

# Exploring the Experiences of Adolescent Identical Female Twins

By:

Lara Jayne McBride Alamad

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of Birmingham City  
University for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

August 2025



**BIRMINGHAM CITY**  
University

## Abstract

Twins are a growing population, this means that professionals need to understand the realities of twinship as opposed to stereotyped ideas, which twins can find insulting and hurtful. Yet while some quantitative research studies found that identical twin girls have higher levels of codependency than identical male twins and non-identical twins of both sexes, a negative aspect of this codependency is that identical twin girls are more likely to experience low self-esteem.

Despite this, there is a paucity of qualitative research about twins, particularly during adolescence, as most qualitative research involves adults as study participants. This is a significant gap in the literature, as research with adult twins indicates that adolescence can be a pivotal time for twins in terms of developing their identity. Furthermore, only Bacon (2005) has conducted qualitative research with twins under 18 years in England, indicating a significant gap in the evidence base. Research that focuses solely on female identical twins is also limited, yet studies indicate that their experiences and inter-twin relationships may differ from those of other categories of twins.

This study uses narrative inquiry to explore the experiences of adolescent identical female twins in England, including the role of twinness and the evolving nature of twinship over the life course. The sample includes eight pairs of identical female twins aged 10 – 17 years who took part in semi-structured, online interviews. The interviews were conducted over two stages: in Stage one, the twins were interviewed together. In Stage two, they were interviewed separately. This was at the request of the researcher; however, they were able to be interviewed together if they wished to do so. One pair chose to be interviewed separately in both stages. The first stage interview contained semi-structured questions which asked about their lives in a chronological order, while the second stage interview incorporated a photo-elicitation activity. The theoretical framework includes Bronfenbrenner's (1979; 1993) bioecological model and Lundy's (2007) model of participation.

The data found the support provided by the intertwin relationship was the greatest positive aspect of being a twin. This relationship was viewed as a constant despite

participants' need for spaces away from their twin and any diverging future plans. More challenging were inter-twin comparisons made by others and the stereotypes of twins faced in wider society, particularly within educational settings, with some behaviours experienced by participants being akin to microaggressions, the intentional and unintentional insults based upon racial characteristics (Sue et al., 2007). These negative perceptions of twins were particularly perplexing to participants as they were so divergent from the participants' positive perceptions of their twin relationship and their own individuality. In response participants felt they had to work to be seen as an individual within wider society. Nonetheless, twins were able to assert their individuality, particularly through increasing their use of space apart from their twin.

The study developed an integrated conceptualisation of Bronfenbrenner's bioecological model and Lundy's model of participation, which was used to examine the interaction between participation, power and social contexts. The study provides insight into the need for practitioners, particularly within educational settings, to have a greater understanding of the impact of negative perceptions of twins.

## Acknowledgments

*Dyfal donc a dyr y garreg – persistent tapping breaks the stone*

This has been a work of great persistence and there are many whom I need to thank for their support along the way. To Allah subhanahu wa ta'ala, I give my deepest thanks and gratitude for Your mercy, blessings and for granting me tawfiq.

I am hugely grateful to my supervisory team, Dr Shannon Ingram, Dr Julia Everitt, and to my past supervisors, Dr Carolyn Blackburn and Professor Meryl Harvey, who have all steadfastly guided me throughout this process, and to Dr Paola Pedrelli for being such a supportive and encouraging critical reader. My colleagues at the Elizabeth Bryan Multiple Births Centre have been both inspirational and understanding, particularly Professor Liz Bailey, Jane Denton, Nathalie Turville and Dr Laura Maguire. I am fortunate to have worked alongside many brilliant nurse academics who have encouraged my studies and to whom I am very grateful: Jaye Ryan, Jo Durham, Katie Meah, Laura Maguire and Waheeda Zaman.

One of my greatest blessings is my family. My husband Samir, you are my partner, committed helper and have been my tireless PhD coach. My daughters Faith and May have provided love and joy throughout the many hours of work, while my Mum, Dad and siblings Sandra, Emma and David have sustained me with their love and humour throughout my life.

Finally, there would be no thesis without the 16 individuals who gave me their time and their voices. More than anything else, it has been the power of their words which have fuelled this work and pushed me onwards. I remain filled with gratitude towards them and their families, and it is to them that I dedicate this work.

# Contents

Abstract.....	2
Acknowledgments .....	4
Contents.....	5
List of figures.....	10
List of tables .....	11
Chapter 1: Introduction.....	12
1.1 Introduction.....	12
1.2 Defining key terms.....	12
1.2.1 Categorising twins.....	13
1.2.2 Twinship.....	14
1.2.3 Twinness.....	14
1.2.4 Life course .....	15
1.2.5 Adolescence .....	15
1.2.6 Experience .....	17
1.3 Justification for the study .....	18
1.3.1 Twin fascination from an adolescent perspective .....	19
1.3.2 Limited current discourses of twinship from a twin perspective.....	20
1.3.3 The prevalence of the prima donna complex theory .....	21
1.3.4 Prioritising the perspectives of children and young people .....	21
1.4 Study aims.....	22
1.5 Research questions .....	23
1.6 Connection to the study .....	24
1.7 Outline of the thesis .....	26
Chapter 2: Literature review.....	29
2.1 Introduction.....	29
2.2 A Historical overview of research into twins and twinship .....	29
2.3 Literature search strategy .....	32
2.4 Synthesising the literature .....	35
2.5 Themes within research into twins and twinship .....	35

2.5.1 Twinship as a social performance .....	36
2.5.2 Twinship and the twin bond .....	40
2.5.3 Twins in Adolescence .....	57
2.5.4 Twinship in society .....	59
2.5.5 Stereotyping and stigma.....	63
2.6 Conclusion.....	69
Chapter 3: Theoretical framework .....	73
3.1 Introduction.....	73
3.2 Bronfenbrenner’s bioecological model .....	73
3.2.1 Devising an ecology of human development .....	74
3.2.2 Bronfenbrenner’s ecological systems theory .....	74
3.2.3 From ecological systems to bioecological model .....	76
3.3 The socially active child .....	82
3.3.1 Lundy’s model of participation .....	85
3.4 Theoretical framework .....	88
3.5 Conclusion.....	89
Chapter 4: Methodology .....	91
4.1 Introduction.....	91
4.2 Research aims.....	91
4.3 Research questions .....	92
4.4 Research paradigm .....	93
4.4.1 Ontology .....	93
4.4.2 Epistemology .....	96
4.5 Research design: narrative inquiry.....	97
4.6 Data collection methods .....	100
4.6.1 Interviewing children and young people .....	101
4.6.2 Participants .....	103
4.6.3 Conducting interviews via VoIP .....	106
4.6.4 Considerations of VoIP.....	107
4.6.5 Stage one – interviews .....	108
4.6.6 Stage two - photo-elicitation interviews .....	109
4.7 Recruitment strategy .....	111
4.7.1 Sample size / inclusion criteria .....	112
4.8 Data analysis.....	113
4.9 Role of the researcher .....	114
4.9.1 Positionality.....	115

4.9.2 Quality and trustworthiness .....	119
4.10 Ethical considerations .....	121
4.10.1 Consent and assent .....	123
4.10.2 Adult/child power relationships and the role of parents.....	126
4.10.3 Confidentiality and collecting, coding, interpreting and storing the data .....	128
4.10.4 Risks and benefits of the research .....	129
4.11 Conclusion.....	130
Chapter 5: Results .....	132
5.1 Introduction.....	132
5.2 Interviews: parental involvement.....	132
5.3 Data analysis .....	133
5.4 Results .....	135
5.5 Sociality of twins .....	136
5.5.1 Always someone there .....	137
5.5.2 Struggling against stereotypes .....	140
5.5.3 Coping with comparisons and competition .....	150
5.5.4 Friendship groups .....	155
5.6 Temporality.....	162
5.6.1 Developing differences.....	163
5.6.2 Role differences in twinship.....	169
5.6.3 Future divergences, future togetherness .....	176
5.7 Place .....	182
5.7.1 School.....	183
5.7.2 Bedrooms.....	190
5.7.3 A space apart.....	192
5.8 Conclusion.....	196
Chapter 6: Discussion .....	199
6.1 Introduction.....	199
6.2 Research aims and research questions .....	200
6.3 RQ1: What are the experiences of adolescent identical female twins in England?... 200	
6.3.1 Permanence and prominence of the twin relationship .....	201
6.3.2 Companionable competition .....	207
6.3.3 Roles of reliance and independence .....	213
6.3.4 Summarising the experiences of identical female twins in England .....	219
6.4 RQ2: What is the role of twinning in the life course of identical female twins?..... 221	
6.4.1 Facing others' perceptions of twins and twinships .....	221

6.4.2 Contending with Comparisons.....	232
6.4.3 Summarising the role of twinness in the life course of identical female twins.....	239
6.5 RQ3: What is the evolving nature of twinship over their life course? .....	240
6.5.1 Amplifying individuality .....	241
6.5.2 Seeking space .....	246
6.5.3 Plans for separation and symbiosis.....	250
6.5.4 Summarising the evolving nature of twinship over their life course: RQ3	
Conclusion .....	255
6.7 Conclusion.....	257
Chapter 7: Implications, recommendations and conclusions .....	260
7.1 Introduction.....	260
7.2 Research questions .....	260
7.3 Implications .....	262
7.3.1 Twins .....	263
7.3.2 Teachers .....	263
7.3.3 Peers .....	264
7.3.4 Parents .....	265
7.4 Recommendations for policy and practice .....	266
7.4.1 Supporting space without pathologising togetherness .....	267
7.4.2 Not knowing a twin's name or using portmanteaus is unacceptable .....	269
7.4.3 Navigate academic differences sensitively and maintain confidentiality.....	270
7.4.4 To understand that twins experience prejudice .....	271
7.5 Methodological Recommendations for Research with Twins .....	272
7.6 Review of the theoretical frameworks .....	274
7.6.1 Socially active child .....	275
7.6.2 Bronfenbrenner's bioecological model (1979; 1993).....	278
7.7 Reflecting on co-creating narratives.....	281
7.8 Review of research methodology - narrative inquiry .....	286
7.9 Review of the quality of this narrative inquiry .....	287
7.10 Contribution to knowledge .....	290
7.11 Dissemination .....	291
7.12 Limitations .....	292
7.13 Future research .....	293
7.14 Conclusion.....	294
References .....	296
Appendices .....	329

Appendix 1: Ethics approval letter from the University Health, Education and Life Sciences Faculty Academic Ethics Committee for Stage One Interviews .....	329
Appendix 2: Stage One Interviews Participant Information Sheet - Parents .....	330
Appendix 3: Stage One Interviews Participant Information Sheet - 16+ .....	335
Appendix 4: Stage One Interviews Participant Information Sheet - 10 - 15 years .....	340
Appendix 5: Stage One Interviews Oral Consent Script Parents .....	342
Appendix 6: Stage One Interviews Oral Consent Script 16+ .....	346
Appendix 7: Stage One Verbal Assent Form .....	350
Appendix 8: Stage One Interview Questions .....	352
Appendix 9: Ethics Amendment Application .....	353
Appendix 10: Ethics Amendment Approval Letter .....	357
Appendix 11: Stage Two Participation Information Sheet - Parents.....	358
Appendix 12: Stage Two Participation Information Sheet - 16+.....	363
Appendix 13: Stage Two Participation Information Sheet - 10-15 years .....	368
Appendix 14: Stage Two Oral Consent Script Photo-Elicitation Activity Parents.....	372
Appendix 15: Stage Two Oral Consent Script Photo-Elicitation Activity 16+.....	376
Appendix 16: Research Activity Schedule .....	381
Appendix 17: Recruitment Strategy.....	382
Appendix 18: Conference Presentations .....	383

## List of figures

<i>Figure 3.1 Adapted from Bronfenbrenner's bioecological model (1979, 1993)</i>	76
<i>Figure 3.2 A representation of the PPCT model of Bronfenbrenner's bioecological theory adapted from Tudge (2008)</i>	79
<i>Figure 3.3 Adapted from Lundy's model of child participation</i>	86
<i>Figure 4.2 Data analysis process using the three commonplaces framework</i>	114
<i>Figure 5.1 Mapping Clandinin and Connelly's three commonplaces (2000) to Bronfenbrenner's bioecological model (1979; 1993)</i>	134
<i>Figure 6.1 Mapping the shared microsystems of Vicky 1a and Courtney 1b</i>	202
<i>Figure 6.2 Mapping the proximal processes of competing in a swimming gala using Tudge's (2008) adaptation of the bioecological model (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; 1993)</i>	210
<i>Figure 6.3 Adapting Lundy's model of child participation (2007) to illustrate why twins cannot overturn societal prejudices about twins and twinship</i>	227
<i>Figure 6.4 Adaptation of Bronfenbrenner's (1979; 1993) bioecological model and Lundy's (2007) model of participation</i>	228
<i>Figure 6.5 Alison and Robyn avoiding comparisons by constructing new microsystems</i>	236
<i>Figure 6.6 The possible future microsystems of Amy and Marie</i>	252
<i>Figure 7.1 The narratives of adolescent identical female twins and recommendations for practice visualised through Bronfenbrenner's bioecological model (1979;1993)</i>	280

## List of tables

<i>Table 2.1 Schave and Ciriello's (1983) Six patterns of twinship</i>	46
<i>Table 2.2 Pietilä et al. (2012) Three patterns of twinship</i>	49
<i>Table 2.3 Hay and Preedy (2006) Three types of twinship</i>	51
<i>Table 4.1. Stages of data collection</i>	101
<i>Table 4.2: List of participants</i>	104
<i>Table 5.2 Themes categorised into the three commonplaces</i>	135

# Chapter 1: Introduction

## 1.1 Introduction

The research presented within this thesis is a narrative inquiry to explore the experiences of adolescent identical female twins in England, including the role of twinning and the evolving nature of twinship over the life course. This chapter will introduce the thesis. Key terms relevant to the conduct of the research are defined first, as a shared understanding of these terms is essential for understanding the context and aims of the study. The justification for the thesis is then outlined, indicating why there is a need for this research and how this has influenced the theoretical frameworks and research design. Subsequently, the aims of the study are presented and the connection between the researcher and the area of study is detailed. Finally, an outline of the thesis is provided.

