



Book Review

Identical Twins Reared Apart: A Reanalysis

By Susan L. Farber. Basic Books, New York, 1981. 383 pp., \$26.50.

This book is in a sense three different books, which will appeal to three different audiences. First, it is an elaborate compilation of basic data from previous studies of separated monozygotic (MZ) twins. Included are the big three—Newman et al, Shields, and Juel-Nielsen—plus scattered additional reports from the literature. (Burt's cases are excluded, for obvious reasons.) Of the total sample of 121 MZ pairs, 26 were eliminated on various grounds (doubtful zygosity, late separation, and insufficient information) leaving a "core sample" of 95 sets for which extensive tables of information are provided: sex, handedness, birthweight and birth order, ages of separation and reunion, degree of contact, whether raised by relatives, characteristics of voice and speech, dental features, vision, IQ, menstruation and menopause, and sleep disturbances. By no means are all of these items available for all of the twins, but those mentioned are each reported in some form for at least 30 sets. Also included is information on the occurrence of a wide variety of medical and psychiatric conditions in the twin samples.

Behavioral and medical geneticists should find this first aspect of the book useful, though they are well advised (as always) to double check against original sources. I did this for Farber's reported IQs and birthweights for the Juel-Nielsen cases. IQ was dependable. Birthweight was not. For two sets Farber fails to include birthweights although Juel-Nielsen has them; in a third set one birthweight is given incorrectly; for a fourth set potentially useful information about the combined birthweight of the two twins is omitted. Thus in one third of Juel-Nielsen's 12 sets, Farber's reporting of birthweights is defective. Caveat emptor.

A second aspect of the book is an elaborate statistical treatment of the IQ data from the separated MZ twin studies. Some interesting analyses are provided, but readers are hereby cautioned to watch out for the graphs and summaries in Chapter 7. These suggest that the amount of contact between separated MZ twins accounts for some 20–30% of the IQ variance. Perhaps, but only if one assumes that the mechanisms involved work in opposite directions in males and females (see Appendix E, page 350). For the sexes combined, the amount of contact between the twins does not predict their resemblance in IQ.

A third aspect of the book, in some ways the most intriguing and at the same time the most exasperating, is a freewheeling, loosely speculative blend of case history material and clinical hunches concerning the twins' personalities. (The author is a clinical psychologist.) A major theme of this discussion is that growing up together may systematically make MZ twins less alike in personality than they would otherwise be. This idea does

not of course originate with Farber, but she brings out some novel features of the separated twin data that bear on it.

In summary, this is a flawed book, though in some respects useful and provocative. In addition, a booklength review of this literature seems awkwardly timed, given that a fourth major separated twin study is in process at the University of Minnesota, a study that surely will revise our views on many of these matters.

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