town in Northern Minnesota called Fertile during our early years, and then for adolescence and high school in a town called St. Peter, MN . I am the oldest twin by three minutes. From what was told to me by my parents, strangers would knock on the door of the house asking to see the twins. I know when I was born I was the smaller one. I was in the hospital longer before being released to go home. I know also during delivery it wasn't sure if I was going to make it or not.

Mom claims that's why I have a stubborn streak in me because I had to fight to stay alive! By the end of our first year, we had become about the same size.

My father worked outside of the home and my mother was a housewife. We lived in Fertile until the age of five and then moved to a town in southern Minnesota called St. Peter. Right before moving to St. Peter we had a younger brother born into the family named David. I remember a few things about living with all four brothers and sisters but for the most part when I became older, Kathy and Steve were off at college, and only living at home for short periods of time. Most of my growing up was with my sister Jill and younger brother David.

I remember most of the time Jill and I were always doing things together, made decisions together on what to do for the day and were a team. I recall when we moved to St. Peter it was right when school had started for first grade. It never dawned on me until we were with Dad going for the first day that Jill and I would be in separate classes. We had started the school year together in Fertile in Kindergarten because they had only one class, but when we moved to St. Peter there were enough kids in the grade that there was more than one unit, and we went into different classrooms. I was devastated at first but then everything went just fine. All through school from then on, we never were in the same classes.

From what others told me in my family early on I was the quiet one. We had a great childhood. Jill and I had a lot of opportunities, to be in choir, take piano lessons, be in Campfire girls, gymnastics, in band, swimming. We both were involved in a lot of activities and we able to do a lot of activities growing up

in St. Peter. We both loved school. From what I recall, I tended to like to read more than Jill but we were very comparable in academic abilities and had very similar grades. We tended to choose and pick the same extra-curricular activities but were able to do them individually. We dressed alike all through childhood until Junior High. Even in Junior High, we would buy the same things; just wear them at different times.

Many times Mom would sew us matching dresses or when we shopped we always selected what we liked and if they didn't have two in a size we would select something else. Junior high school was the time we starting dressing different. We still bought the same clothes but wore them at different times. Interesting, because if we would have really thought about it, we should have bought different items and had twice the wardrobe! In high school we hung around the same friends and dated different people. Jill worked at a Hallmark store in town and I worked at the local grocery store. Sometimes if a patron had been in each of the same stores on the same day they would look twice – but almost everyone in town knew the “Jacobs Twins”.

Jill dated a boy from our class and I dated a guy that was in a grade younger. It just so happened that we both married our high school sweethearts and to this day we are married to them. Our husbands know each other well from growing up in the same town but interestingly enough are very different in personalities.

### **Myself, a Twin, a Researcher (Jill)**

As twin researcher Segal (who is a twin) states:

Colleagues cautioned me against discussing my twinship...they reasoned that personal perspectives might diminish my scientific credibility because I could be perceived as other than objective or dispassionate. I realized that my own twinship has been a rare source of insights and ideas. It has also strengthened my commitment to producing research meaningful to twins, to families and to people asking developmental questions. (Segal, 1999, pp. 333-334)

My sister and I were born June 12, 1960, in Crookston, Minnesota. We arrived three minutes apart. Our parents did not know at first they were having twins as there were no ultrasounds used at that time to detect multiple births – just the keen ears of a doctor and his stethoscope. My mother tells of all the weight she was gaining the first months of her pregnancy and so the doctor restricted her calorie intake. Later on, when he heard two heartbeats, he told her to eat like crazy. She indicated that this worried her as she was not eating well before. When it was announced that she was having twins my father and brother were up in Canada fishing. My aunt thought that it was such an important piece of news she sent a telegram to my father telling him to come home. This caused a great uproar as she neglected to include in the telegram that it was not an emergency and that my mother was fine. To top it off, she did not tell my mother that she did this. Needless to say, several people were upset, my mother, my father and my brother!

One month later on June 11<sup>th</sup>, my mother's birthday, she was admitted to the hospital set to deliver the next day. The doctor indicated that she was to be heavily sedated when the twins were born. He also revealed that he no longer

heard two heartbeats so he assumed that one twin had died. My parents were very sad. During the delivery my mother heard, "How nice another girl" by the nurses and even though sedated she realized she had delivered two girls but was sad that one had died. However, this was not the case as we were both alive. My sister, Joan Lynn Jacobs, was very small at three pounds and I, Jill Louise Jacobs was much larger at six pounds. My dad was called into the delivery room to have his blood tested, as she needed blood. My dad matched and she was given a transfusion directly from him to her. The doctor indicated to my dad that they were not sure if Joan would make it. We immediately were put into incubators and my parents called in a pastor and we were baptized together in the hospital. Dad called home to everyone about the twins- my bother that had to come home from the fishing trip cried that one could have at least been a boy! I went home after a few days and Joan ended up being in the incubator for another month. When my parents visited the hospital they brought me with them every time because they thought we should be together. When Joan finally was allowed to leave the hospital, the nurses had become so attached to us that they gave us red and white dresses for us to have our one-year pictures taken in. My mother was always so proud of the fact that they were kind enough to give her the dresses – she just knew we were the nurses' favorite babies. She had several pictures taken of us in those dresses. The telling of this story has always made me feel as though my parents thought they were very lucky to have us. The pictures in the red dresses validated it and gave them a reason to tell the



story. I, too, treasure the story as my mother saved the dresses and I have had each of my two daughters' one-year pictures taken in the same dress.

Joan and I have never been genetically tested, but it is assumed we are identical twins. We are very similar in appearance and our parents have always identified and referred to us as identical twins. We also believe we fit into the category of mirror-image twins. We base this on the fact that I am right-handed and Joan is left handed and our fingerprint patterns appear to be reversed. Our physical features tend to "mirror" each others'. It is interesting to note that my sister and I do not seem to experience mirror image aptitudes. We instead have very similar interest and skill levels; however, we do feel that perhaps we do experience some tendencies of individuals that tend to be labeled as having "right-brain" or "left-brain" tendencies. Joan will often describe herself as being more analytical, and I have described myself as being more creative. It strikes me now, how ironic this unsubstantiated conclusion is when I am embedded in this research of exploring perceptions of my identity development.

We lived in a very small town in Northern Minnesota called Fertile. This town is where my mother grew up. My fraternal grandparents also lived in the same town. My father and grandfather had an implement and car dealership business called "T & J's". The "T" stood for Thorkelson (my mother's maiden name) and the "J" stood for Jacobs. We were very close to my grandparents and I loved playing at their house. My grandmother was very happy that we were close as my other aunts, uncles, and cousins did not live nearby.

My twin sister and I saw my grandmother almost everyday. I can still hear her thick Norwegian accent calling our names “Yill and Yoan” and we would giggle because we couldn’t understand why it was so difficult to say “Jill and Joan”. She was a very religious woman who was very proud of her family. She would also call us her little angels and she gave us angel figurines to remind us of that. I never heard her yell at anyone, and I considered her to be very kind and loving. I just knew that everyone loved her as much as I did!

We would often ride our bikes down to her house for cookies. This was important for, as six-year olds, we thought that traveling six blocks by ourselves was very grown-up. We thought that our mother didn’t know where we were going but many years later we discovered that she called our grandmother every time we left our house and she was to call her back if we did not arrive. My grandmother’s telephone was on a party-line, so practically the whole neighborhood knew about our travels. It never occurred to me to ever go anyplace else but to her house.

After we had cookies, we would usually comb Grandma’s hair. Her hair was snow white and it reached the bottom of her back. She wore it pinned up in a bun, but every afternoon she took it down, brushed it, and put it back up. She never let anyone see her with her hair down except us. She had a mirror on the wall at the bottom of her staircase. We would stand on the second step and she at the bottom so we could reach the top of her head and brush her hair. I felt needed and loved the smell of her face-powder that lingered on her hair.

Another favorite childhood memory is the time Joan and I would spend playing in our grandparent's attic. It was on the third floor of their house and it contained many treasures. We were told by grandma that we could play with anything up there as it was just junk to her. We would dress up in old dresses, play with old toys, explore many trunks, look at pictures, and play hide-and-go-seek. It was a wonderful place. Many times we would drag recent finds down to the main floor to show her what we had found (as if she had never seen it before!). She always would say it was junk and we could take it home if we wanted it. We never took anything home, and we thought it was much more fun to leave the treasure where it belonged.

I remember school as being a place that held the most potential for controversy – for other students, for teachers, and perhaps even my parents. In Kindergarten we were in the same class, as the sections went every other day and my parents were not going to bring us to school on separate days. I am told that this was the start of people “telling” my parents what the best way to deal with twins in school was. And if it was not advice, it was subtle and unintentional thoughts and actions. To this day, I can remember my Kindergarten room and some stories. I find that amazing as today there are things I can not remember from other school years, but I certainly can kindergarten. Everyone in our small town knew us; however, as a first day of Kindergarten is a big day I remember the “twin’s” first day being even bigger. As I look back now, and as a mother and a teacher I feel sorry for the other kids because I am sure they must have not felt special because they were not a twin. I have always loved creative activities. I

remember having free time the first day and I raced to the painting easel. The idea of putting an old shirt on backwards that happened to be my dad's made me feel ready for painting and made me feel close to home because it smelled like my dad....I literally loved that paint shirt. My sister followed me and we were standing side by side in the painting corner.