## 1.2 Defining key terms

To understand the context and aims of the study, there needs to be a shared understanding of the key terms used throughout this thesis. This section clarifies the differing nomenclature used to describe twins as this is essential for understanding the wider context of this thesis. It also provides definitions of five terms that are integral to the research questions and therefore this study: *twinness*, *twinship*, *life course*, *adolescence* and *experience*.

### 1.2.1 Categorising twins

From a biological perspective, twins are generally defined into two classifications, identical (monozygotic) or non-identical or fraternal (dizygotic). Monozygotic twins occur when a fertilised zygote (fertilised egg cell) divides into two embryos and dizygotic twins are the result of two ova each being fertilised by a separate sperm (Segal, 2017). While it may be possible to determine monozygosity in utero, if the twins are sharing a placenta and/or an amniotic sac, this is not the case for all monozygotic twins and therefore, only genetic testing can accurately determine zygosity (Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists, 2016).

The term 'identical' has been used in this research to include twins who are aware of their zygosity or who perceive themselves to be identical. This is because the study focuses on the experiences of twins who see themselves and are seen as identical by others as opposed to exploring any genetic aspects of twinship (Ncube, 2018).

However, in the field of twin studies (Hart, 2021), twins are divided into five categories, which describe their genetic status as identical or non-identical and their sex, which are listed below:

- Identical female twins
- Identical male twins
- Non-identical female twins
- Non-identical male twins
- Different sex twins

## 1.2.2 Twinship

Twinship is a portmanteau of the words twin and relationship. It is a term commonly used in literature to mean the intertwin relationship (Allen et al., 2020; Bacon, 2005; Hoctor, 2019; Pietila et al., 2012; Stewart, 2000). When the word twinship appears in this thesis, it is to discuss the relationship between twins.

## 1.2.3 Twinness

Twinness is primarily defined as the state of being a twin (Ainslie, 1997; Allen and Allen, 2020). Huberman (2004) and Klein (2017) argue that it is the same age relationship and subsequent shared parental care that is the central aspect of twinness. Yet from a societal perspective, the idea that twins appear the same is seen as the primary fact of twinness, as demonstrated in Stewart's (2000) survey of public attitudes towards twins. This is despite the fact that there are significantly more non-identical twins than identical twins, at a rate of approximately 70/30% (Feldstein and Filly, 2003; Twins Trust, 2025), meaning that physical similarity may not be a central experience to the majority of the twin population. However, for twins who are identical, it is an integral part of how Western societies may view twins as both fascinating and disturbing (Piontelli, 2008; Stewart, 2000; Viney, 2023). Yet non-identical twins can choose to emphasise their similarities and display their twinness (Bacon, 2005). Therefore, twinness is both a biological and a social phenomenon (Stewart, 2000) and this thesis will consider twinness both as a state which twins experience and a factor which is perceived by contemporary British society.

#### 1.2.4 Life course

The life course can be defined as the marking of the stages of life in a sequential format (Southerton, 2020). It may seem logical to view the life course solely as a biological “arrow of time” (Uprichard, 2008:8) from conception/birth onwards.

However, this could overlook the impact of social context in two areas. Firstly, on the life course of individuals (Elder, 1998). Secondly, the emergence of young adulthood as a distinct life stage from adolescence demonstrates that life stages can be defined by a social context as opposed to a merely biological perspective (Arnett, 2006). Hockey and James (2003), therefore argue that progressing through the life course involves a triangular relationship between the body, the self and society. In this research, a life course perspective is used to obtain narratives. Firstly, because the eliciting of a life story is generally viewed as a foundational practice in narrative research, as it explores the experience of the individual and their social realities (Kim, 2020). Additionally, a life-course approach has methodological benefits, having previously been used to generate comprehensive accounts of twinship in older twins (Pietilä et al., 2012), meaning the use of a life course approach with adolescent twins would be a novel undertaking. This research views the life course as a time period under examination, which in this case is the time period that can be discussed by the participants within their narratives, from their earliest memories to their future selves in their twenties.

#### 1.2.5 Adolescence

Adolescence is a time of physical and social development, the term adolescent being derived from the Latin word, *adolscere*, which means to grow up (Sawyer et al., 2018). Thus, adolescence is seen as the stage where the individual journeys from

childhood to adulthood (Jaworska and MacQueen, 2015). However, there are two main controversies about the term adolescence. Firstly, the relevance of the concept of adolescence in a global context, where law, culture and economic circumstances may mean that the Western perspective of adolescence may have limited global application (Dehne and Riedner, 2001; Degner, 2006). Secondly, the age period covered by adolescence is widely debated; the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) states that 18 years old marks the onset of adulthood, while the World Health Organization states that adolescence is the period from 10 to 19 years of age (World Health Organization, 2023). Nonetheless, Arnett (2006), Jaworska and MacQueen, (2015) and Sawyer et al., (2018), state that declaring adulthood to begin at 19 ignores the neurological development that is still taking place in the early twenties; thus adolescence should be seen as lasting from age 10 to 24 years. However, this suggestion is countered by McDonagh et al. (2018), who argue that while young adults have specific needs, encompassing them into the category of adolescence may be disempowering. Therefore, it is unsurprising that the category of young people/person covering has also emerged, though there is also variation among the age category, as one study may categorise this group as 18–24 (Farre et al., 2014), while another uses 18–25 years (Villanti et al., 2022).

Nonetheless, while this thesis accepts that adolescence is a contested term, as Section 1.2 states above, it remains a period of significance in the existing literature on twins and twinship (Ainslie, 1997; Rosambeau, 1987; Greenwood, 2018; Hay, 1999; Scaife, 2023) and the voices of adolescent twins are notably absent.

Furthermore, a definition of adolescence needs to be distinguished in order to clarify the inclusion and exclusion criteria for participants within this study. Therefore, this research adopts the World Health Organization's (2023) definition of adolescence as

the developmental phase between childhood and adulthood, which is from 10 to 19 years of age.

### 1.2.6 Experience

As this thesis is a work of narrative inquiry, the definition of experience is rooted in that research methodology and utilises Clanadin and Connelly's three-dimensional space framework, the three commonplaces. This framework is used to conduct data analysis (Clanadin and Connelly, 2000) and explore participants' experiences. For Clanadin and Connelly (2006:477), "*Narrative inquiry, the study of experience as story, then, is first and foremost a way of thinking about experience*"; hence, through stories of experiences, we can develop our knowledge and understanding of human actions. Thus, defining what is meant by experience in this thesis is necessary.

The theory of experience adapted by Clanadin and Connelly (2000) is that of the philosopher and educator John Dewey (1938). Central to Dewey's theory is that experiences consist of two principles, interaction and continuity (Kim, 2020). In terms of interaction, each experience contains the interaction between the action of the individual and the consequences of that action, "*An experience is always what it is because of a transaction taking place between an individual and what, at the time, constitutes his environment*" (Dewey, 1938;43). This Transactionalist view of experience (Clandinin and Murphy, 2009) is in significant contrast to Essentialist views of experience, which argue that experience is an internal, subjective aspect of individual consciousness (Chalmers, 1996; Nagel, 1974). While for continuity, Dewey states that "*every experience lives on in further experiences*", outlining a perception of experience as a continuous process, with the past influencing the present and the future (Dewey 1938;27).

However, Clanadin and Connelly (2000) developed Dewey's philosophy of experience further, theorising that there is the personal experience of the individual, but also the social experience, which is derived from the individual's interactions with others. This individual and social interaction was termed sociality, while the continuous nature of experience is categorised as temporality. Finally, there is an awareness that the setting in which an experience occurs is also a relevant factor, and this is termed place (Clanadin and Connelly, 2000). Thus, the three dimensions are sociality, temporality and place and enable the exploration of the participants' experiences over their life course. This framework is key to the data analysis of this thesis and is discussed in more detail in Chapter 4, Section 4.8.

### 1.3 Justification for the study

The twin population is increasing globally, largely as a result of medically assisted reproduction methods, particularly artificial reproductive technology such as in vitro fertilisation (Monden et al., 2021). Despite this growth in population, many twin studies are genetic-environmental studies featuring identical twins (Segal, 2017) as opposed to being concerned with the experiences of twins (Noble, 2014). Twin studies are often studies of contrast, whether it is of the impact of genetics versus the environment (Mavioğlu et al., 2015), comparing twins to singletons (DiLalla, 2006), or comparing identical to non-identical twins (Smith, 2007; Segal and Knafo-Noam 2018). Whilst these studies explore which differences occur in twins, they do not explore twins' experiences of these differences.

### 1.3.1 Twin fascination from an adolescent perspective

Twins remain a source of fascination to the wider public, whether due to their similarity or perceived sense of quasi-supernatural closeness which is seen to set them apart from singletons (Stewart, 2000). However, this fascination can also have a negative aspect, where twins are viewed as unnatural, as bluntly stated by De Bres (2024:15) “twins are two when there should be one.” Other terms used to describe identical twins, even by non-identical twins are “scary” or “weird” (Prainsack and Spector, 2006:2747). There is also the persistent myth of the good and evil twin within horror films and literature (Ncube, 2018). This is a myth which is widespread enough to be included in a collection of twin misconceptions which needs countering (Segal, 2017). While these may seem like a rather skewed perspective of twins, their presence in the narrative discourse about twins means that they may impact the lives of twins (Stewart, 2000). As Bacon (2005:6) states, “Twins, like the rest of us, do not live their lives outside of the discourses, institutions, social relations and social practices that constitute their everyday lives”. Allen and Allen (2021:292) further argue that twins exist in a “contradictory state”, where closeness between twins can be expected and envied, while also being viewed as a source of emotional instability. Such binary portrayals of twins overshadow the more nuanced reality, where twins may have more variable experiences. While the social construction of twinship and therefore societal perspectives of twinness have begun to emerge into the research literature (Bacon 2019; Stewart 2000; Thorpe and Danby, 2006), there is little currently known from the perspective of children and young people growing up with these societal pressures.

### 1.3.2 Limited current discourses of twinship from a twin perspective

The persistence of these conflicting discourses of twinship places the lack of understanding about twin lives into a more problematic context. Indeed, from a British perspective, current qualitative studies are even more limited, with only four having been conducted with twins as opposed to their parents, this century, concerning their experiences as twins (Bacon, 2005; Fichtmüller, 2023; Ncube, 2018; Scaife, 2023). Furthermore, it is only Bacon's (2005) study that includes twins under the age of 18. The adolescent period has been noted as a particularly complex time for adolescents as they may be striving for independence both from their parents and each other (Ainslie, 1997; Rosambeau, 1987; Greenwood, 2018; Hay, 1999; Scaife, 2023), yet the literature views this experience from the perspective of twin adults, as opposed to adolescents themselves.

Subsequently, the knowledge base for professionals may also be outdated, reflected by the fact that Sandbank's (1999) *A professional guide to working with multiples* has not been updated since its publication at the end of the 1990s. Likewise, a similar book aimed at teachers and educational staff is now over two decades old (Mascazine, 2004). In terms of online resources, in the UK, there is the [twineducation.org](http://twineducation.org) website (Preedy, 2024), but it is unclear how frequently it is updated and some resource links are broken. While charities such as Twins Trust provide professional resources, those are mainly aimed at health care professionals, lacking the broader scope of all the professional groups and settings which may have multiple birth children as service users. This indicates that there needs to be greater awareness of the needs of twins in general resources aimed at all

professionals who work with multiple birth children, which are regularly updated in terms of information and accessibility.

### 1.3.3 The prevalence of the prima donna complex theory

An additional issue is that much research on twinships seems to focus on pathological twin relationships and the potential role of parents in formulating dysfunctional twinships (Ncube, 2018; Schave and Ciriello, 1983), as opposed to providing a more balanced perspective (Davis, 2014). As such, the current portrayal of twins and their families is limited, offering only a partial perspective. Further hindering this evidence base is adoption of gendered stereotypes of twins, particularly twin girls. There is research which labels identical twin girls as prima donnas who revel in the attention their twinness brings them (Koch, 1966; Hay, 1999), a label which has been unquestioningly cited in both research and literature aimed at parents (Baglivi Tinglof 2007; Davis 2014; Hay 1999; Sawicki and Rogucka 1998). Yet, there is limited contemporary substantiation of this label, nor is there any insight into what identical twin girls themselves may feel about this label. These are external perceptions of identical twin girls, but greater insight into the experiences of identical twin girls and their perspectives on these perceptions of twinness is not easily obtained in the current body of twin studies research literature. This is a further example of the current deficit in knowledge, particularly from the perspective of twins prior to adulthood, and is the primary justification for the focus of this research to be identical twin girls.

