



Book review

Twin and Triplet Psychology: A Professional Guide to Working with Multiples

Edited by AC Sandbank, Routledge:
London and New York 1999.
ISBN: 0415183987

For many twin investigators, twins are interesting from a methodological point of view: they are a beautiful freak of nature that enables scientists, in several ways, to estimate the contributions of nurture and nature to complex behavioural and health traits. And for other scientists, such as gynaecologists, twins are interesting for reproductive and obstetrical peculiarities. The larger part of the pages of this journal are filled with this sort of issue. Twins themselves, their parents, and several types of clinicians have, however, an additional and very relevant interest: the nature of being a twin and the possible consequences for health problems and for educational and upbringing strategies. All those researchers in genetics and multiple birth biology are regularly confronted with questions like: 'Should we send our twin children to different schools or not?' or 'Is it better to dress them alike or different?' or 'One twin died from cot death; is the risk increased of the remaining one meeting the same fate?' or 'What to do in case of long-lasting emotional conflicts between twins?' Many of us feel inconvenienced when they have to answer such questions and have resource to several books and pamphlets.

The recent book: *Twin and Triplet Psychology: A professional guide to working with multiples*, edited by Audrey C Sandbank, seems to cover most things worth knowing about the psychology of multiples as well as its

biological background. To me, this well written text, by a group of eminent scientists and/or clinicians replaces a larger number of (smaller and more specific) resources that can be consulted in case of questions and problems with multiples and their parents. The editor of the book is a competent family therapist with a long experience of multiples and their parents. She contributes two lucid chapters on the specific relations between multiples, and with other family members, and also on the effects of being a twin on marriage and on relations with the partner and their children.

The effects on postnatal life of being together in the womb and how to get information about this prenatal period is more important than many of us think. Neuropsychiatrist Alessandra Piontelli from Milano has written a valuable chapter on this issue. The expectations and (often) worrying feelings of parents anticipating the birth of twins or greater multiples can have an effect on the manner of upbringing and subsequent behaviour of the children. This, and related issues, such as the specific position of the children's father are clearly discussed by Jane Spillman, who has been working for several years in the Twins and Multiple Births Association (TAMBA).

There are two interesting chapters on the development of twins, one on motor development (by John Buckler) and one on language development (by Kay Mogford-Bevan), which can be different from that in singletons. This has to do not only with the possible prematurity of twins and the associated lower birth weight but also the fact that twins share each other's environment, and consequently their parent's to a lesser degree.

Excellent chapters are by Pat Preedy (headmaster of a primary school)

about the specific educational problems with twins during the pre-school and the primary school period, including the effects of sometimes very strong competition between a pair of twins. David Hay – a very experienced twin investigator from Melbourne, Australia – completes the educational issue for the adolescence period. It is a chapter with plenty of relevant information for those in educational advisory functions.

A special but considerably smaller group is formed by greater multiples than twins. Apart from problems and peculiarities that they share with twins, higher multiples have their own specific problems in addition. Professor Britta Åkerman from Stockholm has compressed her experience on this issue into a well written chapter about triplets.

Elisabeth Bryan, director of the Multiple Birth Foundation (MBF) in London, and author of several books on multiples, contributes two chapters on special problems in families with a disabled twin and on mourning in the case of a twin who loses a twin brother or sister. Both chapters are very useful for the therapist and clinician.

In conclusion, I can say that this book is clearly written, largely also for the layman, and covers a wide and complete range of valuable knowledge about special characteristics on growth, development, education, and emotional features of twins and higher multiples. Every clinician who has to advise multiples and/or their parents, should have this book on the shelf.

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