***The "Art" of the unexpected!***

Standing side by side on cue...  
Loaded brushes attacking the white paper as children do...

Looking for a rainbow, an animal or a picture of many a hue....  
Thoroughly expecting the same pictures as identical twins should do...

But wait....is it true?

One is linear and one is askew...  
One is orange and one is blue!

It has to be a trick by those two...  
Their pictures should match we all knew!  
...because they are **not** like me and you! (Conlon, 2007)

When I was in first grade, a few months after my younger brother was born, my parents announced to us that we were moving to another town – St. Peter, Minnesota. My father had been offered a job. He had just completed his term as President of the State School Board and was offered a full-time position working for the Minnesota State School Board Association. My grandfather was willing to continue their business alone, so my father could not miss this opportunity. I was not that upset with the prospect of meeting new people, or getting a new house or changing schools, but I was very upset that the town we were moving to was six hours away from my beloved grandparents. At that point

in time, I did not think about how difficult it was for my parents to leave or how difficult it was for my grandparents to have us leave.

Moving to a new town and attending first grade in a new school is a lasting memory. Dressed alike in bright, blue jumpers, white turtlenecks, matching shoes and chestnut ponytails bouncing as we walked fast to keep up with our father's footsteps...created quite a commotion. Not only were we the new kids in town...but we were a matched set. What was the big deal? We are twins. Haven't you ever seen a twin before? It was an exciting and scary moment that quickly tilted more to the scary side. The Principal announced, "We have a policy that all twins should be separated and placed in different classrooms." "We want to help them be themselves and not be competitive!" "Oh, and by the way.... we have a shortage of lockers so they can share a locker and maybe some books." Sadness filled my body and I felt it in hers. How could we be separated? Don't they know our world is together and not just a space where we keep our books and coats. I wanted to tell him to make someone else share their books. The locker is okay because we understand how to share physical space – we do it all the time. But I don't want to share books; I want my own "space" to learn. Have you ever tried to read a book with someone else? I could picture that turning the pages at the same time would be difficult enough but how do you read at the same pace as someone else and make meaning of a story with someone else? Is it right that the school sets the rules for twins? What makes "them" an expert on twins?

I remember when I was fairly young discovering the astrological zodiac signs. It was extremely satisfying to me to find out that by being born in the month of June that my sister and I were under the sign of a Gemini. I felt as though I had found my reason for existence. Gemini is known as the sign of the twins. The word Gemini is rooted in the Latin origins of the word *geminatus*, “duplicated” (Harper, 2001a). The constellation of Gemini is marked by a pair of stars that mark the heads of the Greek mythological twins, Castor and Polydeuces (Pollux). “Like many twins, the stars of Castor and Pollux appear identical at first glance, but upon closer examination, differences appear” (Duff, 1994, p. 12). My childhood imagination could not conjure up a reason for my existence....it was fate! In my mind I created a theory of evolution for myself. My parents’ birthdays are both in June...so that is why I became a twin. As for sure it was the result of two Gemini’s marrying and having children...it was “in the stars” to have a set of twins....and identical ones for sure. Just like Castor and Polydeuces (Pollux), who were born of the extraordinary union of Heaven and Earth (Duff, 1994, p. 12). I clung on to this theory until my adolescent years when I learned the real truth of the circumstances surrounding the conception of twins. I find this amusing to this day, and sometimes prefer to share my previous “theory of evolution”, especially when I am often asked, “Do twins run in your family?”....“Is it true that it skips a generation and that your children will probably have twins?”

Growing up in St. Peter proved to be wonderful. I had many friends and developed many interests. These days of my life were terrific, busy days. Joan

and I both were very involved in cheerleading, yearbook, music, church, spending time with friends, and working part-time. We dressed alike until the eighth grade. At the time, I do not remember any particular event that caused this major appearance change, but I remember other people making a bigger deal out of it than we did. I believe all the activities that I was involved in have contributed to the fact that I enjoy a very fast-paced life today.

Graduation from high school brought a sense of rebirth. Joan and I did not attend the same college. I attended the University of Wisconsin-Stout in Menomonie, Wisconsin. I enjoyed college life greatly studying my passion of textiles. I was involved in many activities and organizations. Joan transferred there her sophomore year because she changed her major and we thought that living together would save us money. Many people commented that they thought we just could not stand not living together. This was never the case. We both graduated with honors; she in Early Childhood Education and I in Clothing, Textiles and Design with a concentration in Education and a minor in Business Administration. I thought my career goal was to work at a major sewing pattern company in the area of product education; however, love beckoned elsewhere and I married my high school sweetheart. Ironically, Joan married her high school sweetheart and our weddings were three weeks apart. I remember my father saying, "I am going to ask this just once, would you want a double wedding?" and we replied in unison, "No!" My husband's name is Dennis and Joan's husband's name is David. At the time, this did not appear to me as so unusual but over the years people have commented on what a coincidence it is that we both married

our high-school boyfriends and that their names are so similar. I began my married life in Janesville, Minnesota. I was very happy!

### **My Mother, Our Mother (Grace)**

My mother was born on June 11, 1922 in Trail, MN. My mother grew up as a shopkeeper's daughter. They lived a frugal, conservative life she describes herself as a tomboy growing up. Her best friend was a neighbor boy and she refused to play with dolls or girls and disliked to wear dresses. When she turned about ten years old is when she decided it was ok to be a girl (her description). She then learned common household work such as cooking, sewing, and cleaning. She worked hard at home and was very involved with 4-H. She loved to bake and earned trips to the state fair doing bread baking demonstrations. In junior high school she thought she wanted to be a dietitian with the goal of eventually being a nutrition writer for a newspaper. She was successful in school and had support from her parents to attend college in an era when many women were not offered this opportunity. She tells the story of her father believing women should go to college only to be teachers or nurses. She tells of how she convinced her father that she was going to be a "dentist's nurse". My mother graduated from the University of Minnesota with a degree in dental hygiene. She worked as a hygienist until my older sister was born, and then she stayed home while all five of us children were growing up.

My mother is the perfect compliment to my father even though they have disagreements like all married couples. She is his constant companion and their family of five children is the focus of her life. She has a sincere sweetness that is



ever present on a daily basis. I have always pictured my mother with my father. I have pleasant memories of her warm hugs, her lingering scent - a combination of designer perfume and dish washing soap, and a loving gesture of cupping her hands around my face. She has a very warm heart, and all of us recognize her constant love.

My mother's appearance has always been striking – hazel eyes, dark skin and coal colored hair that only reveals itself as dark brown in the sunlight. People would comment to my twin sister and me as we were growing up that we looked like our mother. I could never understand this as I thought of my fair skin, my bright blue eyes and light brown colored hair. I never rebuffed the comment, but held the thought warmly as I always admired her beauty. As she has aged, I still look at her with beauty in my eyes.

### **My Father, Our Father (Jim)**

My Dad grew up as an only child on a farm in southern Minnesota during the Depression era. He was born on June 6, 1921 in Plainview, MN. He was the only child and was raised to be very responsible, polite and religious. He tells stories of how hard he worked on the farm with his dad. He told the story of when he was in elementary school being with his Mom in Rochester, MN shopping and he saw a Catholic nun for the first time dressed in a Habit. He asked his mother, "What are them things?" His mother was mortified and made him go up to the Sisters and apologize. He used this story to remind us to always think before we speak and to be sensitive to others. He would tell us of the hard times and how lucky we were to have brothers and sisters. He borrowed money to go to college

during a time that most farm boys were borrowing money to keep the family farm afloat. The University of Minnesota was a big place for a small town guy but he did well and often told us stories of eating peanut butter sandwiches all the time and sending his laundry home on the train. As with many parent stories, I believe these were told to remind us of how much easier life was for us. He did not want pity from us for his life, but rather to show how the world had changed. He met my mother at college and completed a degree in chemical engineering. I remember him several times recounting the story of the first time that he took my mother on a date and he forgot his wallet. He was humiliated that my mother ended up paying for the night out. He thought that he would never get another date, as how would any women be interested in a man that was not conscientious enough to bring his wallet. Upon graduation, my parents married and lived in St. Louis, Missouri as my father was stationed with the Navy there. He often reminded us he was fortunate to have the position of a Lieutenant as his college education dictated an officer's position. After his service with the Navy was over, he owned a local business and volunteered for years on the local school board, eventually becoming the state president. He then worked full time for the Minnesota State School Board until retirement and continues to volunteer with several community organizations. Over and over again we heard his undeniable conviction to education and helping others. In looking back at my father's life, his actions and words always led back to his mantra in life: education and hard work. He talked often of his past experiences in school, how school

gave him opportunity and how his opportunities were a direct result of hard work and helping others.

During my first few days in college, I received a letter from my Dad. I remember being not only excited at the sight of mail in my mailbox, but how the return address of “Dad” brought a surprise and almost immediate feeling of nervousness. I had never had a letter written just to me from him. This letter was something that not only had tears welling up in my eyes because I missed home, but I could feel his presence through his words. While working for the State School Board Association in Minnesota my father was recognized for his meticulous work, strong public speeches, and kind spirit. As I read the letter, the tone was not the familiar “professional tone” I had expected. Instead it read with great compassion. I noticed the familiar bold capital letters that identified his writing. His letter told me how proud he was of me for going to college but what he was proud of was how happy I seemed to be and that is what he wanted. This written affirmation of my demeanor and his support was so rewarding to me. I will never forget that letter and how much it meant to me. Today, I print in capital letters and use my middle initial of “L” to be like my father. I figured that when I was married I did not keep his last name but I wanted to keep his way of writing and middle initial he used in his signature. He always made a point to tell Joan and me that he loved us. He would say, in a quiet voice before we went to bed at night, “Good night, Jill” ... “Good night, Joan.” I do not remember hearing “Good night, twins”.