### 1.3.4 Prioritising the perspectives of children and young people

Central to the context of the study is the valuing of the voices of children and young people. This is reflected in the choice of theoretical frameworks which is Bronfenbrenner's (1979; 1993) bioecological model and the socially active child

(Prout and James, 1997). Both theories are centred on the development and experience of the child but also see them as influencing and being influenced by their social contexts. This focus on the voice of participants was also reflected in the choice of narrative inquiry as a research methodology. Incorporating a participatory research method, such as photo-elicitation, in stage two interviews means that adolescent twins can actively influence research activities, rather than being passive research subjects. While Bacon (2005:27) also sought to conduct research to “*directly access the voices of children*”, her work mainly focused on the identity development of a cross-section of twins and their parents. This research instead focuses on the experiences and evolving twinships of adolescent identical female twins, which is largely absent from the literature.

## 1.4 Study aims

This study aims to obtain a greater understanding of the experiences of adolescent identical twin girls by undertaking research in which they are the sole focus, as opposed to being compared to singletons or the other categories of twins. The research aims to provide an adolescent perspective on the experiences of being an identical female twin, thus examining the complexities of the adolescent identical twin experience while it is occurring as opposed to retrospectively from the distance of adulthood. As a work of narrative inquiry, rooted in the view of the child as an active agent in their lives (Prout and James, 1997), this research hopes to produce rich, storied narratives and illustrate how twins “*see themselves*” (Creswell and Poth, 2018:69). Yet insight will also be gained as to how twins feel others perceive them, and as a dyadic research study, the twin relationship will be narrated from the perspectives of participants. As stated in Section 1.2, much advice for professionals working with adolescent twins may be dated or not relevant to the UK context. While

a small-scale study, the intention of this research is that the core findings offer a more contemporary perspective of the twin experience for adolescents, which in turn will result in current, relevant and research-informed guidance for those working with twins in education, health, social care and other children's settings.

Finally, as an outsider researcher who is not a twin (Merriam et al., 2001) yet who is aware of the stereotypes and stigma that twins and twinships face (Hart 2021; Stewart 2000), I wanted to treat their narratives in a respectful non-derogatory manner, while also working within the theoretical framework of children as socially active agents (James and Prout, (1997). This reasoning influenced not just the conduct of the research but also the analysis and presentation of the data.

## 1.5 Research questions

After exploring the existing literature, three research questions were generated:

1. What are the experiences of identical female twins in England?
2. What is the role of twinning in the life course of identical female twins?
3. What is the evolving nature of twinship over their life course?

Question one aligns with the overall aim of the study. However, an examination of other features in the lives of identical female twins is required in order to explore their experiences in more detail. Question two considers the dual role played by twinning; both being a twin and being perceived as a twin by others throughout the life course, the time period being examined within this study. Finally, question three focuses on the relationship or twinship between twins and its evolution through the life course.

The thesis is rooted in a child centred theoretical framework and methodology as discussed in Chapter 3 and 4 respectively. A key motivating factor for this research is the absence of twins' voices in the current literature. This generated the need to centre the voices of the participants. Thus, a theoretical framework was constructed which views children and young people as socially active young people within wider society through the theories of Bronfenbrenner (1979; 1993) and Prout and James (1997) with the additional lens of Lundy's (2007) model of participation to explore what influences how twins' voices may be heard or unheard. As the research questions seek to explore experience through the life course, narrative inquiry seemed the most apt methodological approach (Creswell and Poth, 2018). By obtaining narratives the lived experiences of individuals but also how they may see themselves or view their identity can emerge (Creswell, 2013).

## 1.6 Connection to the study

Clandinin et al. (2016:26) state that at the centre of a research study is a research "puzzle", an area of experience which is of interest to the researcher. Furthermore, for most researchers, there are three levels of justification, the personal, the practical and the social/theoretical that one should consider (Clandinin et al., 2016). From my own perspective, these levels are an intertwined combination of professional identities and external events. In the early 2000s, I became a Registered Children's Nurse, working with children, young people and their families in several clinical settings. In the following decade, I undertook a master's degree in Childhood and Youth Studies, focusing on children's worlds and voices and how practitioners working with children could work to ensure the voices of children are heard. This subsequently became a key part of my academic identity, even as I moved into higher education as a nursing lecturer in 2016, where I would subsequently lead a

module on children's nursing from a policy and politics perspective. As discussed in my positionality statement in Chapter 4, Section 4.9.1, nursing voices are limited within the discourse of child studies, making my practitioner perspective an unusual one. Furthermore, even in the qualitative sector of twin studies, researchers are often psychologists (Ainslie, 1997; Klein, 2016:2021; Ncube, 2018) or sociologists (Bacon, 2005; Greenwood, 2018; Stewart, 2000). I am neither and while this research may be of interest to both fields, it is fundamentally aimed at practitioners working with children in fields such as health, education and social care.

Shortly after moving into higher education, I became involved with the work of the Elizabeth Bryan Multiple Births Centre, where I currently work, and in particular, their work with health visitors. I was already aware of ongoing doctoral studies with parents of multiple birth children (Clifford, 2025; Maguire, 2021). However, I wanted to conduct research with older twins, particularly as the further I explored the literature about twins, the more disproportionate the comparison between the vast amount of data derived from twins and the comparatively diminutive amount of research actually speaking to twins. Literature that included twins as participants under the age of 18 was scarcer still and with my ongoing commitment to children's rights, this is a gap in the literature that needed to be rectified, and I realised that I could contribute towards this, which would make my doctoral studies and even more meaningful endeavour.

Further fuelling this desire to facilitate the voices of twins was my professional identity. As a registered nurse, I am bound by the professional standards (NMC, 2018) of my regulatory body, the Nursing and Midwifery Council. The first theme of these standards (NMC, 2018:6) is "Prioritise People", which includes acting as an

advocate. As I am based in an educational institution and studying for a qualification, I am also required to adhere to the British Educational Research Association (BERA) Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research (2024). Of particular salience in these guidelines is within the section outlining responsibilities to participants which states the researchers should “*be mindful of the ways in which structural inequalities...affect all social relationships*” and that “*Sensitivity and attentiveness towards such structural issues are important aspects of researchers’ responsibilities to participants*” (BERA, 2024:11). Hence, I view this research as an academic work, but also an act of professional advocacy, bringing to the forefront voices and narratives which may have otherwise been unnoticed and asserting that those voices have value to the broader field of twin studies for practitioners working with twins in a variety of settings including educational environments, health care facilities and youth services.

## 1.7 Outline of the thesis

The remainder of the thesis consists of five chapters, structured thus:

**Chapter 2 - Literature review.** An historical overview of the development of twin studies is provided, before focusing on qualitative studies of the social perceptions of twins, the twin bond and twins during adolescence. The gaps in the literature are clearly stated, to indicate the need for the research.

**Chapter 3 – Theoretical Framework.** The theoretical frameworks applied within the thesis are defined and discussed, beginning with the evolution of Bronfenbrenner’s bioecological model (1979; 1993). The concept of the socially active child (Prout and James, 1997) is then discussed and its application within this study explored, before discussing how Lundy’s model of participation (2007) is used as an additional lens of

analysis when considering issues of power and influence within participants' narratives.

**Chapter 4 - Methodology.** This chapter justifies the methodology and methods of this study, rooting them in the research paradigm of social constructionism and connecting them to the theoretical framework of the socially active child (Prout and James, 1997) and Bronfenbrenner's bioecological model (1979; 1993). From then onwards, the methodology of narrative inquiry is discussed and how this influences the sampling, collection and analysis of research data. After considering the positionality of the researcher, the ethical issues involved in conducting research with adolescents are discussed, particularly the tension between enabling participants' voices to be heard, while also respecting the parental role as gatekeeper.

**Chapter 5 - Results.** The findings of the research are presented, analysing the findings from the Stage One and Stage Two interviews. Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) Three Commonplaces are used to analyse and 're-story' the raw data. Themes are categorised into the three commonplaces of Sociality, Temporality and Place with links made between the findings and the systems of Bronfenbrenner's bioecological model (1979; 1993).

**Chapter 6 - Discussion.** The existing literature and the findings from Chapter Five are analysed using Bronfenbrenner's bioecological model (1979; 1993) and Lundy's (2007) model of participation. The contrasts and congruences between the literature and the research findings are explored to answer the research questions.

**Chapter 7 - Implications, Recommendations and Conclusions.** A stakeholder approach is used to delineate the implications from the research and create recommendations for practice. The research design and methodology are reviewed alongside a reflection on the co-creation of narratives, with any areas that could have been conducted differently identified. The limitation of the research is considered and then the potential for future research is stated, before concluding the thesis.

# Chapter 2: Literature review

## 2.1 Introduction

The last chapter introduced the study and in particular the terminology concerning twins, twinning and twinship. This chapter reviews the literature concerning twins and twinship (including all categories of twinship, i.e., identical male and female twin pairs and fraternal twins in same-sex and opposite-sex pairs) and the impact of adolescence on twins' lives. This chapter starts with an historical overview of the development of twin studies into what I term twin and twinship studies, followed by the search strategy. The existing literature is then presented thematically and critically discussed, clearly illustrating the gaps in the literature from a twin perspective, whilst considering the inclusion or exclusion of child and/or adolescent voices. The chapter concludes by reasserting the aim of this research to centre the voices of twins and justifying why, within the field of twin studies, adolescent female identical twins are a group in need of further research.

## 2.2 A Historical overview of research into twins and twinship

Research which focused on twins as a group of interest in themselves emerged from the field of psychology. In 1875, Francis Galton published his work *The History of Twins, As a Criterion of the Relative Powers of Nature and Nurture*, which set forth the hypothesis that studying twins could be a way to resolve the debate between determining the impact of environment versus heredity (Bahjat, 2017). However, Galton did not view this debate from an impartial position. Instead, fuelled by

colonialist attitudes, Galton's theories of inherent traits were then used to underpin his other beliefs of the relative inferiority and superiority of different racial groups, which led him to coin the term eugenics, derived from the Greek term for well-born (Allen et al., 2022).

While institutions for the study of eugenics were subsequently established in Europe and North America, it was in Nazi Germany that the now notorious combination of eugenics and twin studies occurred. The principal investigator of the Mengele experiments on twin children in Auschwitz, Dr Otmar von Verschuer, was also a pioneer in twin studies (Seidelman, 1996). Prior to this, 1932 saw the first Nobel Prize nomination related to twin studies for Heinrich Wilhelm Poll and Hermann Werner Siemens, both of whom worked in the field of *rassenhygiene* or racial hygiene, which sought to generate genetic superiority through racial purity (Braund and Sutton, 2007). The link between twins and the study of race was further emphasised by the 1939 edict by the interior minister stating that all multiple births must be registered to enable research to isolate the impacts of nature and nurture (Allen et al., 2022). As Viney (2021;109) argues, "*Contemporary twin researchers owe the scale, intensity and infrastructure of current research, particularly the creation of large-scale data registries...to mid-century European eugenic race science*". Twins who survived such experimentation in Auschwitz faced being informed that the data obtained in such abuses was scientifically valuable (Mozes Kor, 1992). Yet revisionist histories by twin researchers often provide a partial portrayal of Galton, which omits his underlying motivations, while also erasing the connections between the origins of twin studies and Nazi race science (Joseph and Wetzel, 2012; Teo and Ball, 2009).

Nevertheless, it would be inaccurate to limit the political uses or misuses of twin studies to one particular time or country. Prominent British eugenicist and psychologist Cyril Burt's work on the heritability of intelligence in twins is still cited, despite the likelihood that his data was falsified (Chamarette, 2025). More controversially still, twin studies were a major source of evidence for Herrnstein and Murray's (1994) claims concerning the differences in intelligence between racial groups in their controversial book, *The Bell Curve*. Despite numerous critiques of its methodology and findings, the Bell Curve remains a widely cited text, used to justify institutionalised racism and racist political rhetoric (Joseph and Richardson, 2024).

Teo and Ball (2009) assert that no debate on nature versus nurture, which is ultimately at the centre of much of twin studies, occurs within a socio-political vacuum. For example, an argument that heritability outweighs environmental factors may be used to limit government spending, while arguing the converse will also have real-world policy implications. Despite these concerns, twin studies have continued to be conducted, with much twin research consisting of what is now called genetic environment studies (Segal, 2017). Twins are still seen as the ideal candidates to explore the ongoing debate between nature and nurture (Noble, 2014), as opposed to gaining knowledge of the everyday lives of twins. Thus, there are significant gaps in society's qualitative understanding of the lives of twins, gaps that my research will examine.

The invention of in vitro fertilisation has led to growing numbers of multiple births in society (Human Embryology and Fertilisation Authority, 2018). This demographic

change has also seen the advent of research focusing on the specific needs of twins. Particular areas of focus have concerned developmental issues specific to twins such as language development and placement in education (Sandbank 1999, Segal, 2017). Despite this surfeit of research about twins, the positivist nature of much research relating to twins, means that as stated by Bacon, (2006) and Määttä et al., (2016) the voices of twins themselves are only sometimes present within the research. For example, there is research that considers whether twins should be separated in schools, which measures educational outcomes but does not consult the view of twins (White et al., 2018). Even when seeking direct input from children, research into twins can also generate stigmatising, even dehumanising imagery, such as the focus on being a 'clone' in another educational study entitled "Clones in the Classroom: A Daily Diary Study of (...) Twin Differences in School Experience and Achievement" (Asbury et al., 2008). This omission of the voice of twins in favour of quantitative data generated by the twin participants elicits concern about the credibility of this research and is contrary to the concept of children as influential social actors, who possess a unique and valuable perspective (Thorpe and Danby, 2006). Instead, failing to hear the voices of twins generates a cyclical effect. As twin perspectives remain unheard, their perspectives are absent and therefore undervalued. This means that research does not seek the voices of twins, and the cycle of absence and ignorance continues.

