**Introduction**

Welcome to the 8th edition of the Michigan State University Twin Registry (MSUTR) Newsletter! This edition includes research findings from our studies, exciting news about our updated website (msutwinstudies.com), and information about participating in our current twin studies.

First, we would like to share with you a few of the recent milestones reached by the MSUTR:

- The Twin Study of Hormones and Behavior has reached its goal of assessing 590 female twins during the five-year span of the project.
- Over 11,000 families have now participated in the Michigan Twins Project (MTP)!
- Over 800 families and counting have participated in the Twin Study of Behavioral and Emotional Development-Child.
- Over 200 families have participated in the Twin Study of Mood, Behavior and Hormones during Puberty.

These achievements would not have been possible without the generosity of the twin participants and the 70+ volunteer research assistants who dedicated over 40,000 hours of their time to the projects! Thank you for making our research possible and for making a difference in our quest to understand the origins of major medical, psychological, and social difficulties!

As always, feel free to contact us about anything in this newsletter or about any of our studies.

Sincerely,

Drs. Alex Burt and Kelly Klump
(Directors of the MSUTR)

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**Twin Facts**

- Twins are multiplying! According to a CDC report, the birth rate for twins has increased by 76% since 1980.

- The oldest living twins, Edith and Evelyn Rennie of the United Kingdom, are 103 years old.

- William Shakespeare was a father to twins: Hamnet and Judith.

- Polar bears most commonly give birth to twins and, on rare occasion, triplets.

- The only set of giraffe twins in the United States were born on May 10th at the Natural Bridge Wildlife Branch in Texas. The calves were named Wasswa and Nakato.

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**Research Findings from Our Studies!**

The MSUTR researchers were interested in exploring how parents’ behaviors toward their children influence the quality of sibling relationships in the family. Two types of questionnaire data were examined from the MSUTR child twin study (which involves twin pairs between the ages of 6 and 10). In the first questionnaire, each twin described their relationship with their parents and how involved their parent was in their life. In the second questionnaire, the same twin described his or her relationship with his or her co-twin. Specifically, each twin described how positive his or her relationship is with the co-twin, including how often the twins say nice things to each other or do favors for each other.

The researchers found that for both mothers and fathers, more parent involvement was related to greater positivity in the sibling relationship. That is, if a twin reported that his or her parent was very involved in their life, then he/she also reported a more positive relationship with their co-twin than twins who reported their parents being less involved. This study shows that positive, involved parenting may have positive effects on the relationship between siblings. However, we cannot yet say whether involved parenting causes positive sibling relationships, or whether positive sibling relationships result in more involved parents. We hope to be able to answer these questions in the future by conducting studies that follow twins and their parents across time in order to tease apart these types of cause and effect relationships.
Twins on the Web

We are excited to announce the launch of our new website (www.msutwinstudies.com)! The goal of our website remodel was to provide twins, their families, and visitors with an easy way to learn all about the MSUTR and useful information about twins and twin studies. With our new website, you can now find out more about our current studies, find resources for twin families (e.g., universities that provide scholarships for twins), update your contact information, and catch up with all of the past editions of our newsletter!

In addition to the MSUTR website, there are many other websites that are designed by, for, or about twins. In fact, many of the most famous viral videos and stories on the web are about twins! For example, in one such video, 11 month old twins Chloe and Alexis, are seen dancing along to the sound of their dad’s guitar. The video has been watched over 16 million times on YouTube®! And there are thousands of twin inspired “pins” on the popular social bookmarking site Pinterest® that range from crafting ideas especially for twins to products tailored to meet the needs of parents of twins. We’ve added a special section on our website with a link to these sites and many other popular twin stories. Please check out msutwinstudies.com/newsletters/ for more!

There are many terms that are used to describe twins, their relationship, and their behaviors. Interestingly, the origins of many of these terms and expressions date back several centuries ago! Here are the histories of a few notable sayings:

Twin: Appearing around 900 A.D. as “twinn,” the origin of this word is thought to come from the ancient German word twinjaz, meaning “two together.”

Like Two Peas in a Pod: Dating back to 16th century England, this simile was first used by writer John Lyly to describe the likeness of twins studied by the ancient Greek physician, Hippocrates.

Evil Twin: The myth that an “evil” twin exists in every pair dates back to 220 A.D. and has appeared in several fictional stories including the British epic Beowulf, written during the Middle Ages, and William Wilson, a story by Edgar Allan Poe.

Our Current Studies

**Study 1. Michigan Twins Project & Children of Twins Project:** These related studies are aimed at developing a registry of twins ages 3-25 and 30-50 born in Michigan. To participate, adult twins and families with twin children complete a brief questionnaire that assesses family composition and health status. The questionnaire may be completed using our online system or via a mail-in questionnaire.

**Study 2. Twin Study of Behavioral and Emotional Development - Child:** This study examines relationships among genes, mood, peers, family relationships and acting out behaviors in same-sex and opposite sex twins ages 6-10 years old.

**Study 3. Twin Study of Mood, Behavior, and Hormones during Puberty:** This project investigates the influence of hormonal, genetic, and environmental factors on a range of psychological characteristics during puberty in female twins between the ages of 8-15 years.

If you are interested in Study 1 or know someone who is, please contact us at: msutr@msu.edu or call (517) 432-5604

If you are interested in Study 2 or know someone who is, please contact us at: burtlab@msu.edu or call: (517) 355-6878

If you are interested in Study 3 or know someone who is, please contact us at: msutr@msu.edu or call (517) 432-7279