**My Sister, Our Sister (Kathy)**

My older sister Kathy was born on September 16, 1945 in St. Louis, MO, where my father was stationed for two years in the Navy. As the first born, she was looked to as a leader. Honestly, I do not have many memories of actual day-to-day living experiences. She was 15 years older and she was in college when I started kindergarten. She often tells many stories of having to care for us, all the diapers she changed and all the times she had supervision responsibilities. Candid family photos usually show her holding one of us. I am sure it intruded on her teenage agenda. She is tallest of the girls and her hair is blond and she has soft brown eyes. Joan and I were the opposite with brown hair and blue eyes. I often think it is a little ironic that one sister looks so different than me and the other exactly the same. Kathy has always been recognized for being so thin. Throughout junior high and high school her nickname was Feeb – from the word feeble. My brother and her friends used the name the most.

She was always interested in the arts. She excelled in music, theater, and art. My mom tells stories of her sitting for hours cutting pictures out of magazines and catalogs and pasting pictures that she liked onto paper. She was the Valedictorian of her graduating class in Fertile, MN and graduated from Concordia College in Moorhead, MN majoring in Art Education. She currently teaches art and has a home business that designs and sells her original rug hooking patterns and supplies.

**My Brother, Our Brother (Steve)**

My older brother Steve was born on September 2, 1947. Growing up he and Kathy were the closest due to the fact that they were only two years apart. He was a typical boy who loved to be outside, was involved with the Boy Scouts and as he got older loved to do projects with his hands. In his high school Shop class, he made Joan and I a dollhouse that was a replica of our house. It was so large that one of us could actually sit in the living portion. He was talented in working on cars and working with wood. He had many friends in high school and I remember that he played music loud in his room and Mom was always telling him to turn it down. He graduated from Moorhead State University in Industrial Technology; however, while he was attending college he was drafted and this was deferred for him to finish school. I remember my Dad crying for a long time when he left for boot camp. I never saw my Dad cry like that before or ever again. Steve and my Dad were often at odds as my brother is very stubborn and he liked to do things "his way". Steve talks about taking care of us twins and how we would have our cribs close to each other and when we got mobile we would move from one crib to the other. He thought this was amazing that we would do this. He reminds me I was the bigger baby, and when we were in our playpen I would stand on top of Joan to see over the railing.

**My Brother, Our Brother (David)**

My younger brother, David was born in Crookston, MN on July 5, 1967. I actually remember Joan and I going to a 4<sup>th</sup> of July parade with my father close to the hospital where Mom was about to give birth. At this point in time, my

mother was forty-four years old. She says that a few people wondered why they would have another child at their age when they were so busy with their other children.

Joan and I cherished our role as the big sisters and we were the protectors of him. I can only imagine now how different it would have been if he would have been a girl. When he was three months old, we moved from Fertile to St. Peter, MN. I remember Mom and Dad driving separate cars with one twin in each car. David was in Mom's car and we would stop and Joan and I would switch cars to help care for David while he was in the infant seat (no car seats then). I remember him crying all the way and thinking he didn't want to move either. To this day, many people in St. Peter do not know that we have an older brother and sister because they were living on their own by that time. David was a joy to play with as he was very active and willing to do what Joan and I wanted him to do. He would play school with us and games. He was good friends with the neighbor boy and they would spend hours driving their big wheel bikes around and around in the driveway. He loved Legos and toy cars and he could imitate all sorts of noises and motor sounds. We would spend many meals at the table getting him to do his imitations. As he got older he still loved anything with a motor. He played sports and liked the outdoors. He talks about how many times he was asked by his friends and others, "How do you tell your sisters apart?" and he answered that he never even thought about it as he we were just Jill and Joan.

Currently, the three of us can spend hours reminiscing about our childhood. Joan and I still sometimes call him “Babs”; we called him that since he was the baby of the family. He graduated from St. Cloud State University and currently works as a computer programmer and manages an Auto Parts store.

### **Boundaries**

In order to achieve a rich descriptive case study, the method chosen for research was carefully triangulated between the targeted design, data collection and establishing a context of space and time. Triangulation of data collection was shaped by my twin sister, my siblings, my parents and me through the lens of autobiography, written reflection, chronological family Christmas letters and perceptions of family photographs. The timeframe of years 1960 (birth) to 1978 (high school graduation) bounded the study as this was the period of time that my sister and I lived together. This timeframe was further delineated into subsets. These subsets include infancy, childhood, early adolescence and late adolescence. The structure of these subsets was selected based on Erikson’s stages of identity development.

### **Limitations and Biases**

This research is not intended to make generalizations to other twins and their families but to add to the literature through this description of the experience of one set of twins. The case study format allows for one context to be explored. The purpose of this study was to explore how one family perceived the identity development of their set of identical twins. It is recognized that the researcher was using her own life experiences as one of the twins in the family; therefore, a

personal interest may be strong. Clarifying the researcher's point-of-view as a member of the family during the study informs the reader of any bias that may have impacted the study. However, it should be noted that this alignment with the case also has a descriptive dimension that may not be present with other twin studies; thus, adding a "voice" and "memory" rich to the descriptive nature of the study.

### **Validity**

Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest that terms of validity, reliability, and generalizability are quantitative terms that are not applicable to qualitative research. However, multiple strategies used by qualitative researchers can contribute to a study's validity. Those strategies that are used to verify the credibility of this qualitative study are: 1) External auditing (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Denzin & Lincoln, 1998; Creswell, 1998); 2) Member checking defined as soliciting informants' review of the transcriptions and credibility of the findings and interpretations (Creswell, 1998; Merriam, 1998); 3) Providing rich, thick descriptions (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998); and 4) Clarifying researcher bias (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998; Merriam, 1998).

### **Trustworthiness**

In demonstrating the trustworthiness of data is for the reader to be aware of the limitations of the study. This means that an inquiry should "demonstrate its truth value, provide the basis for applying it" and "allow for external judgments to be made about the consistency of its procedures and the neutrality of its findings or decisions" (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper & Allen, 1993, p. 29). As the intended



research design, I have tried to build trustworthiness into the study by using various combinations of strategies and data collection methods.

### **Confirmability**

In a research study, confirmability involves the level to which the data enable an external reviewer to make judgments about the products of the study (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper & Allen, 1993). According to Denzin (1998), confirmability builds on audit trails and involves the use of field notes, memos, diaries, and reflexive journals. In the proposed study, I kept interview notations, family letter notations, and a reactionary photography log. All of these data are kept as adequate trails to enable an auditor to determine if the conclusions, interpretations, and recommendations are supported by the inquiry.

Two additional facets included:

1. Family members reviewed findings and were asked for feedback. The goal of getting this feedback was to gather their perceptions of the plausibility of the findings based on their previously provided information (Hancock, 2006).
2. Findings were reviewed by a peer debriefer. The patterns and findings were reviewed by a Family Consumer Sciences colleague whose expertise is Family Life and Child Development. This review focused on the findings to validate accuracy, clarity and meaningfulness.

### **Data Collection and Analysis**

The sets of data were collected and triangulated for rich interpretation of the phenomenon. The process of qualitative data analysis is an inductive and interactive process. I first organized the sets of data and did some surface

analysis, and then reread the data and looked for general themes and patterns. I then classified and reduced the data, broke the data into pieces and reconstructed meanings from these data by creating codes and coding the data into categories. Consideration of the patterns were aligned with the theoretical framework (Erickson's Theory of Development and Family Systems Theory) and synthesized. During the course of data analysis, I stepped out of my role as family member and reviewed research insights, observations and analyses with my colleague who specializes in Family Life and Child Development and gained feedback to refine the inquiry process. I then proceeded to interpret the data and tried to align explanations for the phenomena observed in the study. After data analysis, I conducted member-checking with my family to confirm the correctness and authenticity of their statements and expressed attitudes. At this point a final conference was held with my colleague to discuss themes identified. Agreement was reached. As the last stage, the study and its findings were compiled and explanations offered.

### **Summary**

This chapter has outlined the research orientation and methodology for the study. This qualitative inquiry focuses on providing a rich description of my family and their perceptions of identity development of my sister and me. The case study explored the theory that if a family recognizes their identity perceptions and navigates them between the twins' identity as a set and as individuals, that this understanding will have a systematic family effect.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

#### **Findings of My Development, Our Development, and Family Development**

This chapter presents a summary and discussion of this study which focused on my family's perceptions of the identity development of my identical sister and me. Case study results vary widely according to the information collected and the analysis method used; as a result, there is generally great flexibility in the manner in which they are reported (McWilliam, 2000). In identifying these results I seek to illuminate one family's reflective experience of twin identity. In exploring this, several perceptions emerged. Through the family interviews, the autobiographical sketches of my twin sister and me, the photo analysis and the reading of the collection of family Christmas letters, themes emerged about the family's experience with identity formation. This study does not attempt to explain what the attitudes or the processes were in dealing with identity formation, or if they were appropriate, but rather to reflectively chronicle the perceptions surrounding the case study of the early life of my twin sister and myself.