## 2.3 Literature search strategy

For my research, qualitative literature on twins and twinship and the impact of adolescence on the lives of twins was sought. This is congruent with the strategy that I have used, which looks at the narratives generated by personal experiences. However, quantitative research, particularly the use of cross-sectional surveys

(Ainslie, 1997; Case, 1996; Koch, 1996; Rosambeau, 1987; Watzlawick, 2009) was also included if the findings involved the inter-twin relationship or twins' development during adolescence as related to my research questions, particularly my second and third research questions which seek to explore the role of twinship in the life course of twins and the evolving nature of twinship over the life course, respectively.

Two strategies were utilised during the literature search process database searching and berry picking. In terms of database search, CINAHL Ultimate, AMED - The Allied and Complementary Medicine Database, APA PsycArticles, APA PsycInfo, British Education Index, Child Development & Adolescent Studies, ERIC and MEDLINE were searched as their content of psychological, medical and educational material could contain relevant articles. Aside from placing a limiter to seek results in the English language, there were no other constrictions on research location to ensure that all relevant research studies could be identified.

A search term of Twins AND Qualitative with a limiter for studies published in the English language generated a result of 1204 articles, reduced to 895 when duplicates were removed. From this, eight relevant articles were identified, which provided data pertinent to my research questions.

The second search strategy was a search method known as berry picking, where once a useful article or text was identified, it would be citation tracked, and references checked to find other useful articles (Bates, 1989). This generated 44 articles or texts, which was the majority of sources used in the literature review and was particularly helpful when searching for multiple works by the same author, for example, Bacon (2002, 2005, 2019) and finding work which otherwise was not

visible in databases, such as Kozlak (1978). In addition to this, the specialist library at the Elizabeth Bryan Multiple Births Centre was also an important source of literature. Of the appropriate sources identified, most studies were conducted in the USA, Canada, or in Europe. European countries involved included the United Kingdom, France, Finland, Germany, Hungary and Malta. However, as this research focuses on the experiences of adolescent identical female twins in England, it is notable that there have only been four comparatively recent English qualitative research studies conducted with twins, Bacon (2005), Ncube (2018), Fichtmüller (2021) and Scaife (2023), with all researchers including male and female twins, except for Scaife (2023), which only featured female twins.

Notably, a considerable number of researchers conducting twin studies are themselves, a twin (Allen et al., 2019; Bacon, 2005; Baxter and Diaz, 2012; Conlon, 2009; Davis, 2014; Hart, 2021; Hoctor, 2019; Huberman, 2004; Klein, 2017; Noble, 2014; Olney, 2019; Segal, 2017; Smith, 2007). Despite this, qualitative literature detailing the experiences of adolescent twins is still incredibly low in number. Aside from Formosa's (2020) undergraduate work on friendship formation in Malta and Tóth's (2023) research examining the roles of twins in schools in Hungary, no qualitative studies to date feature only adolescent twins. In addition, most of the studies cited in this chapter have focused on all categories of twins, i.e. identical male and female twin pairs and fraternal twins in same-sex and opposite-sex pairs (Ainslie, 1997; Bacon, 2005; Case, 1996; Forrási, 2023; Fülöp, 2023; Klein, 2017; Koch, 1966; Mór, 2023; Rosambeau, 1987; Schave and Ciriello, 1983; Spudich, 2014; Zazzo, 1977), meaning that detailed information about identical twin girls as a group, as opposed to as a comparison with other categories of twins is limited. Of

the qualitative studies discussed in this chapter, only the work of Määttä et al. (2016) is solely focused on identical female twins. This represents a clear gap in the literature that my research is beginning to fill.

## 2.4 Synthesising the literature

In addition to the paucity of literature, a further complexity is its disparate nature in terms of academic field. While research into twins and twinship was pioneered by psychologists such as Burlingham (1952), Koch (1966), Zazzo (1972), Ainslie (1997), Segal (1995) and Klein (2010, 2017), the work of Hay and Preedy (1999), heralded the increasing interest of educationalists into twin development.

Conversely, Rosambeau (1987) and Case (1996) were researchers working outside of academia with a personal interest in twins. The 21st century and the works of Stewart (2000), Bacon (2005) and Greenwood (2018) marked the entry of sociologists into the field of twin and twinship studies, while the works of Pietilä et al. (2012; 2013) are from the realm of nursing. This diverse selection of literature was therefore best suited to be analysed using a process of thematic synthesis, which was formulated as a method for synthesising heterogeneous qualitative literature (Thomas and Harden, 2008). Thematic synthesis has three stages, line-by-line coding of text, the generation of descriptive themes, then finally a further stage of interpretation to develop analytical themes (Aveyard et al., 2021). These themes are identified and explored in depth in the following section.

## 2.5 Themes within research into twins and twinship

Themes were generated by comparing, contracting and grouping the findings from the selected literature. The key developments in this field have included the shift away from solely psychological interests and focusing only upon the influence of

genetics or parenting, to the increasing awareness of the importance of the intertwin relationship or twinship, (Ainslie 1997; Schave and Ciriello 1983; Zazzo 1977).

Rather than being termed 'twin studies', research produced by this field is more accurately categorised as twin and twinship studies.

The remainder of this chapter will examine a broader spectrum of research to identify which themes have arisen through the process of thematic synthesis. These themes are:

- Twinship as a Social Performance
- Twinship and the Twin Bond
- Twins in Adolescence
- Twinship in Society
- Stereotyping and Stigma

### 2.5.1 Twinship as a social performance

The work of Stewart (2003) has been highly influential in moving the study of twins and twinship from the genetic and biological into the sociological realm and is therefore of great relevance to this thesis which views twins as social actors . For Stewart (2003), twins exist both as a biological fact and within a twinship: the term for the relationship between twins and the state of being a twin. This twinship is where consideration of being a twin as an "*irreducibly social phenomenon*" commences (Stewart 2003:167). The social construct of twinship is illustrated by the variance in the perception of twins within different cultures throughout history, where twins may be viewed dichotomously as either a blessing or a bad omen (Dassen 2005, Aspeloff, 2013).

The difference between being a twin and twinship can be further understood using the theories of Berger and Luckmann(1966), concerning objective versus subjective reality. While being a twin is an objective reality, twinship is an objectivation of subjective reality. A twin in society must coexist with the societal preconceptions of twinship. Primarily, this is the expectation of sameness (Bacon 2005, Watzlawick 2009), not only in physical appearance but in interests and personality. This means that twinship is loaded with connotations in society beyond the birth of two children from the same pregnancy. Yet it is argued that much research focuses on pathological twin relationships (Davis, 2014), or the twinship itself, overlooking the social milieu surrounding twins (Adelman and Siemon, 1986). Therefore, there is a need for research to focus beyond the twinship and consider the spaces where these expectations and beliefs of twins and twinship exist, impacting the development of twins.

These societal assumptions about twins form wider expectations of how twins should behave and therefore 'perform' twinship. The concept of twinship as a performance for others is connected by Stewart (2003) to Goffman's (1969) writings examining the presentation of the self in social interactions. In Goffman's (1969) theory of dramaturgy, human social interactions are a type of performance where both aspects of physical appearance and manner are props which can be used to convey an impression. For twins, clothing, in particular, can be an important prop to either assert similarity and foreground twinship or emphasise differences or thus try to disguise twinship (Bacon, 2006). While these may appear to be individual choices, they are messages aimed at society to influence external perception, thus a performance. The use of props by adolescents is incorporated into Bacon's (2005)

findings, but as Bacon's (2005) work contains the five categories of twins, with no female adolescent participants categorised as identical, my research can explore the use of props and the general environment by identical female twins in greater depth.

For some of the participants in Ncube's (2018) UK research of 14 pairs of adult identical twins, twinship was performed by twins demonstrating their similarities or their differences. In one interview, a twin made a drink for the other twin without asking any questions about the drink. Ncube (2018) felt this had been a purposeful performance of similarity, which delineated him as an outsider. Yet for other twins in Ncube's (2018) research they felt their performances of twinship were a display directed and even demanded by others, particularly family members. In Case's (1996) work, a participant recalls being groomed to be exactly like their twin sibling, to the extent that when they lost a front tooth, their mother wiggled the same on their sibling until it also fell out. These findings by Case (1996) and Ncube (2018) illustrate that the performance of twinship, especially in children and young people, is often directed by family members who have fixed ideas as to how twins should present themselves.

While those around them may emphasise their sameness, for some twins, distinguishing differences is more important. Ainslie (1997) refers to the inter-twin relationship as the twin situation, agreeing with Zazzo (1976, 1977) that the relationship between twins is as influential as heredity and shared environment, particularly as there is often a polarisation of characteristics, almost to the point of caricature. Such polarisation may be a method by which twins assert their differences and thus, their uniqueness (Ainslie, 1997:). Ainslie interviewed twins and

parents of twins, with the twins being aged from 14 to 72 years of age. This may explain why his work has a more vivid view of interactions between twins. A notable finding was that twins may use differentiation to avoid competition, as competition can be an issue of concern for twins, either bringing a sense of loss to oneself or one's twin.

This raises the question as to whether differentiation is authentic or if it is a social performance with a specific purpose, for example, to avoid competition. From a sociological stance, Stewart (2000) considers if twins can be regarded as role takers, where twins are blank slates socialised into the roles available to them, or role players, whereby roles are created from the interaction between society, the family and the individual within the family, ultimately deciding that the latter option provides a more dynamic social assessment of twinship. Twins may feel external/internal pressure to be differentiated, but this may cause a burden or distortion on the development of identity (Ainslie 1997; Segal, 2017). How identical female twins perceive the evolution of these differences and what purposes they may serve requires further examination because this will provide important insights into how twins and twinships develop and change over the life course, as explored in Research Questions 2 and 3.

From encouraging these performances, parents especially may gain their own benefits from being visibly the parents of twins, with the social cachet that may provide (Bacon 2005; Hay and Preedy 2006; Klein 2017). Thus, the same society which prizes individualism also stereotypes twins as a unit. This may occur both linguistically in language, e.g. being consistently referred to as “the twins” or “treated

as a bundle” (Määttä et al., 2016:40). While it may be common for parents to compare siblings, twins face constant comparisons being made between them and their co-twin within the home, school and elsewhere (Bacon, 2010). Such comparisons can be very hurtful to twins, either marking themselves or their co-twin as deficient (Noble, 2014). Further exploration of how identical female twins negotiate these comparisons in terms of their well-being and also their twinship will be examined in my research findings.

### 2.5.2 Twinship and the twin bond

The twin bond is viewed as a relationship unlike any other (Stewart, 2000) with closeness and togetherness as defining factors of twinship (Case, 1996, Bacon, 2010). Yet there have been several contrasting attempts to define and categorise the twin relationship which need to be reviewed in more detail. Due to the breadth of concerns within this theme, it has been subdivided into four subthemes:

- The Couple Effect
- Parental Impact on Twinships
- Categorising Twinship
- Twins’ Perception of Twinship

#### 2.5.2.1 The couple effect

Ortmeyer (1970:125) theorised that twins formed a “we-self”, with two separate personalities functioning as a single unit, instead of viewing themselves as two individuals. This is somewhat echoed by Friedman, (2008:172) who claimed that twins may engage in an “illusion” of separateness while remaining completely enmeshed with each other. However, Zazzo (1976) conducted personality tests on adolescent and adult identical twins living apart, and identical twins living together.

The findings demonstrated that the twins living apart were more alike than those living together (ibid.), which led Zazzo (1976) to argue that twins are not just impacted by heredity or environment, but that the twin situation causes a “couple effect”. This means that the interactions and relationships between twins are of equal interest to their heredity and environment. Identical twins are not doubles, but exist as a couple, with Zazzo (1977) subsequently positing that birth order and parental relationships influence the interdependent relationship between twins. This marks a shift in focus from the twin as an individual, to looking at the twin in their social context, or microsystem.

Though Ncube (2018:73) does not cite Zazzo’s work, he also used what he termed ‘couple discourses’ to describe how twins describe and discuss their relationship, comparing the twinship to elements of a romantic relationship. This comparison is shared by Tancredy and Farley (2006), who view twinship as an attachment relationship. The concept of attachment relationships was initially defined by Bowlby (1969) as a theoretical framework for understanding how close emotional bonds between two people are formed, with the primary attachment relationship being between mother and child and how those bonds may differ from other relationships (Pietila et al., 2012). While attachment relationships are exceptional, they can also be experienced by singletons. This overlap in discourses between marriage and twinship was an important finding of Bacon’s (2005) research. Bacon (2005) further connects how a relationship is defined linguistically and impacts the thought process and perceptions of that relationship. Therefore, it is important for my research into twins’ lives to not only consider the impact of the twin relationship but also consider what influences the twinship itself.

Indeed, research into twinship can impact the wider perceptions of twins and twinship. A negative depiction of twinship is still echoed by twin studies which centre on whether being a twin may distort development or social relationships (Määttä et al. 2016), giving rise to what Piontelli (2002:3) refers to as the “twin neo-gothic” a fixation upon the internal co-dependence and external dysfunction of twin relationships. Zazzo (1977) also had additional concerns about the impact of twin studies on the lives of twins. In particular, he argued there should be a move away from studies examining the negative aspect of twinship, as such consistently pessimistic findings may lead to further stereotyping and stigmatisation of twins.

