



The Twins Foundation: Twins Take Up the Challenge

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Abstract. Revelations about twins are abundant, but the information often is inaccessible. Therefore, The Twins Foundation, a multifaceted, international, nonprofit agency has been formed. Through development of a Research Library, Museum and Hall of Fame, it will (1) provide archival and research support to the growing number of disciplines involved in twin studies; (2) provide a central repository and clearing house of information about twins for the general public; (3) enlist twin achievers to act as role models for adolescent twins; and (4) collect information about the contributions twins have made to their societies in order to dispel still prevalent negative stereotypes about multiples. (**Note:** The term "twin" is used generically and implies all multiples).

Key words: Twin Foundation, Adolescence, Stereotypes, Twin achievers

A casual examination of the literature on twin studies suggests there is hardly an area of research which has not benefited from the study of multiples. Yet, the material remains widely scattered and far too inaccessible to the layman. Consequently, errors are perpetuated and negative stereotypes about multiples tend to be magnified. In addition, the subjects of this intense scrutiny – twins themselves – have seldom had an opportunity for active participation or communication on subjects of most concern to them. To alleviate this, The Twins Foundation was formed. As a result, researchers from a wide variety of disciplines will have access to an organization designed to enhance their efforts; the lives of twins will be enhanced; and the general public will gain a truer perspective about the lives of multiples.

Why a New Organization?

The major areas in twin research that relate directly to the twin population as such divide

naturally under the following headings: (1) twin births and survival, (2) the rearing of and dealing with twins, especially young twins, and (3) the lives, problems, joys and achievements of adolescent and adult twins. While the first two areas have had attention from existing organizations, there remains much they are not yet equipped to address, and the third area, concerning the lives of adolescent and adult twins, has never had ongoing attention from a permanent agency.

Adolescence and the move from it to adulthood, while seldom uncomplicated, may be more so for twins. Assimilation into the singleton world becomes an added burden to be faced by pairs, often placing a strain on the twin bond, discussed by Zazzo [4]. Are twins assimilated like any other minority group? Do they continue to live emotionally closer than any other human pair? Where is the search for the solutions to the problems they encounter? What are the consequences of their actions on the twinship or on the individuals involved? If the search is underway, how will those most directly affected by the answers ever learn of them? If there are benefits and joys from the assimilation – and we truly believe there are – all twins need to know more about how to achieve them.

Where, also, are the role models so important for such deviations from the earlier acquired patterns? And once assimilation has been achieved, how shall researchers identify these twins who are living and achieving as “honorary singletons”? They are, in effect, invisible to the research community, other twins and to the population at large.

Some of the topics of interest to twins and, we believe, of future interest to scholars in many disciplines are: (a) the longitudinal emotional nature of the twin bond and its many consequences; (b) the achievement of adult personal identity in harmony with the twin identity; (c) twins and their primary relationships with significant others; (d) twins in marriage and/or divorce (preliminarily discussed by Zazzo [4]); (e) twins as parents; (f) the absence of recognizable twin role models; (g) the reluctant twin; (h) specific problems of adult identicals; (i) specific problems of adult fraternal; (j) specific problems of other adult multiples; (k) assimilation versus the overemphasis on the twin bond; (l) isolation, of the pair or of one of the pair; (m) dealing with the loss of a twin, actual or imagined, [2]; (n) the search for a surrogate twin [3]; (o) problems of guilt when the twinship is under pressure [4]; (p) relations with the media and the consequences of over-exposure.

When specialized research and interdisciplinary examination pursue these subjects earnestly, many more topics will come to light. Those twins being studied by the Minnesota Twins Reared Apart Project [1], just to mention one instance, will undoubtedly offer several entirely new subjects stemming from their unique perspective since they have lived as singletons *first* and twins *later*.

Therefore, out of deep gratitude for having been born a twin and having reached a healthy, successful maturity, a consortium of prominent twins has incorporated The Twins Foundation.

The Board of Directors includes such prominent names as John Mack Carter, Editor-in-Chief of *Good Housekeeping* magazine and director of new magazine development for the Hearst Corporation, and Richard B. Stolley, Managing Editor of *Life* magazine. The members of the Board – all twins – have had decades of experience in many areas: science, communications, finance, development and public relations. They enjoy excellent

reputations in their fields. Because they have agreed to contribute substantial support, both through the use of their personal expertise and through their ability to contact other influential persons, The Twins Foundation believes it can offer the entire twin and research communities an invaluable source of business acumen, professional expertise and good will.

The enlistment of twin achievers for the Hall of Fame should not be seen as just an effort to praise twins; rather as a vehicle to further *all* of the Foundation's goals through the appropriate kind of public attention. Such a *positive appeal* to twins and to those whose research involves multiples is vital to the Foundation's development.

The Foundation will focus on identifying, expanding and collecting research into a central repository, including the standard physical systems for classification and storage, a computer system, and special preservation of rare and historical memorabilia and documents, fiche, film and video documentation. Other services under consideration are compilation of a comprehensive twin registry, seminars, conferences, traveling exhibits, periodic literature, and so forth.

As it accomplishes its goals, The Twins Foundation will provide the research community with the vital link – twins themselves – in a new, more effective dialogue.

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