#### **Answers to Research Questions**

In using the qualitative approach and the methodology of case study, I have found answers to the three research questions that guided the study. The following summarizes these findings:

- 1. How did my family (parents and siblings) perceive the identity development of the twins in their family?***

My family perceived the development of my sister and me differently, as expected. My parents were the ones that placed the most importance on this identity. To my surprise, this importance was greater than either my sister's or mine. I expected that as identical twins we were the ones most concerned with establishing our individual identity. This reminds me that when we look at our own families, our personal viewpoint often skews our perception of our families. However, this research of my family has revealed to me the power associated with parents' desire to have their children develop positive personal identities. In my family, my parents had a stronger focus on our identity development than we did as twins. Currently, as a parent and a Family and Consumer Sciences professional, I understand how actualization of personal identity is a goal that most parents have for their children. The identity perspectives of my siblings were more difficult to identify as they did not place too much emphasis on our identity development.

***2. How did my sister and I view our identities and identity development?***

My sister and I viewed our identities as separate individuals living in a world of twinness. We felt comfortable with being twins and navigated our development fairly well. This research revealed that our identity perceptions were something that we did not discuss. I find it interesting that I thought we focused on it, but when it comes to specifically describing these discussions, neither of us could articulate many conversations. I found the communication among my sister and me, and within our family, to be very limited on the subject of our identities.

This is intriguing because when asked to define identity development, we expressed similar definitions with similar strong emphasis that identity development was fostered in a family environment.

***3. Are the family identity development perceptions of the twins grounded in the structure of a set or focused on the individuals?***

This research has revealed that my family grounded the identity development of us twins, in the structure of a set. I had to delve deep in my research to understand that my family identified us as individuals; however, their perceptions were grounded in thinking of us as a set. They outlined our identities in the frame of a set, through our differences and likenesses. To our parents, we presented challenge and concern regarding our identities. To our siblings, we drew attention to the family and they had to take on more work and responsibilities with our development. To ourselves, we were individuals living as twins and we knew no other way in life.

**Themes Identified**

Five themes were identified:

- (a) during the tenure of raising us, my parents were concerned with making sure that individual identities were preserved, while my siblings, my sister and I were not recognizably concerned about this;
- (b) constellation and birth order in my family had an impact on perceptions of identity;
- (c) my sister and I were often compared;

(d) the family aligned the twins' identity within the context of a set while the twins' viewed their identity with individual context;

(e) the family did not discuss their perceptions.

### ***Concern of Parents***

Parents are concerned about their influence on their children as they grow into individuals. Parents of identical twins tackle an extra challenge in helping their children become individuals regardless of their status as multiples. Despite parents' best efforts to treat their multiples as individuals, to avoid comparisons and labeling, it's a constant fight to fend off society's views. Multiples face a barrage of stereotypes and are constantly confronted with comparisons because of their twinship. Therefore, it's very important for parents of multiples to overcome the stereotypes, labeling and comparisons by offering continual guidance and encouragement to their children, supporting them as they develop as individuals within the context of their relationship as multiples.

I found it rather interesting that it was evident that to this day my parents are still second guessing their approach to dealing with the identity of us twins. In looking at Erickson's stages of development, many parents look at their children and validate the effectiveness of their development by its alignment with the "norm". Making comparisons of what their children can do at a particular age is compared with what is normal in relation to the majority of the population. My mother mentioned that often when taking us to doctors' appointments that our development was compared to what should be happening with the "average" population at any particular point in time. These conversations were usually

approached by talking about us in general, as a set, and what typical children are doing at particular ages. Rarely did conversations focus on “what Joan was doing” or “what Jill was doing”. A mentioned diversion to this was in talking about leadership roles.

I remember telling the pediatrician about how Jill liked to be the leader. I worried that this was not good for Joan. He said not to worry as they would take turns being the leader as they grow up. I wonder now if he really believed this or just said it to make me feel better. How does anyone (laugh) really know what is the “right” way to deal with identical twins. (Mother)

Our parents also negated our growing up between thinking about equality and identity. They tried to treat us fairly and equally.

When we named the girls, we made a list of names that started with the same letter or sounded alike - boys and girls names. It was tough to find two we both liked. I am happy we both liked Jill and Joan – everybody who had twins then named them with the same beginning letter. Nowadays nobody does that. (Mother)

When gifts were given we were usually given the same gift. I remember sitting back-to-back on the floor opening presents so we did not see before we got our gift unwrapped what it was. If it was an expensive gift when we were small we usually shared the gift; however, as we got older the expensive gifts started to appear as one for each of us. I think our parents were shifting us to the concept of we were getting closer to being on our own and these gifts were an example of this shifting in thought on their part as parents and helped us to materialize this change. (Joan)

This was still apparent in doing this research. When asked to describe Jill’s personality at an adult age and subsequently Joan’s, the answers were the same.

Jill is outgoing, confident, intelligent, friendly, and capable. Oh, they are different in some things and interests but Joan is outgoing, confident, intelligent, friendly and capable too. (Mother)

My identity as a twin impacted my identity as an individual. To this day, I tend to make decisions based on how it impacts others and include their opinions. I truly believe this trait is a direct result of being a twin. I have never felt alone in my life. There has always been someone else who I truly feel knows my point of view, my perspective. (Joan)

There was a fine line with this navigation and thinking about proper age development and the stress of daily life. My parents indicated it was a constant evaluation process for my parents. They handled the task of parenting as best they thought - as most parents do. They decided on their actions and reflected on the results. Having the added dimension of the two of us being identical twins only complicated and widened the line between what was right and what was wrong. In reflection, some events were second guessed.

I remember when they had a major disagreement about "territory" in their bedroom. Oh, they must have been about Junior High age...they both were very upset and I remember Joan moving all her stuff to the bedroom downstairs. It took her all day. As soon as she got settled in, we made her move back upstairs. I know now we made a mistake in making her move back. We should not have done that! (Mother)

Mom asked me once if it was "bad" that she dressed us alike growing up - since later on she read information about dressing twins differently because they should have their own identity expressed in their clothing. She was concerned about doing the right thing. I told her no, it was great. That didn't bother us at all. (Joan)

Fatigue, daily stresses, preoccupation with the care of the children and lack of parenting information related to raising multiples are the special demands of parenting multiples. For many, joining a support group and spending time with other parents of multiples to discuss specific concerns and solutions may be helpful.



Importantly, I myself thought that my family had effective communication; however, through the case study it was revealed to me that this was not the occurrence. Identity development perceptions, thoughts and assumptions were not discussed among my family. I would place a high importance on promoting communication within the family - between parents, siblings, the twins and across the family.

How to approach school was another area of concern. At that time, parents believed that the way to preserve identity was to allow the educational system to dictate what was to be done. The most popular belief was to keep us separated in school as that would allow us more freedom to be recognized as individuals and approach learning as an individual. This set-up would also allow teachers and other children to get to know us individually.

There was only one kindergarten class in the town where we lived at the time so they went together. It was normal and the teacher lived across the street from us so she “thought” she knew us. I wonder if she really knew us as individuals or did this mean she was familiar with us as the twins. (Joan)

We moved to St. Peter just when the girls started first grade, the day I enrolled them in school, I brought them into the Principal’s office to meet him. He announced that there was a rule that twins could not be in the same classroom and they would be split up. They were really scared when I left and I felt helpless and wondered how they did all day. They had no problems in school, even though they were always in different classrooms. They had many friends, no fights, did homework sometimes together, participated in a lot of activities, and had good grades...but I think they should have been able to be in the same class. (Father)

I know now in Minnesota, there is a law that parents can decide if their twins are in the same room or not in school...I think they realize it is hard for them to be separated at first after being together at home all the time. (Mother)

Survey research related to classroom placement of twins was reviewed by Dryer (1991) and NOMOTC (2000). A study completed in 1976 showed that the principal of the school was the person who most often made the placement decisions (Alexander, 1987). Of 169 randomly chosen principals, 83% favored separation and 9% recommended separate schools if possible. Only 4% were flexible in their thinking. Seventy-eight percent of parents wanted their twins to be separated. (It is worth noting that 38% of the parents who were twins themselves chose not to separate their twin children). Dreyer and NOMOTC suggest that the parents who selected separation may have given the decision of separation to the educational professionals and did not revealed their true feelings. Parents are heavily influenced by separation theories read in books or heard in lectures or at meetings of twin organizations (Dreyer, 1991; NOMOTC, 2000).

In the same study, 249 pairs of twins were surveyed regarding their class placement preferences. Seventy-seven percent were actually separated, although 55% were actually separated. Elliot (cited in Dreyer, 1991) surveyed 73 twin sets between the ages of 12 and 73 and found that only 41% agreed with the decisions made on their behalf. A slim majority (51%) favored separation, but not in early childhood. Twenty-five percent thought separation should be eased into after grade 3 (or grade 6 if there was a concern), and 31% favored total class separation from the start of elementary school. Elliot's research also indicated that twins want involvement in the decision, and want experiences of being placed together as well as being separated.