Furthermore, Zazzo (1977) argued that twins should be studied as twins; instead of twins serving psychologists, the field of psychology should be serving twins. This means that rather than having twins and twinship being viewed solely as a canvas to explore heredity versus environment for the benefit of the wider population, the experiences of twins should in themselves be viewed as a valuable area of study. Segal (2017: xxiii) agrees, stating that there needs to be a “twins for twins” category of research which is focused on physical, behavioural and psychological situations which generally only occur in twins. Ncube (2018) and Martinez (2021) extend this argument further. Intriguingly Ncube (2018:92), who is not a twin, states that his research supported the existence of a ‘twin world’ that singletons would not be able to comprehend fully, while Martinez (2021:48) who is an identical twin states that it is the ‘singleton-world’ that is an inadequate basis for understanding the twin experience, hence both see the need for research to support twins experiencing twin-specific issues. This view of the experiences of twins as inherently valuable is

central to my research aims, which seek to explore the twins' experiences and their perception of being twins and twinships.

### 2.5.2.2 Parental impact on twinship

While Zazzo's concept of the 'couple effect' could be located in the microsystem, albeit focused largely on the interactions between twins, in their American study, Schave and Ciriello (1983) look to another pair of figures within the microsystem, the parents. The parental impact on the twinship was a key finding of Schave and Ciriello's (1983) work.

In Schave and Ciriello's (1983) research, of the five patterns of twinship for same sex twins, only one is the outcome of effective parenting, with the other patterns all being described as the results of deficient parenting. Though Schave and Ciriello (1983) discuss the impact of parenting on patterns of twinship, fathers are not mentioned in this research and therefore their influence is absent from the discussion. Instead, the role of the mother is the sole focus with the final claim of the research being that mothers create the nature of the twin relationship. This contrasts with Case's (1996) research, which, like Schave and Ciriello (1983), featured adult participants from all five categories of twins and was also conducted by an insider researcher, as Case is a twin and also a sibling of twin brothers. However, while the participants in Case's work (1996) agreed that parents were hugely influential, they made no distinction between mothers and fathers, stating that both had a role in raising twins successfully. Fülöp's (2023) research with the five categories of twins aged 21 – 42 years, found that parents encouraged joint socialisation for reasons of practicality and child safety. However, this could lead to twins being parented as a single unit, which twins countered by seeking separate spaces away from their twin in the form

of bedrooms, friends, schools and even, for one participant, a separate birthday cake, using these actions of apartness to assert their own individuality.

Ainslie's (1997) work had a more nuanced view of the parental role and differs from Schave and Ciriello's (1983) and Klein's (2010, 2017) in that he felt that both parents are influential. Particularly, as twins may not have an equal relationship with each parent, one twin may be closer to their mother and vice versa. Additionally, parents have their own perceptions of how twins should be. In the questionnaire phase of Ainslie's (1997:160) research, across all categories of twins, when asked what relationship they hope their children will have in the future, the vast majority selected "close, loving", with the option of "Just like siblings" coming a distant second, which infers a clear parental desire for the twin relationship to be something more special than the sibling relationship. This suggests that parental idealisation of twinship could be influential upon twins and how they view their relationship. For example, in Spudich's (2014) doctoral study of twins attending the same college, several participants stated that their parents wanted them to be together, with one saying that their father had always told them that being twin brothers meant a lifelong close friendship.

The romanticised views of twinship as expressed by the latter parent may potentially cause distress if the twins subsequently feel that cannot fulfil their parents' ideals (Noble 2014; Klein 2017), yet a view of twins as being like any other sibling relationship, may not allow the twin bond which many twins reportedly feel (Bacon 2005; Davis 2014; Formosa 2020; Greenwood 2018; Ncube 2018), to be acknowledged. There is also the stereotype of damaged twins, described as the "twin neo-gothic" by Piontelli (2002:3). Such stereotypes generate unease about the

nature of twins and twinship, which means that parents are anxious for their children not to appear or behave in an overly twin-like manner. This lack of clarity concerning the role of parents, therefore, requires further research. However, what influence, if any, adolescent twins believe their parents to have versus their own ideas and actions may be challenging to unpick.

### **Categorising Twinship**

Building upon Zazzo's (1977) findings, Schave and Ciriello's (1983) research stated that twinship was mythologised and sought to instead define and categorise the variances within twinships. Schave and Ciriello (1983) did so from the perspective of themselves being identical twins, hence asserting themselves as insider researchers (Le Gallais, 2008), a position which has become increasingly common within twin research (Tárnoki et al., 2022). They argued that misconceptions of twinship were generated by two issues within previous studies. Firstly, twin studies have tended to be derived from case studies of "troubled twin subjects" (Schave and Ciriello, 1983:7) and secondly, personality development studies are hampered by a lack of agreement as to what the term personality means. Schave and Ciriello's (1983) work consisted of interviews conducted with 20 sets of adult identical twins and 20 sets of adult fraternal twins, providing an entirely adult perspective. Schave and Ciriello's (1983) work identified six patterns of twinship: *Unit identity*, *Interdependent identity*, *Split Identity*, *Idealized identity*, *Competitive identity* and finally, *Sibling attachment identity*. These patterns are briefly summarised in Table 2.1

*Table 2.1 Schave and Ciriello's (1983) six patterns of twinship*

<b>Pattern of Twinship</b>	<b>Relationship qualities</b>
Unit identity	The twins each feel like half of a single unit. This is related to either the loss of a parental figure, or deficiency in the child/parent relationship.
Interdependent identity	While the twins may appear independent, they remain each others' closest relationship. They may also try to replicate their twin relationship with others. The primacy of the twin relationship is due to parents allowing the twin bond to be stronger than the parental bond.
Split Identity	Twins are categorised into specific roles or labels by their parents. One role may be viewed more favourably than the other. This pattern is viewed as the most destructive.
Idealized identity	The twin identity is prized above everything else, due to parents who have an excessive pride in the twin status of their children. Yet while the twin identity may be overly priced, the twin relationship itself may lack closeness.
Competitive identity	Twins feel in competition, yet this is not a negative as competitive behaviour enables them to assert their individuality while maintaining a relationship with their twin. Parents of children in this pattern of twinship were more likely to have treated the children as individuals.
Sibling attachment identity	This pattern of twinship is only applicable to differently sexed twin pairs. In this pattern twins have their individual roles and personalities.

Of the six patterns of twinship listed, only two of these patterns of twinship, *Competitive identity* and *Sibling attachment identity* are described by the researchers positively in terms of both the twins' relationship and the quality of the parenting they had received. Furthermore, Schave and Ciriello (1983) state that developing a sibling attachment identity would seem to be more influenced by being opposite-sex twins, as opposed to any actions by parents, and the authors do not appear to view this identity as available to same-sex twins, whether identical or fraternal.

Schave and Ciriello, (1983) ultimately depict twinship as a relationship fraught with difficulties and twins as individuals with a tendency towards atypical emotional and social development compared to those born as singletons. The sole focus on the parent, particularly citing the mother as the most prominent factor in the development of twins, may explain why it has been utilised in guidance for parents. In a guide to parenting, *Multiple Birth Children as Adolescents* (Heinonen et al. 2016), Schave and Ciriello's six patterns of twinship are utilised to explain identity development, with the proviso that twins may have features of more than one category. While it might seem initially counterintuitive for such a potentially negative perspective to be provided to parents, it is possible that emphasising the role of parents reassures them of their ability to guide their twin children through the developmental changes of adolescence, as stated as an aim of the guide (Heinonen et al. 2016:4).

Nevertheless, this view of parental influence needs to be compared to other concepts of children and child development. James and Prout (1997), consider children to be socially active agents in their lives as opposed to merely passive agents. Bacon (2005) suggests that while parents may emphasise the twin identity of

their children during their earlier years, children are soon able to set their boundaries in terms of clothing and space. How this assertion of boundaries is enacted will be explored further within this thesis.

Schave and Ciriello (1983) use examples from identical and fraternal twins, both male and female throughout their work, but they do not make any distinctions between the experiences of male and female twins, despite their assertion that gender is significant. This limits the utility of this research for exploring the experiences of specific categories of twins, especially as my research focuses on identical female twins. Schave continued to conduct research into twin relationships under her married name Klein (2017, 2021), most notably in twin estrangement, as Klein considers herself an estranged twin. In 2017, she reduced the six categories of twinship to three: *Interdependent Identity*, *Split Identity* and *Individual (Competitive) Identity*. However, of these three identities, it remains that all are influenced by parents and only the final identity takes a positive perspective, though Klein states those within that category may still require therapy. As my work focuses solely on the experiences of adolescent twins, their perspectives on their relationship and what has influenced their relationship may provide an alternate perspective to maternal role-focused findings of Schave and Ciriello's (1983) and Klein's (2010, 2017, 2021) subsequent work. Hence, the experiences shared by participants in my research are potentially far broader than just their experiences of being parented.

While qualitative research rejects the concept of researcher objectivity (Braun and Clarke, 2013) and the involvement of twins in twin and twinship studies is viewed as a positive development within the field (Tárnoki et al., 2022), it is worthwhile to

consider what influence Klein (2010, 2017, 2021), *née* Schave's (1983) negative personal experiences of twinship have generated within her work and if this has hindered uncovering a more multifaceted view not only of twins and twinship but the roles of parents.

In a text co-authored with Klein and Martinez, Hart (2021:233) developed a Framework for Conceptualising Twin Minority Subgroups. The Framework contains what Hart (2021) described as 'five flavours' of the co-twin relationship: Enmeshed Twins, "Typical" Twins (quote marks used in original text), Distant Twins, Estranged Twins and Twinless Twins. He also identified the following five natures of the co-twin connection, Maladaptively Strong, Healthily Strong, Somewhat Deficient, Deficient > Non-Extant and Non-Existent. Although Hart (2021) states that the purpose of this framework is to set out the complexities of the twin relationship, he does not provide any descriptions or definitions for these categories. It also remains that this is still a framework with only one inherently positive category. Furthermore, categorising twinless twins or lone twins as having a non-existent relationship seems to erase the life and experiences they may have experienced with their twin while they were alive and what impact that may have upon their life now. Thus, the utility of this framework remains unclear.

Nonetheless, Pietilä et al. (2012) also found three patterns of twinship in their life course research with elderly twins in Sweden. These patterns are *nurturing*, *draining* and *superficial* and are described in Table 2.2

Table 2.2 Pietilä et al. (2012) three patterns of twinship

Pattern of Twinship	Relationship qualities
Nurturing	Nurturing twins experience emotional closeness whilst also maintaining their sense of independence.
Draining	Twins in draining relationships are overly dependent upon each other,
Superficial	Twins in a superficial relationship lack emotional closeness.

Like Klein's (2017) three patterns, one is favourable and two are perceivably negative. Yet the final category of the superficial pattern was only relevant to a small number of participants who had been raised apart, and the majority of participants were categorised as falling within the *nurturing* pattern of twinship, experiencing their twinship as a positive factor throughout their lives. Even more compelling was the absence of parental influence within the *nurturing* pattern findings in Pietilä et al.'s (2012) study. The participants discuss school, work and relationships as having a positive impact on their lives, but the role of parents in generating a positive twinship is unspoken. Whereas in the *draining* pattern of twinship, comparisons by parents and in one case, parents placing a twin into a caregiver role for her co-twin, were seen as influential factors in the tenor of the relationship (Pietilä et al., 2012).

Elsewhere in the social worlds of twins' lives, Hay and Preedy (2006) focused on twins in the classroom to generate their patterns of twinship, providing an overview of their body of work examining the educational needs of multiple-birth children. They conducted surveys in the UK of 3000 schools (Preedy, 1999) and in Australia with 784 families and 1264 teachers (Gleeson et al., 1990) and interviewed both twins and parents of twins. Although they did not directly cite Zazzo (1977), Schave and Ciriello (1983) or Ainslie (1997), they built on both the concept of the couple effect and inauthentic differentiation, dividing twins into three types, as shown in Table 2.3

*Table 2.3 Hay and Preedy (2006) three types of twinship*

Pattern of Twinship	Relationship qualities
Extreme Individuals	<b>Twins who find their relationship restrictive and therefore have elevated levels of conflict, and deliberate polarisation to assert their differences and may even deny their twin relationship entirely.</b>
Mature Dependents	<b>These twins are happy spending time together but are also happy to be apart to pursue their interests without being overly resentful or competitive.</b>
Closely Coupled	<b>Twins who see themselves as one unit, possibly answering to either twin's name interchangeably. They have few other friends yet can combine to be a formidable unit.</b>

Hay and Preedy (2006) did not state whether boys, girls or any category of twins are more likely to be any particular type. In addition to this, it is noticeable that much like Schave and Ciriello's (1983), Pietilä et al.'s. (2012) and Hart's (2021) categories of

identities, the negative categories outnumber the positive ones. A further point of similarity between Schave and Ciriello (1983) and Pietilä et al. (2012) is that the classification seems fixed, without any consideration that twins may behave differently in different settings

Unlike Zazzo's (1977) and Schave and Ciriello's (1983) work, which remained within the field of psychology, Hay and Preedy's (2006) work has appeared in the national media (BBC News, 2001) and a guide for practitioners working with multiple birth children (Sandbanks, 1999). Thus, its ecological influence in the micro/meso/exo and macro system of twins is potentially far greater, particularly as Preedy states schools should "help [twins] develop as 'mature dependents'" (BBC News, 2001). What form this help should take, aside from potential classroom separation, and who is responsible for viewing twins as acceptably "mature dependents" is not clearly stated (Hay and Preedy 2006: 400). Also absent from Hay and Preedy (2006), Klein (2017), Pietilä et al. (2012) and Schave and Ciriello's (1983) work, is the perspective of how twins feel about these categorisations of their twinship. This absence of the child's voice is prevalent within many studies and is an aspect which my study addresses to explore the perceived impact of the outsider's perspectives on the experience of being and twin and the twinship relationship.

