

The
**TWIN
SURVEY**



A Study by Amber Gayle

separation-individuation process comes up again at adolescence, and Ainslie suggests that it is again more challenging for twins than non-twins, and that the difficulties can lead to certain patterns. He notes that these patterns are not pathological, however, and in some cases may even protect twins from family dysfunctions. They are simply vulnerabilities that are more typical for twins than non-twins.

Specific issues Ainslie addressed, which I focused on in the survey, include:

- Interdependence/interidentification: a tendency to view the twin as an extension of the self.
- Dependency/separation anxiety: high dependency on each other and discomfort being alone.
- Role complementarity: a rigid division of roles or strong desire to keep interests, friendships, appearance, education, etc. separate.
- Competition, conflict and dominance.

CREATION OF THE TWIN RELATIONSHIP SURVEY

I developed the "Twin Relationship Survey" to examine the nature of identical twin relationships. I wrote questions based on patterns I noticed in my interviews with twins; on Schave Klein's analysis of four twin relationship styles; on Pearlman's ideas about twin issues; and on Ainslie's concept of twin psychology. I used a much larger group of twins than any of the previous studies. Creating an online survey meant being able to reach over 150 twins, which should provide a better sense for the accuracy of these theories.

I was also inspired to create a survey because establishing a reliable tool to measure what is "normal" or "typical" for twins could put some twin issues into perspective. It could help not only twins but parents, teachers and therapists to have appropriate expectations, and not make ungrounded assumptions about how twins should relate to each other.

The first phase of the survey, in the summer of 2005, was completed by 29 identical twins. The sec-

CONFLICTS AND DOMINANCE

Several questions in the original survey asked about a variety of specific difficulties or conflicts (e.g. "I care more about our relationship than my twin does") but patterns in these responses have not been analyzed. Based on my interviews with twins, I am curious whether an older sibling/younger sibling dynamic might exist in some pairs, with the first born twin being most likely to take an older sibling role, to feel dominant in the relationship, and to feel that their twin is too dependent on them; and where the second born, or less dominant twin might be more likely to feel like a younger sibling, depend on their twin and say they often give in to their twin.

CHANGES IN THE RELATIONSHIP

IDENTICAL TWINS

The first qualitative question in the survey asked: "Has your relationship gone through different phases? If so, how and when have things changed?" Of 129 Identical twins, 8 didn't answer, 99 (77%) said yes and 28 (22%) said no.

Of the 99 who said yes:

- 26% described separations or changes brought on by marriage or dating partners.
- 24% wrote that they are closer as adults, after fighting as children or a separation or conflicts as teens or young adults.
- 9% described a variety of lifestyle or health differences that created a division or change at some point.
- 7% described changes based on moves apart or back together.

SURVEY OF TWIN RELATIONSHIPS

DIRECTIONS

*Fill in a numerical score next
to each question based on
your level of agreement:*

- 1. Strongly Disagree*
- 2. Disagree*
- 3. Neutral*
- 4. Agree*
- 5. Strongly Agree*