### ***Constellation and Birth Order***

My family structure provided an interesting case study perspective for looking at the effects of birth order and family constellation on identical twins. With five children with an age range of twenty-one years (my oldest sister) to (my youngest brother) this sets up almost two sets of families – with the same set of parents. As identical twins, we had both sexes for siblings and siblings who were older and younger. The older siblings experienced our parents alone for several years before we were born and then experienced the added “work” of having to help take care of Joan and me when we were infants, toddlers and young children. When our younger brother was born six years later and we were entering first grade, we moved to St. Peter. Many people in St. Peter did not realize we had an older brother and sister because they were in college. This division of ages as well as the fact that my sister and I and younger brother grew-up in different towns created a “different” family.

We lived in Fertile until the age of five and then moved to a town in southern Minnesota called St. Peter. Right before moving to St. Peter we had a younger brother born into the family named David. I remember a few things about living with all four brothers and sisters but for the most part when I became older Kathy and Steve were off at college, away for the summers working, only living at home for short periods of time. Most of my growing up was with my sister Jill and younger brother David. (Joan)

Strangers would say there is quite an age difference. Once Kathy and I went to the clinic with the twins and Mom, the people in the waiting room thought Kathy and I were the parents of the twins. (Steve)

In looking at a family picture....Strangers would say, “Is that one family or is that a Grandpa and Grandma and a set of kids with their little kid?”  
(David)

This picture tells the “whole” story meaning the complete family; the St. Peter time frame. (Kathy)

My older siblings seem to notice this age difference more than we younger ones. I attribute this to the fact that we only knew the family as it included us, the older ones made comparisons with when we were not born and after we were born. My older siblings recall many events associated with the amount of work that it took to take care of us as infants and the amount of time they had to babysit us.

It changed everything. Everything was a BIG DEAL. Our family went from four people to six people. It was more crowded at the dinner table, crowded in the house, more laundry, more babysitting and folding diapers. No down time for anybody because one of them or both of them needed attention at all times. (Kathy)

They were a lot of work. We folded cloth diapers every night after they went to sleep. Feeding them was not fun as one would always want more just as I fed the other one. They would drive me crazy because one would run one way and the other one thought it funny to run the other way. They thought this was so funny and it was just a lot of work. (Mother)

All my friends thought it would be so much fun to have twin sisters...they never had to babysit them (sigh)! (Kathy)

They were almost like celebrities everywhere we went. Living in a small town when they were born – everybody knew them. I would push them in the double stroller and everyone would stop to talk or look at them. It took forever to go anywhere. (Father)

Encouraging the older children to spend time and talk with each twin separately would help to emphasize each child's individuality and reinforces an older sibling's role as part of the teamwork of the family. Although it may be difficult with the demands of time and responsibilities parents should spend some individual time with the older siblings.

My younger brother did not experience or even realize the work in raising twins. As the youngest he indicated that having twin sisters really was not that big of a deal. I think as a way to rationalize having older parents and to take the attention away from us we would often tease him that he was adopted. Today I think it is terrible we did this. I wonder if our twinship was “threatened” by the fact that when he was born that all of a sudden the spotlight on us as twins had to be shared.

This picture was taken in Fertile...in other words, that was before me. When I was little, the twins told me I was adopted and then we moved to St. Peter. They said that way Mom and Dad did not have to explain where I came from - so that people would not know that I was adopted. I remember them (twins) once showing me this picture to prove it...this is another picture that showed us in St. Peter. I remember Jill telling me I wasn't smiling because I missed my real family. (David)

The twin's impact on our family was not different than any non-twin family in my mind. The only impact I can remember is that more people outside of the family, you know like friends, know of them because they were identical versus just two other sisters. They would take care of me and we did a lot of things together. (David)

It is not surprising, then, that Joan and I took on birth order characteristics of oldest children. It is apparent that we were very close as twin sisters and to our younger brother and not as close to our older siblings. Case (1991) found that identical twin sisters tended to form the closest emotional bonds as compared to twins of other types and gender. Bank and Kahn's (1997) found that the closer siblings are in age and gender, the more intense their relationship will be. What is interesting to think about is that I really do not remember the five of us siblings being together very much. Was birth order the sole factor in this separation, or did the fact that we were twins contribute to the dynamics of the relationship with

our siblings? McEvoy's (1985) study of female twins found some negative effects of twinship on twins' relationship with others during childhood and adolescence.

### ***Comparisons Made***

Joan and I were often compared by all family members. Perceptions by our parents often focused on how we were the same, and perceptions by our siblings included comments mostly on how we were different. Joan and I talked about our similarities and differences; however, I believe the family comments and stories we heard on this subject affected our perceptions. In his study of identical and fraternal twins, Ainslie (1997) found that twins made attempts to avoid competition with each other. He described the feelings that to be successful would be at the expense of one's twin, yet not to do well would be undermining one's own potential. In response to this "no-win" situation, many of the twins in his study tended to develop different interest and areas of expertise as a means of avoiding direct competition with each other. Appearance, clothing, and personality were mentioned the most when comparisons were made.

From what others told me in my family early on I was the quiet one. From what I recall, I tended to like to read more than Jill but we were very comparable in academic abilities and had very similar grades. We tended to choose and pick the same extra-curricular activities but were able to do them individually. We dressed alike all through childhood until Junior High. Even in Junior High, we would buy the same things; just wear them at different times. Today, that does not seem very economical as why not just buy one article and share it, not buy two of the same thing! (Joan)

Joan was the little one and always got stepped on. Jill stole her toys. Jill took the snacks away from her. Joan had to be quite a fighter because she was the little one. Jill dominated because of her physical size. She was the alpha. (Steve)

They were always dressed alike when they were little. Even went so far as to mark the bottom of their shoes because you couldn't tell one from the other. It also worked well when they sat in their stroller because people remembered this and they would look at the bottom of their shoes to tell them apart. I got asked all the time, can you tell them apart? Of course we could! (Father)

This picture reminds me how identical they looked and were dressed, down to identical bracelets. I think how cute they were. I can tell them apart, Jill is on the left and Joan on the right. Strangers would comment on "the cute girls" (laugh), aren't all babies cute and twin babies are double cute! (Mother)

Does this comparison affect development? According to Pearlman (2001), there are a lot of myths about twins. Some people, such as teachers, parents, and relatives, comment on if there is a good twin and a bad twin or that there is always a leader and always a follower. It has a lot to do with the labeling of twins. Parents have to help refrain from labeling as this will aid in developing individual perceptions.

### ***Differences in Personality***

My parents and siblings would tell me how I was the smaller of the two at birth and almost didn't survive. I claim that is what makes me so stubborn – my willingness to survive! It was also told to me that initially when Jill and I were in the playpen, Jill would stand on top of me to climb the playpen. Also, I remember comments saying that I was the shy one of the two. Jill would take the initiative to try things and I would survey things first, learn about and then decide if I was going to participate. (Joan)

I believe their individual personalities are a product of them being identical twins. One is right handed while the other is left handed. I believe this carried over into other areas as one being smarter and one is better in sports. Just as a person has a dominate hand, I believe Jill was the dominate twin. (David)

I am the oldest twin by three minutes. From what was told to me by my parents, strangers would knock on the door of the house asking to see the twins – now that is living in a small town! I know when I was born I was the

smaller one of the twins but by the first year we had become about the same size. I was in the hospital longer before being released to go home. I know also during delivery it wasn't sure if I was going to make it or not. Mom claims that's why I have a stubborn streak in me because I had to fight to stay alive! (Joan)

Joan is a very hard worker. She handles stress reasonably well. Very much a people person...more like Dad's personality. Jill is highly motivated...has a lot going on in her life. She has stronger interests in clothing and design and cooking...more like Mom's personality. (Kathy)

Comparing personalities between identical twins is not new. Some of the most detailed observations of twin personality studies are found in the 1870s letters compiled by Francis Galton (1875), who viewed identical twins' corresponding emotions and habits, and occasional interchangeable likeness. Over the years, advancements in psychological and biological research methods and theories included greater numbers of twin studies. Approximately 20-50% of individual differences in personality are genetically based (Saudino & Plomin, 1996). Parents, close friends and twins themselves tune into these differences (Segal, 1999). In my family, this is apparent. My parents, my siblings, and even my twin and me, felt a responsibility to point out differences to others. We all recognized that the set structure of being identical twins caused others to blend our personalities.