### 2.5.2.3 Twins' perceptions of twinship

A frequent element within twin studies is the focus on dysfunction within twin relationships (Määttä et al., 2016), yet for many twins, their twinship is an advantage

in developing resilience (Thorpe and Danby, 2006) and positive socioemotional behaviour (Pulkkinen et al., 2003). The closeness of the twin bond was seen as being the greatest benefit of twinship in Allen et al.'s (2020) study. This has been echoed by other researchers, with Ncube's (2018:84) British study describing twinship as "never being alone", a feeling also echoed by Fülöp (2023) and Tóth's (2023) studies conducted with Hungarian adult and adolescent twins, respectively. In her interview with adult twins in the US, Greenwood (2018) found the word "always" featured prominently when twins were discussing their relationship with their co-twin. Their twin had always been there and always would be; this permanence frequently being cited as the "best thing" about having a twin (Greenwood, 2018:68). Whether this feeling is an integral part of twinship during adolescence will be explored further in my research.

Twinship bonds vary and both twins who spend much of their time together and those who have less time together with different friendship groups and interests (Noble 2014, Allen et al. 2019), can both feel misunderstood, being pressured to be similar and yet not too similar (Ncube, 2018). Birth order can be influential, with the delineation between older and younger twins being significant (Pietilä et al. 2013, Segal 2017). The power balance between twins can also exist in a state of flux, as in sibling relationships (Bacon, 2005). The evolution of these bonds over time is congruent with the concept of the chronosystem as devised by Bronfenbrenner (1993), which encompasses change not only within the person but also their surrounding environment. This concept will be explored in greater depth in Chapter 3, Section 3.2.

Reading Pogrebin's (2010) and Segal's (2017) accounts of their twinship certainly underpins the uniqueness of the relationship, alongside the frequent statements in literature that the bond between twins is difficult for singletons to comprehend (Noble 2014, Garro et al. 2016) and for twins themselves to articulate (Prainsack and Spector, 2006). Yet, Pogrebin's words demonstrate not only the importance and uniqueness of the relationship with her twin sister as a person but also her identity as a twin and being in a twinship (Pogrebin, 2010). This is in contrast to other adult twins, who feel that part of being an adult twin is asserting the differences between themselves and the co-twin and their status as an individual (Pietilä et al. 2013). Twins in adulthood may, therefore, have a dichotomous relationship, of needing their twins' presence and support while also wanting to be separate and seen as separate (Fichtmüller, 2021). In Friedman's (2018) overview of her work as a therapist to twins, she sees twins who feel guilt at wishing to be more separate, and twins who feel self-loathing at being overly dependent upon their twin. Hence, twins may find it difficult to balance their needs with both the needs of their twins and the perceptions of those outside of the twinship (Ncube, 2018).

The twins interviewed by Ainslie (1997) identified a discrepancy between the uniquely close relationship they believed twins should share and their actual twin relationship and this generated feelings of sadness and disappointment.

Rosambeau, (1987) and Segal (2017) have also documented the feelings of inadequacy in some twins feeling disappointed in not fulfilling the stereotype projected of the very close twins, even if they do have an otherwise positive relationship. How twins perceive stereotypes will be discussed in my research, particularly in Question 2 which looks at the impact of twinning upon participants.

Another key element of twinship, posits Ainslie (1997), is that twins' investment in their twinship is not necessarily symmetrical. One twin may prioritise the twinship much more than the other twin. Even in joint interviews, one twin may prefer to assert their differences and therefore their separateness, while the other twin will assert their similarity and therefore their twinness. My research aims to explore the evolving nature of twinship, but through doing this, it is likely that the roles played by the twins will also be illuminated. Aside from outward comparison, there may also be internal competition or rivalry, particularly for parental attention (Noble, 2014). Some twins may feel concerned that this competitiveness is counter to the idealised twin relationship (Segal, 2017). Yet Case (1996) argues that competition should not be categorised positively or negatively, as it is merely an inherent part of a twin's striving for independence.

While Greenwood's (2018) research participants were overwhelmingly positive about their twinship, being compared was the aspect of being a twin which they found most difficult; Spudich (2014) also found that comparison was a behaviour that her participants found frustrating. The young adult twins within Forrási's (2023) study, found that comparison was the main cause of rivalry and conflict between twins, which was alleviated by removing sources of comparison through choosing separate activities and classes. One female identical twin coped with comparison at home and school by purposely formulating a personality which was the "bad" opposite to her twin sister, but once she had to repeat the school year and was separated from her sister, this need for such a purposeful differentiation lessened (Forrási, 2023:25). The tension between competition and comparison is explored within my research,

both in terms of the impact upon twins as individuals but also what impact this may have upon the twinship.

Additionally, the discussion of twinship may also be gendered. From a psychological perspective, some quantitative research studies show that identical twin girls spend more time together and have higher levels of codependency than identical male twins and non-identical twins of both sexes (Fischbein et al., 1990, Akerman and Suurvee 2003 and Penninkilampi-Kerola 2006). Nonetheless, this codependency can have negative consequences, with identical twin girls more likely to experience low self-esteem (Akerman and Suurvee, 2003) and psychological distress (Penninkilampi-Kerola, 2006). Ainslie (1997) also proposed that it is possible to assert twinship and feelings of closeness due to the twinship being more feminine-coded behaviour. Bacon's (2005) work with younger twins supports this theory with female participants being more forthcoming about their positive feelings of twinship.

Qualitative research has indicated that female twins may be more likely to discuss what they believe is special about their relationship, as expressing such closeness may not be viewed as a masculine behaviour, which male twins may feel less comfortable expressing (Ainslie 1997, Bacon 2010, Ncube 2018). Data from Kozlak's (1978) study, while inconclusive, indicated that females may identify more than males with being a twin, particularly in terms of dressing alike. In general, female twins stopped dressing alike at 13.5 years, 1.9 years later than the male group (age 11.6). Kozlak (1978) also posited that interdependency is more of a female-coded trait and, hence more likely to be prevalent in female twins. As my work is only with

female identical twins, it would not be able to conclusively prove that females identify more than male twins with their twin status.

### 2.5.3 Twins in Adolescence

As with singletons, adolescence is a critical time of differentiation and identity development (Bacon, 2010), when twins seek to be seen as separate individuals (Mór, 2023). Unlike singletons, however, as twins, they may need to individuate not only from their parents but also from their twin, potentially making adolescence more stressful (Ainslie 1997; Cooper 2011; Heinonen et al., 2016). As Huberman (2004:86) describes her own twin adolescence, she acknowledged that it was hard being a twin; twin adolescence was harder still, a time of identity formation challenged by the existence of her twin and feelings of competition. This sentiment of adolescence and young adulthood being an intense period of identity “work” is also expressed by Scaife (2023:104). Sandbank (1999) and Klein (2017) both argue that the work of individuation can be eased by parenting, which treats twins as individuals from early childhood. This argument builds on Burlingham’s (1952: 88) findings in a small-scale study of three pairs of identical twins, that in terms of development, twins face a “double task” of needing to adjust in their relationship with their parents and their twin from a very early age.

This construction of a separate identity will often commence by discerning differences between themselves and their co-twin (Garro et al., 2016) and defining themselves and their interests (Huberman, 2004). Määttä et al. (2016) and Bacon (2019) found that while clothes were used by their parents to signpost their twinship,

for adolescents, they become a common tool to delineate themselves as different from their twin. The choice of clothes indicates the need not only to use items available within the twins' reach but also to use them daily as a work of asserting their individuality. What other tools adolescent female identical twins may use to individuate will be examined in my research, in Question 3 as it views the evolution of the participants and their twinship through the life course.

By adolescence, many twins will have experienced a degree of separation within secondary education by either choosing or being placed into separate classes (Bacon, 2010) and this correlates with an increase in what is termed the non-shared environment as peers and school play a larger role in everyday life (Watzlawick, 2009). Whether twins can have separate friends and activities also impacts their relationship and drive to individuate from each other (Tohme, 2014). Spudich (2014:140) reports that twins must balance development and autonomy, with twins wishing for separation while also maintaining the "connectedness" of their relationship. Identity development may entail shedding some aspects of twinship (Bacon 2010). For some twins, they may deny their twin identity (Hart, 2021), or feel that they have "outgrown" it, instead viewing each other as siblings (Kozlak, 1978:116). Twins may also feel an element of peer pressure to be seen as an individual (Huberman, 2004) or that there is something "childish" about being a twin (Bacon, 2005:114). These attitudes about twins and twinship may be influenced by stereotypes held by others who interact with the twins, thus occurring at the mesosystemic level, which is discussed in more depth in Section 2.5.5.

However, the decision to resist 'performing' twinship is not usually bilateral. Instead, it seems to be one twin who will assert the desire to, for example, dress differently first; it is not necessarily vocalised as a joint decision (Bacon 2010). This may feel distressing to the other twin, who feels left behind (Noble 2014; Klein 2017) or may even feel separation anxiety at spending time apart from their twin (Noble et al., 2017). Some researchers categorise this separation as generating intense feelings of loneliness as one twin seeks to replicate with others the relationship that they have experienced with their twin (Fichtmüller 2021; Hart 2021). This potential discordance in twin behaviour and roles within the twinship will be explored further in my research as I seek to examine how the participants' twinships evolved over the life course in my third research question.

#### 2.5.4 Twinship in society

While the genetic and developmental nature of twins renders them an area of scientific fascination (Segal, 2017), it is also true that wider society also finds twins and multiples compelling, with a variety of myths and superstitions concerning twin conception and twins themselves (Aspeloff, 2013; Ncube, 2018; Segal, 2017; Stewart, 2000; Viney, 2023). Stewart (2000) posits that this fascination is because twins are doubly anomalous; two children of the same age in a family, while Segal (2017) and Ncube (2018) hold that it is also contrary to widely held concepts of human uniqueness in terms of birth and genetic makeup, with Mór (2023:82) arguing that the very similarity of identical twins in terms of physicality and voice renders them a "spectacle". This is disputed by Lewin (2018) who believes that the fascination is not about the biological factors but because many people idealise the twin relationship and long for a similar level of intimacy with another person. Alternatively, Shackle (2016:55) describes such idealisation as a "singleton gaze"

where singletons view twins through lenses of mystification and misunderstanding. This fascination impacts how others interact with twins, most notably in the frequent questions twins may be asked about being a twin by singletons. Often, twins find these questions repetitive or annoying (Case, 1996; Mór, 2023; Spudich, 2014). What other forms twin fascination may take and how twins may experience this fascination will be discussed with the participants of this study, to further explore and understand their experience of twinship, in line with Research Question 1.

Nevertheless, this fascination and idealisation of the twin relationship is something that can have a destructive impact, argues Klein (2021) and Mór (2023) causing feelings of shame or guilt among twins who feel that their relationship with their twin falls short of the ideal. In addition to this, the enchantment others have with the twin relationship can lead to unwanted curiosity. Klein (2021) reports how she is repeatedly asked why she cannot have a good relationship with her twin sister, but the same intrusiveness is not present concerning her relationship with her brother. In short, societal expectations of twins and twinship can be burdensome upon twins.

Therefore, being a twin is about more than the relationship between the twin and co-twin. Twins move through society (Bacon 2005; Stewart 2000), hence, twinship is created both by twins and within the microsystem, the social world twins live in and the social attitudes of the macrosystem. However, the socially constructed aspect of twinship is also an area of focus which has emerged comparatively recently (Bacon 2019; Stewart 2000; Thorpe and Danby, 2006). By asking my participants about their experiences and thus their interactions with others, I aim to uncover more insight into the societal pressures and influences that twinships may face, which relates to

Research questions 1 and 2 in terms of exploring the experiences of twins and the impact of twinning.

While being treated as a unit may have its roots in practicality, it is also maintained by society. Stewart (2000) states that identical twins are viewed as the epitome of twinning, with one of the most common questions parents of twins are asked is “Are they identical?” (Stewart, 2000: 120). Bacon (2005) develops this idea further, stating that one of the key characteristics of twinning is sameness. This sameness is embodied by twins, whether by physical resemblance or by being dressed alike by parents. By presenting their children recognisably as twins, parents are also able to access the reflected “star power” (Pogrebin 2009:150) of being a parent of twins. However, while Bacon (2005) focuses on the meaning of clothing, the action of dressing is missed, despite the parents clearly stating the pleasure they derived from dressing their children the same. This seeking pleasure in choosing clothes may well be a contrast to the physical and emotional challenges of caring for two babies/toddlers (Harvey et al., 2014) and a way for parents to find enjoyment during what is generally a very challenging period of parenting as all the work required to parent twin babies and toddlers is doubled. Likewise, social appreciation from others for their twins may be seen as a reward for the otherwise difficult role of parenting twins (Maguire, 2021). This idea of sameness and particularly how it may change over the life course is included within my research, alongside the nature of the attention received for this sameness because this is often viewed as the ultimate conundrum of being a twin, being an individual while looking identical to another person (Pogrebin, 2010).