### ***Difficulty in Telling Which Twin Was Which***

To be honest, I am not entirely sure. How crazy is that – to not even know which one is me. My first reaction is I am on the left. The baby on the right seems just a little bit bigger which should be Jill since she weighed more at birth. I know we were different size until our first birthday and then we matched in weight and height. (Joan)



I always make the comment when someone asks me “What is it like to be an identical twin?” I always respond, “I do not know any different.” Being a twin is all I know and that has had to have an influence on my development. Consciously or not, growing up what I did, what I said, how I made a decision always was influenced by having a twin sister. (Joan)

My Dad recalls writing our names on our shoes to make sure we always wore the same ones, important for our feet and it also helped those who could not tell us apart when we were toddlers. (Joan)

All the pictures we have when Jill and I are younger are together, Jill tends to have a bigger smile in front of the camera. (Joan)

I am guessing Jill is on the right. It is hard to tell since the image is not shot from head on. I can usually tell them apart on any other picture. Joan’s face is different from Jill’s. I can’t give any specifics; it’s just different. (David)

Interestingly, in high school we had a set of twin boys in our school. Some people commented we should go on a double date – Jill and I never wanted to do that. Even though we were very much alike and had the same likes and dislikes, we never wanted our twin status to be a freak show. (Joan)

It is important for families to recognize the differences in their identical twins and to help others achieve awareness. It would be important for parents to discuss situations and emotions where their twins have felt a need to communicate to others their physical differences. Family communication would aid in this support. I haven't encountered specific research that indicates that dressing alike has produced any negative effect on twins. However, many psychologists do recommend against it for parents that wish to emphasize individuality. For example, Segal (1999), does not advocate dressing alike for fraternal twins; however, she indicates it may be a different issue for identical twins. They should not rely on it for attention but do so for enjoyment. Opponents

of dressing alike (Ainslie, 1997) argue that it obscures a child's sense of self identity even at a very young age. My sister and I indicated that it wasn't that big of a deal, because we were not forced to dress alike especially when we were older.

### ***Set and Individual Identity***

Interestingly enough, when looking at all the data collected and the themes presented and adding another layer of inspection concerning whether the perceptions could be labeled as “twin set” or “individual perceptions” no patterns were easily identified. My sister and I repeatedly looked at our identity from an individual perspective but recognized the dual nature of the connectedness of being an identical twin. Our parents and siblings had a greater perception of the twins as a set with the dual nature of connected of individuality.

Separation is a process that all children experience and that re-occurs throughout life. For the first two months of life, an infant is barely aware of the outside world. Gradually the infant becomes aware of him or herself as a separate person. Between 5 to 6 months old is when twins start to recognize that there's someone else present and that the mirror image is not themselves, it's another person (Day, 2006).

Pearlman & Gannon (2000) noted that children often have transitional objects to help separate them from their mothers such as a teddy bear, a blanket, or a diaper, which may sooth and comfort them when their mother is not there. However, twins may use each other as a transitional object as they often sooth

and comfort each other. Starting with their togetherness in the womb, they learn to share and to be in a relationship with others.

The twin and sibling perspective were expected; however, the parental viewpoint was not. Parents' intentions and thoughts focused on individual aspects; however, comments and actions resulted in showing attitudes towards twin's identity as construed in a set structure. These results in combination with the themes identified in the case study have indicated a need for future research.

### **Summary**

A hypothesis emerged from my interpretation of family data gathered to answer my main research question, "What are my family's perceptions of identity development for their identical twins and are they grounded in the context of a set or as individuals?" This hypothesis suggests that perceptions of identity development were not discussed as a family and that it was grounded in the structure of a set more than as individuals. I hypothesize that by having more family communication, the perceptions of identity development would have been more grounded in the context of my sister and me as individuals.

The answers to my research questions showed that the family perceptions of our identity development varied. My parents perceived our identity development as volatile and important. They felt they had a responsibility to make sure that we developed strong, individual identities and personalities. They had concern that their actions affected this outcome. My twin sister and I had a more second degree of concern; however, our perceptions were self-fulfilling and not fully defined. We recognized ourselves as individuals but accepted our strong

presence as identical twins. My siblings had the least connection to perceptions of our identity development. Their perceptions aligned with the attention that we drew and the extra work needed for our care. Overall, the family perceptions were grounded in the context of us twins as a set. Most identity perceptions were balanced and navigated with the constant mindfulness that we were identical twins.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **RECOMMENDATIONS AND SUMMARY**

#### **Recommendations for Further Research**

As a researcher, who has an identical twin sister, I have created a case study of my family. I have found answers to my research questions concerning the family's perceptions of the identity development of my sister and me. Untangling these perceptions has provided me insight into qualitative and case study methodology protocol. Being a researcher, and subject simultaneously, has been insightful and added a valuable dimension to conducting research. I have found that being a twin, in the context of a family, is complicated and that the subject of identity development is complex. Answers to my research questions revealed a need for communication and identified family perceptions of us were grounded in the structure of a set. Perspectives are important to share and discuss as this may shift the focus from the set to more of an individual focus that many twins may find desirable.

There is a need for more research on identity perceptions of families with identical twins, as supported through the research presented in this study's Literature Review, (Chapter 2) ,Theoretical Framework (Chapter 3), and Findings (Chapter 4). It is recommended by this researcher that future studies on family identity perceptions be completed. Recommended research topics include the following:

1. Similarities and differences of internal family relationships within families with identical twins
2. Family communication levels and mechanisms used in identity development of identical twins.
3. Factors that validate or change family perceptions of identity development of identical twins.
4. Identity development perceptions in families with higher orders of identical multiples.

### **Similarities and Differences of Internal Family Relationships**

Any family is dynamic and unique to itself; however, when that family has a set of identical twins, additional variables are present. Since family relationships vary over the course of a lifetime, they are a complex area of study. Families play an integral part in the development of one's social world, and often comprise a salient, long lasting, socialization environment (Buhrmester & Furman, 1992; Lamb & Sutton-Smith, 1982). Parents and siblings not only contribute to one's understanding of "the other" but also to one's self-definition. As important a role as parents and sibling relationships play, sibling research is limited and sparse (Furman & Buhrmester, 1985; Cicirelli, 1982). It is reasonable to make the case that specific research directed toward the differences within families with identical twins is even more limited. It is important that these relationships be reviewed and studied. It would be important for families to recognize and understand what these differences or similarities are.

## **Communication Levels and Mechanisms**

As mentioned in the preceding chapter, my family lacked communication about perceptions of the identity development for my sister and me. Families need to recognize that if they are viewing their identical twins as a set or as individuals. Families need to communicate what they are thinking and how they view identity development. Individuation is not something that parents do to twins, as they are individuals already, by virtue of the fact that they have physically separate bodies and brains. Therefore, families can either enhance or obscure their multiple-birth children's individuality, but they not create it (Malmstrom & Davis, 2009). The family needs to recognize that the family is part of a system and that system will affect individuation. This awareness is created through communication.

## **Factors That Validate or Change Family Perceptions**

How do parents know that their attitudes and actions regarding identity development for their identical twins are appropriate? I have learned through my research that developmental stages for children are important for parents to understand; however, when parenting identical twins another layer is added. This layer is the fluctuating context of individuals who are part of a set. Research is needed not only to keep shedding light onto the context of the family and its influence on identity perceptions, but it is also needed to deal with family and societal changes. Support of the Family Systems Theory indicates that additional research is needed on how identity perceptions are validated and changed. How do identity perceptions of identical twins change, or how do perceptions continue

to be supported? How does this affect the development of the twins? The family as a system needs to recognize the identical twin perspective. Families would benefit from research that would provide helpful and concrete actions that family members can do to promote healthy identity formation in their multiples.

### **Families with Higher Orders of Identical Multiples**

Because of the increase of fertility treatments, the number of families that have higher order multiple births has skyrocketed. The public is fascinated with families that have these multiple births. For these families, I assume that the burden of multiple births creates a great deal of concern in families regarding identity development - especially when the children are not a “set” but a “group”. Research is needed for these families. Would perceptions of identity development be different for these children? I am not aware of any research pertaining to this subject.

### **Summary**

In summary, although identical twins have presented additional dimensions for families, identity development for identical twins appears to garner a great deal of attention and concern. The overall recommendation of this research supports the need to have more communication between family members and twins, focusing on discussion of what family member’s perceptions of this identity development are and should be.



## **APPENDIX A**

### **Approval of Institutional Review Board**

**DATE:** 1 June 2009

**TO:** Jill L. Conlon  
217 Prairie Lane  
Janesville, MN 56048

**CC:** Dr. Robert Bosselman  
31 MacKay Hall

**FROM:** Jan Canny, IRB Administrator  
Office of Research Assurances

**IRB ID:** 08-173

**Approval Date:** 29 May 2009

**Date for Continuing Review:** 5 June 2010

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The Co-Chair of the Institutional Review Board of Iowa State University has conducted the annual continuing review and approved the modification of the protocol entitled: "One-whole or one-half: An identical twin's exploration of personal identity through family perceptions." Your study has been approved for a period of one year. The continuing review date for this study is no later than **5 June 2010**.

Based on the information you provided in Section II of the documents submitted for continuing review, we have coded this study in our database as being permanently closed to the enrollment of new subjects, where all subjects have completed all research related activities and the study remains open only for data analysis. To open enrollment or initiate research-related interaction with subjects you must submit a modification and receive IRB approval prior to contacting subjects.

Even though enrollment of subjects has ended, federal regulations require continuing review of ongoing projects. Please submit the form with sufficient time (i.e. **three to four weeks**) for the IRB to review and approve continuation of the study, prior to the continuing review date.

Failure to complete and submit the continuing review form will result in expiration of IRB approval on the continuing review date and the file will be administratively closed. As a courtesy to you, we will send a reminder of the approaching review prior to this date.

Any **changes in the protocol or consent form** should not be implemented without prior IRB review and approval, using the "Continuing Review and/or Modification" form. These documents are located on the Office of Research Assurances website or available by calling (515) 294-4566, [www.compliance.iastate.edu](http://www.compliance.iastate.edu).

You must promptly report any of the following to the IRB: (1) **all serious and/or unexpected adverse experiences** involving risks to subjects or others; and (2) **any other unanticipated problems involving risks** to subjects or others.