Nevertheless, while the sameness of twin babies and children is seen as appealing, this is not necessarily the case for older children or adults (Bacon 2005; Stewart, 2000). Indeed, for adult twins to not be differentiated as individuals, or to be too similar is instead viewed as disturbing (Rosambeau, 1987; Bacon, 2005). Certainly, parenting twins and helping them to negotiate twins and twin relationships and their co-twin relationship, while not being overly dependent upon each other, is deemed to be of immense importance in literature aimed at the parents of twins (Noble, 2014). Particularly as much psychological discussion of twinship focuses on twins with a dysfunctional relationship due to varying degrees of over-dependence/ inadequate differentiation (Ainslie, 1997; Klein, 2017; Schave and Ciriello 1983). Hence, the picture of a well-functioning twinship is less present in the literature and this is a gap I seek to explore within my research, to develop a deeper understanding of the protective and influential factors for successful twinships.

A reason sameness in adult twins is viewed with such disdain may stem from the wider value placed on individualism within Western society (Stewart, 2000; Bacon, 2005; Ncube, 2018 and Watzlawik, 2009). Whilst those authors do not provide a contrasting view of twinship outside of the West, Cetin et al.'s (2012) work in Türkiye has a similar focus on differentiation and twins' concept of themselves as individuals as work conducted in Europe (Penninkilampi-Kerola et al. 2005). The authors also use the same Twin Relationship Questionnaire, Differentiation of Self-Short Form, and the Function of Identity Scale as Olney's (2019) work in the USA, reflecting that this aspect of twinship is of widespread interest across the globe. This may highlight the unhelpfulness of the term "Western" not only as a shorthand for industrialised countries but also as deeming an attitude as a cultural construct, without providing

insight into other cultures. Davis (2014) specifically argues that much of the unease with twins deemed as “too bonded” comes from Western ideas of self and identity. However, Davis is not able to provide any examples of non-Western societies with contrasting attitudes towards twins and therefore this argument lacks both content and rigour. Nonetheless, this awareness of cultural differences will be important when considering the transferability of my research findings.

A final aspect to consider when examining the literature concerning the interactions between twinship and society, is the emergence of a microgenre of books which seek to use twinship and twin identity to illustrate wider concepts concerning psychological and sociological development and human behaviour. Notably, all but one of these books (Wright, 1997) are authored by female twins and apart from Segal (1999), all the twin authors are also identical twins (Davis 2014; de Bres 2024; Pogrebin 2010; Sipes and Sipes 1998). Here, instead of being a passive source of fascination or experimentation, twins are repositioned as guides. As de Bres (2024:230) argues, twins can do important ‘cultural work’ by shifting a “constraining model of what it is to be a person” to benefit society more broadly, particularly in terms of how sociality and autonomy are viewed. This change in discourse is driven by the authors’ assertions that twinship is more than an unknowable state, but instead a form of relationship that has something to teach others. Whether the emergence of this literature has any impact on wider societal perceptions of twins or twinship remains to be seen.

### 2.5.5 Stereotyping and stigma

While twins may outwardly express their twinship to others, such expressions of twinship are also influenced by attitudes and beliefs in the mesosystem and exosystem of wider society, beyond the immediate family. Language itself is socially constructed and disseminates knowledge and thus, meaning (Berger and Luckmann 1966). Therefore, the language and labelling used about twins determine not only the feelings of those in the twinship but the wider societal perception of twins. Constantly being referred to as “the twins” means not only a denial of individual identity, but that society prefers and expects twins to behave as a unit, either as two facsimiles or as two opposing halves of one whole (Baxter and Diaz, 2012; Conlon, 2009). Stewart (2000) asserted that such assumptions could make twinship an unwanted burden, causing some to try to conceal their twinship. If twinship felt to be a burdensome status, it could be akin to a form of stigma, as a deviation from the norm which hinders social acceptance (Goffman, 1963).

The term stigma originates from ancient Greece, where the skin of slaves was marked with an implement to provide a visual marker of their inferior social status. The mark left by the implement was called a “stigma” and the process of being marked was called “stigmatisation” (Falk, 2001;7). However, the sociological concept of stigma and stigmatisation was introduced by Durkheim (1895) as a type of boundary setting for social groups; for a group to share a commonality, it should also be clear who possesses a stigma and should therefore be excluded from that group, and on what grounds that exclusion or stigmatisation occurs. Goffman (1963) developed this idea further by devising a categorisation of stigmas into three specific types. Firstly, there are “Abominations of the body”, which are stigma due to physical characteristics such as congenital abnormalities, then “blemishes of individual character” linked to behaviour of which society disapproves and finally, “tribal stigma”

which may be linked to race, religion, nationality and affects all members of that group (Goffman, 1963;14). For stigmata to exist, the process of stigmatisation must also occur, in which an ideology is generated to support the rationalisation of the negative societal perspective. Goffman (1963) named this rationalisation stigma theory.

Goffman's theories of stigma have been used to explore a broad spectrum of contemporary social phenomena (Bradley-Engen, 2011), so it is not unexpected that consideration of stigma and twinship is present in the socio-cultural perspectives of Stewart (2000) and Ncube (2018). Indeed, of Goffman's (1963) three types of stigmas: bodily, characterological and social collectives, it could be argued that twins, particularly identical twins, fit into all three categories. The physical similarities of twins is a physical sign of difference from the rest of society, which is often viewed as weird or unsettling to others (de Bres 2024; Prainsack and Spector 2006), likewise, the characterisation of twins as unusually or abnormally close is something that is often scrutinised by singletons (Davis, 2014; de Bres, 2023), or even viewed as a psychopathology (Hoctor, 2019) thus generating a stigma theory of twinship. Finally, it could be argued that twins and multiples are a minority group (Lagerspetz, 2023), having to live in a singleton world and forever subject to the singleton gaze (Hart, 2021). These stigmas interact and influence the stereotypes that twins face in society.

The most common public stereotype of twins is their physical similarity (Stewart 2000). Yet even physical similarity can still be regarded as uncanny, by singletons and even non-identical twins, with participants in Prainsack and Spector's

(2006:2747) research declaring that identical twins were “unnatural” or “weird.”

Nonetheless, stigma in twinship is arguably more complex, concerning not just appearance, but the inter-twin relationship itself. For Allen et al. (2019), twinship occurs in a liminal space, as the visual spectacle of twins is praised, but the intimacy twins may experience is denigrated.

The potential spectre of the excessively attached, emotionally *unhealthy* twin features in parenting books for parents of twins, which speak of raising ‘Emotionally healthy twins’ (Friedman, 2008; Lovitz, 2018). This negative depiction of twinship is echoed by many twin studies centering on whether being a twin may distort development or social relationships (Määttä et al, 2016; Scaife, 2023). This again depicts twinship as a relationship fraught with difficulties and twins as individuals with a tendency towards atypical emotional and social development.

In British literature on twinship, there is a real-life example of such a pair of maladapted twins frequently cited (Stewart 2000; Bacon 2005, 2010; Hay and Preedy 2006; Ncube 2018): June and Jennifer Gibbons. Dubbed in the media as The Silent Twins (Wallace, 1986), due to their selective mutism from childhood, they would only communicate with each other. Despite attempts at separating them, they remained “*trapped in our twinship*” and attempts at socialising with others led to a spree of vandalism and arson, which resulted in both twins being detained in Broadmoor Hospital (Leach and Gunasekara, 2023). Unsurprisingly, the narrative of The Silent Twins has also sparked public fascination, generating a feature film and a podcast (Leach and Gunasekara, 2023). Yet the emergence of the experiences of June and Jennifer Gibbons into mass media generated an alternative perspective. Instead of solely focusing on their twinship, the role of racism, due to the twins' Black ethnicity and Caribbean heritage on the twins' and its impact on the sisters' self-

chosen isolation and subsequent treatment within the criminal justice and mental health systems was queried (Als, 2000). This raises the issue that instead of a twisted relationship, the twins' lives may have been equally impacted by the racism of those within their social settings (Rogers et al., 2021).

However, while childhood is discussed extensively in Schave and Ciriello's (1983) work and Schave's later work (Klein, 2010; 2017), the perspectives of twins *during* childhood are absent. This indicates that while the pre-adult years may be formative, they are viewed as a less valuable source of information compared to adult research participants. Even in the parenting books mentioned, aimed at parents directly interacting with their twins during childhood and adolescence, Lovitz (2018) only interviews adult twins and Friedman (2008) only briefly quotes two twins at the start of one book chapter. Twins in childhood and adolescence are spoken about but not spoken to, their voices are absent and as such raises the need for research which prioritises listening to their perspectives on their own lived experiences.

Twins identifying as a unit, as opposed to two individuals, is generally considered to have resulted from inadequate parenting and may lead to difficulties in forming successful relationships outside of the twinship (Schave and Ciriello, 1983).

However, this concern about the twin relationship is not necessarily shared by the twins themselves. Parenting books detail how parents should individualise their children (Baglivi Tinglof 2007; Friedman 2008; Lovitz 2018), but twins may view their relationship very differently. Returning to Ncube's (2018) work, twinship was a source of clear joy to some interviewees. Contrary to the negative stereotype of the overdependent twinship that leads to a unit identity, the person interviewed by Ncube (2018:69) delights in identifying as a single unit with her twin, describing themselves as "*double trouble*". Rather than an inadequacy or overdependence, she portrays

their unit identity as a source of power for her and her twin, while Fichtmüller (2021:24) views her pre-separation period from her twin as "*bliss experiences*". Two identical female twins in Case's (1996) study state that they like feeling like one person. Intriguingly, as they worked as concert pianists playing duets on a single piano, their unit identity can also be considered a lucrative monetisation of the public fascination with twins. Even among twin researchers, the issue of dependency can be complex, with Case (1996) admitting that she found twins with such singular identity perturbing, but had to acknowledge that they appeared happy, while Allen et al. (2020:58) instead argues that intimacy between twins or "twintimacy" should be viewed as existing on a continuum as opposed to binary definitions of dependency. Thus, dependency in the twin relationship and how this dependency shapes the lives of twins is examined in my research to explore this further from the twin perspective.

While it is not possible to trace the genesis of the fear of the overly dependent twin, there is another stereotype of twins and twinship that has a clear birth in twin research. Koch (1966) conducted a comparatively large-scale study of 180 participants divided as equally as possible into the categories of twins: monozygotic males, monozygotic females, dizygotic same-sex pairs, and dizygotic opposite-sex pairs. Participants were aged 59-86 months (4-7 years) and had no other siblings. The parents of the twins and their teachers were interviewed, and the twins were interviewed during play and the data generated was scored using educational and developmental tests. Yet arguably the most influential aspect of Koch's (1966) work is not the results themselves, but a theory she originated, the "Prima Donna" effect. This is the concept that extra attention received by twin girls, particularly identical twin girls, for their likeness, forces them into the role of a prima donna, receiving and seeking excessive attention. Nevertheless, closer examination of Koch's work

shows that both identical and fraternal twins scored highly for affability and sociability compared with singletons, leading her to conclude “The complex of twin-singleton differences here can then scarcely be characterised as revealing any marked or uniquely prima-donna-like tendencies” (1966:193). Thus, Koch directly acknowledges that the prima donna effect is a disproved hypothesis. Despite the prima donna effect having been disproven, it has been cited in research and literature aimed at professionals and parents (Baglivi Tinglof 2007; Beauchamp and Brooks 2003; Hay 1999; Sawicki and Rogucka 1998). That the prima donna effect is still so frequently cited could be illustrative of the perniciousness of stereotypes of twins and twinship, particularly of twin girls. Therefore, it is critical that my research engages with whether the attention received for being a twin is viewed positively or negatively by participants to either counter or confirm this perception.

## 2.6 Conclusion

The most obvious deficit in the literature is the paucity of qualitative research being undertaken with twins under the age of 18, with only Bacon (2005), Formosa (2020), Määttä et al. (2016), and Tóth (2023) having conducted qualitative research with twins aged under 18. Aside from Määttä et al. (2016), who conducted research with female identical twins, aged from 15 to 50 years old, none of the other researchers have solely interviewed female identical twins. While qualitative research with adults can provide a retrospective account of the twin relationship during adolescence (Kozlak 1978, Greenwood 2018 and Ncube 2018), this is not a substitute for the voices of children themselves.

As opposed to the genetic and environmental concerns of classical quantitative twin studies (Sahu and Prasuna, 2016), qualitative research has shifted towards

exploring not just twins as individuals compared to singletons, but also the intertwined relationship or twinship (Ainslie 1997; Schave and Ciriello 1983; Zazzo 1977), generating a field of twin and twinship studies. The picture of twins and twinship which have emerged from the literature is that twins are at a nexus of relationships. The twin-parent relationship, the inter-twin relationship or twinship occurs in the microsystems, and the interactions between twins and wider society feature in the meso/exosystem, which possesses preconceptions about twins and what a twinship should entail (Stewart, 2000). This then influences the behaviour of twins (Allen et al., 2019). Balancing these relationships can become more arduous during adolescence as twins may seek to individuate not just from their parents, but each other (Ainslie 1997, Bacon, 2010, Garro et al., 2016). Furthermore, from the literature, the role of parents in the development of twins is unclear. To Schave and Ciriello (1983), Ainslie (1997) Case (1996) and guides aimed at parents (Baglivi Tinglof 2007; Lovitz 2018), parents play a major role in the development of twins and their twinship, while Bacon (2005) and Pietilä et al., (2012; 2013) are more ambiguous about the length of duration of the parental influence. The views of adolescent female identical twins on the influences upon their relationship may produce alternate perspectives on the interplay between parental actions and other parties in the microsystem, such as their twin, other siblings, friends and classmates.