Upon completion of the project, please submit a Project Closure Form to the Office of Research Assurances, 1138 Pearson Hall, to officially close the project.

**DATE:** 6 June 2008

**TO:** Jill L. Conlon  
217 Prairie Lane, Janesville, MN 56048

**CC:** Yvonne Gentzler  
30A MacKay Hall

**FROM:** Jan Canny, IRB Administrator  
Office of Research Assurances

**TITLE:** **One-whole or one-half: An identical twin's exploration of personal identity**

**IRB ID:** 08-173

**Approval Date:** 6 June 2008  
**Date for Continuing Review:** 5 June 2009

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The Chair of the Institutional Review Board of Iowa State University has reviewed and approved this project. Please refer to the IRB ID number shown above in all correspondence regarding this study.

Your study has been approved according to the dates shown above. To ensure compliance with federal regulations (45 CFR 46 & 21 CFR 56), please be sure to:

- **Use the documents with the IRB approval stamp** in your research.
- **Obtain IRB approval prior to implementing any changes** to the study by completing the "Continuing Review and/or Modification" form.
- **Immediately inform the IRB of (1) all serious and/or unexpected adverse experiences** involving risks to subjects or others; and (2) **any other unanticipated problems involving risks** to subjects or others.
- **Stop all research activity if IRB approval lapses**, unless continuation is necessary to prevent harm to research participants. Research activity can resume once IRB approval is reestablished.
- **Complete a new continuing review form** at least three to four weeks prior to the **date for continuing review** as noted above to provide sufficient time for the IRB to review and approve continuation of the study. We will send a courtesy reminder as this date approaches.

Research investigators are expected to comply with the principles of the Belmont Report, and state and federal regulations regarding the involvement of humans in research. These documents are located on the Office of Research Assurances website [[www.compliance.iastate.edu](http://www.compliance.iastate.edu)] or available by calling (515) 294-4566.

Upon completion of the project, please submit a Project Closure Form to the Office of Research Assurances, 1138 Pearson Hall, to officially close the project.

## **APPENDIX B**

Informed Consent Document

Email to Participants

Interview Questions

## **Informed Consent Document**

**Title of Study:**      **One-Whole or One-Half: An Identical Twin's  
Exploration of Personal Identity**

**Investigator:**      **Jill L. Conlon, M.S.  
Family and Consumer Sciences Education Doctoral  
Candidate**

This is a research study. Please take your time in deciding if you would like to participate and please feel free to ask questions at any time.

### **INTRODUCTION:**

This qualitative research study has been constructed to explore and understand identity development of the early life (birth through age 18) of one set of identical twins as experienced in the social structure of their family. Focus will be placed on identifying one family's perceived influences on identity development of their identical twins and the perceived influences as the twin see it. Additional focus will be placed on looking at if these influences to see if they can be separated into those experienced by each individual twin and those experienced as a twin set. The research will be presented using the case study methodology.

You are being invited to participate in this study because you are a member of a family that includes identical twins.

### **DESCRIPTION OF PROCEDURES:**

If you agree to participate in this study, your participation will for the duration of this project, which will begin with approval from Iowa State University Institutional Review Board (IRB). The approximate time frame for your involvement is May 1, 2008 through January 1, 2009. Your participation will involve one or more interviews or phone conversations, each of which most likely will last not more than an hour to two hours. During the study, you may expect the following procedures to be followed.

You are being asked to participate in an in-depth, semi-structured interview including open-ended questions to encourage conversation and dialogue. The interviews will take place either face-to-face in a location mutually agreed upon or on the telephone. You will be interviewed privately and the interview will be audio recorded. As the researcher, I have prepared a list of questions to guide the conversational interview. You will be asked to provide consent to audiotape the interviews. Secondly, you will be asked to view three family photographs and

answer questions. It is possible that I may want further contact following the interview if a gap in the research is discovered and we agree that you might be able to address it.

### **RISKS:**

There are minimal risks associated with the participation in this study. Use of audio tape equipment may make you feel uncomfortable; therefore, permission to use this equipment will be sought before the interview begins. You may skip any questions that you do not wish to answer or that make you feel uncomfortable. Additionally, there is a possibility that you or other members of your family may be upset about or bothered by your perception or opinions that you share during your interview; therefore, please consider family members reactions to your comments. Any direct quotes or information that can be referenced to you will be shown to you for confirmation of permission prior to inclusion in research findings and publication.

### **BENEFITS:**

If you decide to participate in this study there may be no direct benefit to you. It is hope that this information gained in this study will advance knowledge in the area of identity development for identical twins and their families. Parents and families may gain insight into the influence, if any, of the family on identity development of twins as individuals and as a set. The identical twins may gain insight into their own development. The historical account of the family may be meaningful to the family and to future family generations.

### **COSTS AND COMPENSATION:**

You will not have any costs from participating in this study. You will not be compensated financially for participating in this study.

### **PARTICIPANT RIGHTS:**

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and you may refuse to participate or leave the study at any time. If you decide not to participate in the study or leave the study early, it will not result in any penalty of loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. You can skip any questions that you do not wish to answer.

### **CONFIDENTIALITY:**

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential to the extent permitted by applicable laws and regulations. Records will not be made publicly available. However, federal government regulatory agencies, the auditing department of Iowa State

University and the ISU Institutional Review Board (a committee that reviews and approves research studies with human subjects) may inspect and/or copy your records for quality assurance and analysis. These records may contain private information. During the transcription process, you will be assigned a pseudonym to ensure confidentiality of your responses. At the end of this informed consent form, you may provide consent to be quoted by name in the dissertation; however, since this research involves your family, if all your family members do not agree in using names, fictitious names will be used for all. No names (real or fictitious) will be cited in the study unless consent for either is given by the entire family. The audio tapes and the transcriptions will be maintained in a locked file for a period of three years following the completion of the dissertation. Participants will be asked to make the choice whether the audio tapes are to be maintained for archival purposes or to be destroyed after this time period.

### QUESTIONS OR PROBLEMS:

You are encouraged to ask questions at any time during this study. For further information about the study contact Jill Conlon, Doctoral Candidate, 217 Prairie Lane, Janesville MN 56048; (507) 234-5751; [jill.conlon@mnsu.edu](mailto:jill.conlon@mnsu.edu) if you have any questions about the rights of research subject or research-related injury, please contact the IRB Administrator, (515) 294-4566, [IRB@iastate.edu](mailto:IRB@iastate.edu), or Director, (515) 294-3115, Office of Research Assurances, 1138 Pearson Hall, Iowa State University, Ames, Iowa 50011.

### PARTICIPANT SIGNATURE:

Your signature indicates that you voluntarily agree to participate in this study, that the study has been explained to you, that you have been given the time to read the document and that your questions have been satisfactorily answered. You will receive a copy of the signed and dated written informed consent prior to your participation in the study.

Participant's Name (printed): \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Participant's Signature)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Date)

Participant's Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Participant's Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Participant's Email: \_\_\_\_\_

You have my permission to use my name in the presentation of data.

\_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_ Yes

You have my permission to use a fictitious name for me in the presentation of data.

\_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_ Yes

You have my permission to maintain the audio tape for archival purposes.

\_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_ Yes

### INVESTIGATOR STATEMENT:

I certify that the participant has been given adequate time to read and learn about the study and all of their questions have been answered. It is my opinion that the participant understands the purpose, risk, benefits, and the procedures that will be followed in this study and has voluntarily agreed to participate.

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Signature of Person Obtaining  
Informed Consent)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Date)



Email Draft to be sent to Family members

Dear (Participant's Name):

As a doctoral student at Iowa State University, I am writing this email to request your participation in my research study of an identical twin's exploration of personal identity. You are being invited to participate in this study because you are a member of a family that includes identical twins.

It is important that I obtain your informed consent to be a part of this study entitled "One-Whole or One-Half: An Identical Twin's Exploration of Personal Identity". The study is designed to explore and understand identity development of the early life (birth through age 18) of one set of identical twins as experienced in the social structure of their family. Focus will be placed on identifying one family's perceived influences on identity development of their identical twins and the perceived influences as the twin see it. Additional focus will be placed on looking at if these influences to see if they can be separated into those experienced by each individual twin and those experienced as a twin set. The research will be presented using the case study methodology.

Please read the attached Informed Consent Document to learn more about this research study and to consider the benefits and risks associated with your involvement before granting your consent to participate in the study. Your insight and perspective regarding identical twins are valuable to me and to the successful completion of my dissertation. Your consideration of this request is much appreciated. Since this research will seek to include all members of your family, a family meeting will be arranged on a mutually agreed date to answer any questions or concerns. For individual questions, please contact me at (507) 234-5751 (home) or through email at [jill.conlon@mnsu.edu](mailto:jill.conlon@mnsu.edu). If you agree to participate in the study, you can return the consent form to me at the family meeting or after the meeting by mail or by fax (507-389-2411).

Thank you.

Jill L. Conlon  
Doctoral Candidate  
Iowa State University

Jill L. Conlon

Research Questions –

“One-whole or one-half: an identical twin’s exploration of personal identity”

Questions for Interview – Parents

1. How would you define identical twins?
2. How would you define personality? How would you define identity?
3. When did you realize you were having identical twins?
4. What were your early thoughts about being a mother/father of identical twins? Any parenting issues you were excited about or concerned about?
5. How did their brother and sister react to having new identical twins siblings?
6. Describe everyday life when Joan and Jill were infants.
7. What do you remember about Joan’s identity as an infant?
8. What do you remember about Jill as an infant?
9. Do you remember thinking about the identity development of your twins? What were your thoughts and/or actions concerning this? Did you have any thoughts about the twins developing as individuals?
10. Do you think you influenced the twins’ personalities? If so, how?
11. Do you think the family influenced the twins’ personalities? If so, how?
12. Do you remember any specific family stories or events that illustrate the twins’ personalities or any stories that illustrate the family influence on their personalities?
13. To what extent do you think their individual identities were shaped by each other?
14. What do you remember about Joan as a toddler?
15. What do you remember about Jill as a toddler?

16. What were your thoughts when Joan and Jill started school? Were there any advantages or disadvantages for the twins in school?
17. What do you remember about Joan at school age/adolescent age?
18. What do you remember about Jill at school age/adolescent age?
19. What was life like for Jill during high school?
20. What was life like for Joan during high school?
21. Do you think the girls' personalities were affected by the fact they were identical twins?
22. Were there any struggles for the Joan growing up?
23. Were there any struggles for Jill growing up?
24. At adult age how would you describe Jill's identity, personality and interests?
25. At adult age how would you describe Joan's identity, personality and interests?
26. What is your option, "Do identical twins experience identity development in families as individuals or do they experience it as a set?"

Questions for Interview – Siblings

1. How would you define identical twins?
2. How would you define personality? How would you define identity?
3. What were your thoughts when you discovered you were going to have twin sisters?
4. Were there any advantages or disadvantages being their sibling?
5. What was the identical twin's impact on the family?
6. Describe everyday life when Joan and Jill were infants.
7. What do you remember about Joan's identity as an infant?
8. What do you remember about Jill as an infant?
9. Do you remember thinking about the identity development of the twins? What were your thoughts and/or actions concerning this? Did you have any thoughts about the twins developing as individuals?
10. Do you think you influenced the twins' personalities? If so, how?
11. Do you think the family influenced the twins' personalities? If so, how?
12. Do you remember any specific family stories or events that illustrate the twins' personalities or any stories that illustrate the family influence on their personalities?
13. To what extent do you think their individual identities were shaped by each other?
14. What do you remember about Joan as a toddler?
15. What do you remember about Jill as a toddler?
16. What were your thoughts when Joan and Jill started school? Were there any advantages or disadvantages for the twins in school?
17. What do you remember about Joan at school age/adolescent age?
18. What do you remember about Jill at school age/adolescent age?

19. What was life like for Jill during high school?
20. What was life like for Joan during high school?
21. Do you think the girls' personalities were affected by the fact they were identical twins?
22. Were there any struggles for the Joan growing up?
23. Were there any struggles for Jill growing up?
24. At adult age how would you describe Jill's identity, personality and interests?
25. At adult age how would you describe Joan's identity, personality and interests?
26. What is your option, "Do identical twins experience identity development in families as individuals or do they experience it as a set?" How?

**Questions for Interview – Twins:**

1. What is your “autobiography” from birth to age 18 - focusing on your family and you identity development?
1. How would you define identical twins?
2. How would you define personality? How would you define identity?
3. Have you ever thought of your personality development and if there was any influence on that development from the fact that you are an identical twin?
4. What is your perception of your family’s influence on your personality?
5. What is your perception of your twin’s influence on your personality?
6. What family stories were you told concerning your identity or personality?
5. Do you think you developed your identity as an identical twin or as an individual?
6. How has your family described you as an infant?
7. How has your family described your twin as an infant?
6. What were you like during school age/adolescent?
7. What was your twin like during school age/adolescent?
8. What do you remember about Jill as an infant?
9. What were you like during high school?
10. What was your twin like during high school?
11. Do you remember any specific family stories or events that illustrate your personality or your twins personality or the personality of you as a set?
13. To what extent do you think your (twins) individual identities were shaped by each other?
14. Were there any struggles for you growing up?
23. Were there any struggles for your twin growing up?

24. At adult age how would you describe your identity, personality and interests?
25. At adult age how would you describe your twin's identity, personality and interests?
26. Do identical twins experience identity development in families as individuals or do they experience it as a set? Comments?

## **APPENDIX C**

### **Photographs Analysis Questions**

#### **Photographs for Analysis**



Jill L. Conlon

Research Photo Analysis Questions –

“One-whole or one-half: an identical twin’s exploration of personal identity”

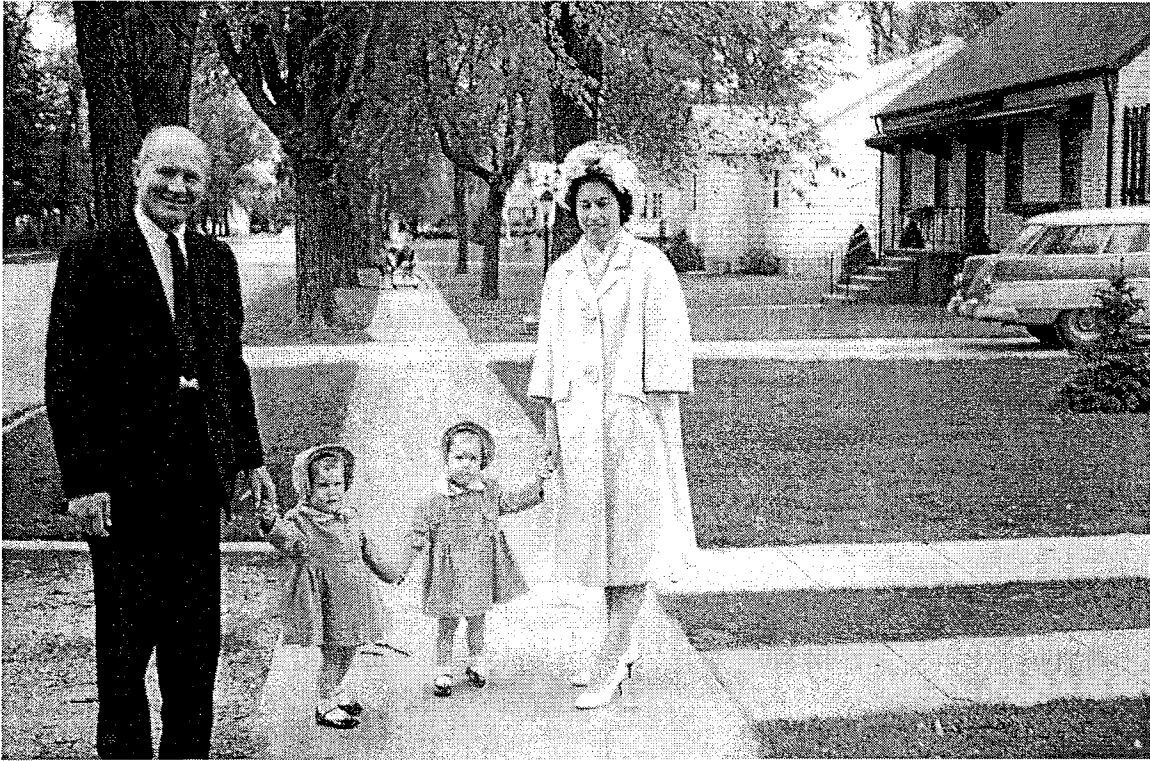
Research Subjects to answer following questions while looking at four photos (attached)  
one at a time:

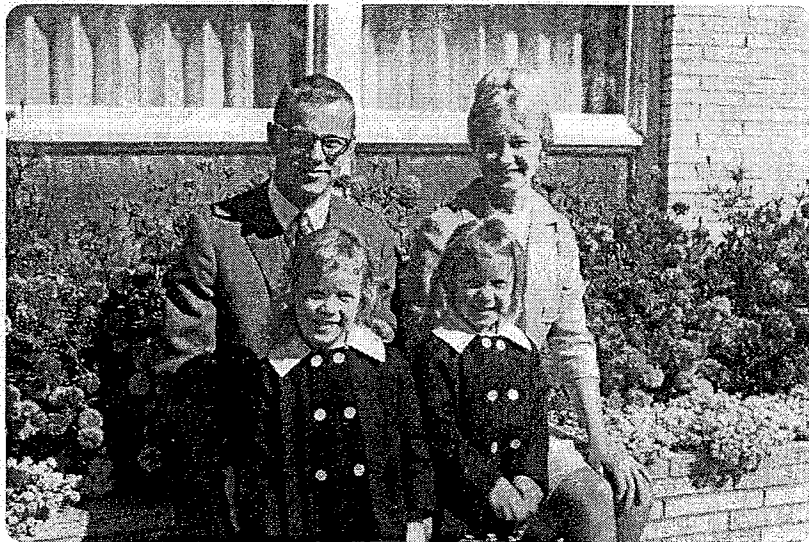
1. What story does this family photo tell?
2. What do you think about yourself when you look at this photo?
3. Can you tell the twins apart in the picture? If so, who is who?
4. Does the picture show anything about the identity and/or personality of Joan?
5. Does this photo show anything about the identity and/or personality of Jill?
6. Does this photo show anything about the identity and/or personality of “the twins”?
7. What do you think strangers would say about the photo?
8. Any other comments about the photo?

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