While parents may be influential figures, Stewart (2000) and Bacon (2005) argue that societal perceptions of twins and twinship are critical to the experiences of twins.

Twins are expected to be similar, yet Allen et al. (2020) argue this similarity is at the same time the subject of scrutiny that twins should not be too similar or too close.

This scrutiny may generate pressure to be similar or differentiated, potentially at the

cost of developing an authentic self (Ainslie, 1997). How identical female twins perceive these societal demands and what impact they generate therefore requires further examination.

This research seeks to centre the voices of adolescent twins. Both their relationship with their twin and the evolution of their relationship will be explored. Furthermore, the twins' perspective of wider society and the preconceived ideas about twins they encounter will also be examined. The population my research focuses on is identical female twins. The gaps within the literature have provided two reasons for this choice. Firstly, female twins, particularly female identical twins, have been highlighted as being the most engaged with the idea of being twins in terms of the closeness of their twinship and levels of codependency (Fischbein, Hallencreutz and Wiklund 1990, Akerman and Suurvee 2003 and Penninkilampi-Kerola 2006). Secondly, despite the evidence from Koch's (1966) research not supporting the existence of a prima donna complex, its widespread usage in literature (Baglivi Tinglof 2007; Hay 1999 and Sawicki and Rogucka 1998) means that twins' perspective on how they feel about receiving attention for being a twin could provide important insight into a key factor in the interaction of identical twin girls with the wider world. This research explores those themes, using Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) three commonplaces of sociality, temporality, and place to examine twins' interactions with each other as they consider their past, present and future.

In summary, though the literature on adolescent twins is limited, it can be concluded that twins face expectations of similarity and may have to engage in various forms of work to assert themselves as individuals and this becomes heightened during

adolescence. The gaps in the literature have also been identified and will be explored within this thesis. These include whether the adolescent perspective of the advantages of twinship differs from those expressed by adults. How identical twins negotiate comparisons and competition and what types of roles and levels of dependency appear within twinships. Finally, what are twins' experiences of stereotypes and stigma and how do they impact the twins as individuals and their relationship with their twin.

This study aims to fill these unknowns by exploring the experiences of twins and the role twinning plays during their lives (RQ1, 2), while also examining how twinship may change over the life course (RQ3). The next chapter will detail the theoretical approaches used to attain this information while centring the voices of the participants.

# Chapter 3: Theoretical framework

## 3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter reviewed the literature on twins and twinship with a particular focus on adolescent twins. This chapter introduces Bronfenbrenner's (1979; 1993) bioecological model and the new sociology of childhood, specifically, the socially active child (Prout and James, 1997) to explore children's voices, power and experiences, thus connecting the theory to the research paradigm and research design which is outlined in Chapter 4.

## 3.2 Bronfenbrenner's bioecological model

Being a twin is a biological state, but twinship is a socially constructed relationship. The same could also be said for being a child as age is a biological factor versus childhood, which is a socially constructed concept. Bronfenbrenner's bioecological model (1979; 1993; 1994; Bronfenbrenner & Ceci, 1994; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006) posits child development as existing beyond a solely biological process, but that child development also occurs via social relationships, because children exist in a social world. These social relationships are not only those of immediate family and surroundings but also the wider and even national community; children could be influenced by and also influencers of systems outside of their physical presence.

### 3.2.1 Devising an ecology of human development

Research conducted in the Soviet Union and the United States of America led Bronfenbrenner (1970) to consider that there needs to be much greater consideration of group forces, such as families, neighbourhoods and classrooms in the role of child development. Combined with this desire for a greater consideration for children's social contexts was a criticism of developmental child psychology as "*the science of the strange behavior of children in strange situations with strange adults for the briefest possible periods of time*" (Bronfenbrenner 1977: 513).

Bronfenbrenner was not alone in this perspective, with Donaldson's (1978:58) work criticising the "*contrived circumstances*" of developmental psychology, stating that they provided an inaccurate view of children's abilities when compared to observing children in familiar social contexts. However, Bronfenbrenner (1979) combined this dismay with developmental psychology and this desire to consider the interaction between the individual and their environment, to generate the Ecological Systems Theory.

### 3.2.2 Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory

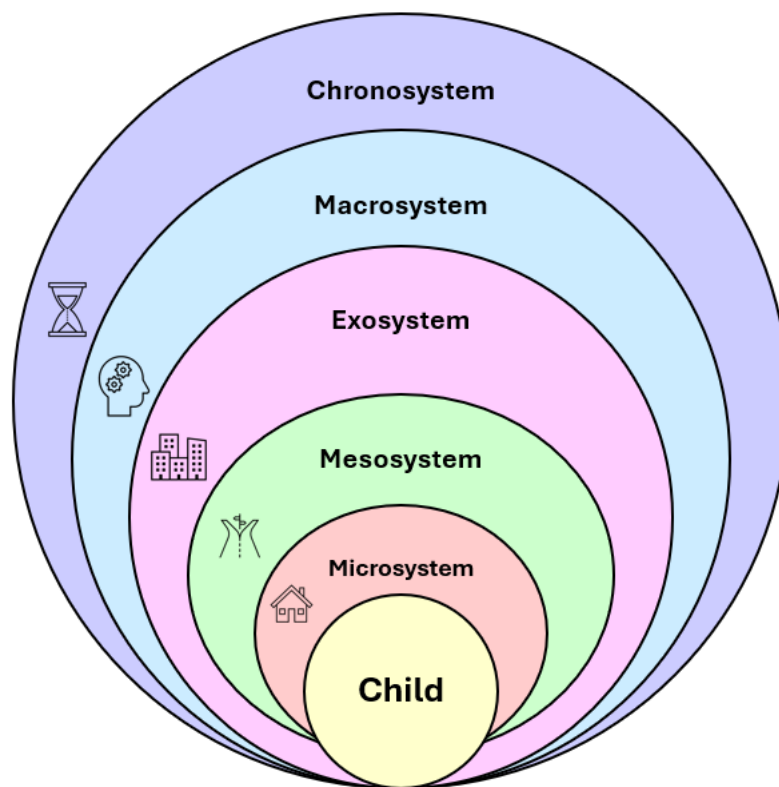
Fundamentally, Bronfenbrenner (1979) aimed to move away from dyadic concepts of child development, which focused solely on the parent-child relationship. Instead, he viewed child development as taking place in triadic dimensions as the wider contexts surrounding the child, such as family, the neighbourhood and the educational system, would all impact child development. These social contexts were conceptualised as a system of nested structures, akin to "*Russian dolls*" (Bronfenbrenner, 1979:3).

The first system is the Microsystem, which consists of those in the child's immediate surroundings. Home, school and play areas and those the child encounters within them, all feature. My research will look at the Microsystem experienced by individual participants, but also the interactions between participants, as a dyad. Any interactions between Microsystems where the child also participates is termed the Mesosystem, for example, a school parents' evening (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Identifying the mesosystems in a child's life is important, as the experiences and influences between microsystems can affect the development of the child, with Bronfenbrenner (1986) using the example of events in the home setting impacting a child's progress at school and vice versa. The Exosystem is a setting where the child is not present yet is still affected by events which occur here (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Examples of settings in the exosystem include the parental workplace or school governance meetings, as both are places where children are not usually present yet can impact the life of the child (Bronfenbrenner, 1986). Finally, the Macrosystem is the wider culture the child lives in incorporating national and international factors such as culture, legislation and government (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

Later Bronfenbrenner (1986:724) added another system to the theory, the Chronosystem, as he stated that this axis of analysis "*makes possible examining the influence on the person's development of changes (and continuities) over time in the environments in which the person is living*". These developments could be considered normative, like puberty, or non-normative such as an unexpected

bereavement (Bronfenbrenner, 1986). Hence, with the chronosystem, the impact of time upon the persona and their environment is both encapsulated.

These systems were later categorised into various concentric systems as shown in Figure 3.1.



*Figure 3.1 Adapted from Bronfenbrenner's bioecological model (1979; 1993)*

### 3.2.3 From ecological systems to bioecological model

Another evolution of Bronfenbrenner's model was a greater focus, not just on the contexts surrounding the individual, but the personal characteristics of the individual and the developmental processes that they experienced. Rosa and Tudge (2013)

categorised the evolution of Bronfenbrenner's work into three phases, noting this evolution was not only the result of Bronfenbrenner's collaborations with others, for example, Bronfenbrenner and Ceci, (1994); Bronfenbrenner and Morris, (1998, 2006), but also his incorporation of the work of other theorists such as Lewin (1935), Vygotsky (1979) and Elder (1985).

However, Tudge et al. (2009:198) argue that the evolving nature of Bronfenbrenner's theory, such as the addition of the chronosystem have resulted in "conceptual confusion" as researchers and practitioners often use "outdated" versions of the theory.

In the final phase of his work, Bronfenbrenner named the four properties of his bioecological model as Process, Person, Context and Time, or PPCT (Bronfenbrenner and Ceci, 1994; Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 1996).

These elements were defined by Bronfenbrenner and Morris (1998) as follows:

- Process: the interactions between a person and the people, symbols and objects within their immediate environment.
- Person: the characteristics of the individual which influence both their own development and their interactions with others. Bronfenbrenner and Morris (1996) placed these characteristics into three categories: Demand, Resources and Force. Demand is physical characteristics such as age and race. Resources are mental and emotional resources like intelligence and knowledge. While Force is the characteristics of personality and temperament.
- Context: the micro, meso, exo and microsistemas outlined in Bronfenbrenner's original ecological systems theory (1979).

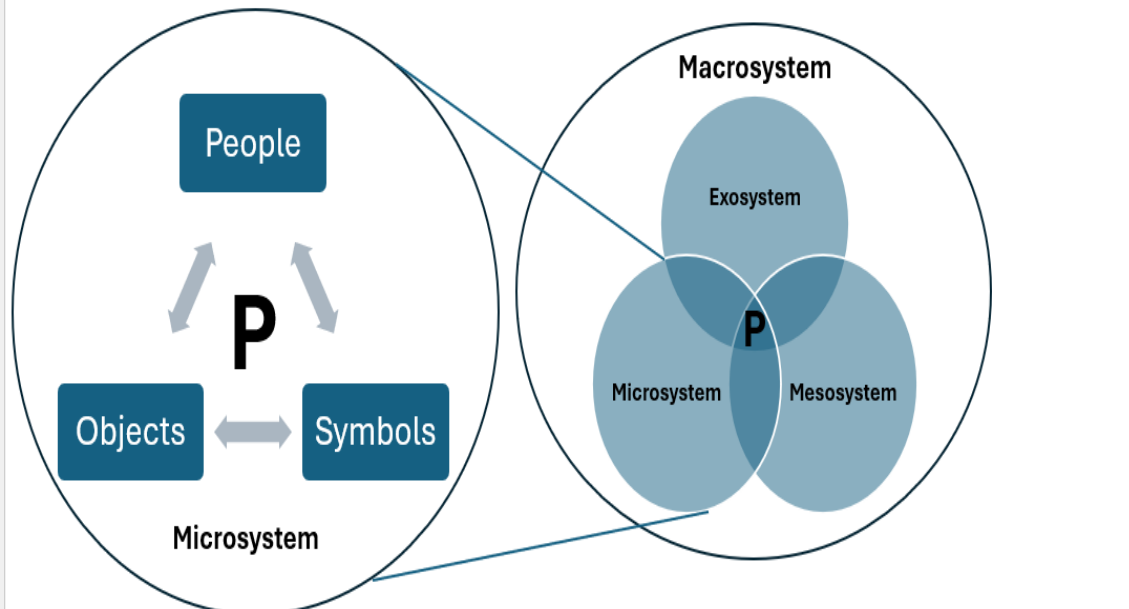
- Time: This again is subdivided into three categories. The microtime occurring during specific activities, the mesotime which relates to consistently occurring activities, and finally macrotime, which is otherwise known as the chronosystem and focuses on events through the life course of the individual (Tudge et al., 2008)

Tudge (2008) argued that the nested schematic of the Ecological systems theory, as shown in Figure 3.1 was no longer a sufficiently accurate depiction of the complexity of how these elements operated and developed an alternative visual representation for the bioecological model as illustrated in Figure 3.2

**Within this model, P = Person**

The microsystem shows them engaged in proximal processes with surrounding people, objects and symbols.

The microsystem, mesosystem and exosystem are interconnected, both influencing and being influenced by the developing person.



*Figure 3.2 A representation of the PPCT Model of Bronfenbrenner's bioecological Theory adapted from Tudge (2008).*

A focus of this later model was on the role of the individual in the developmental mechanism of Proximal Processes: regular interactions between the person and their environment over a prolonged time (Bronfenbrenner & Ceci, 1994). Examples of proximal processes are “*playing with a young child, child-child activities, group or solitary play, reading, learning new skills*” (Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 1998:996). Bronfenbrenner viewed proximal processes as having positive impacts on development, with negative environments disrupting the occurrence of proximal processes (Bronfenbrenner and Evans, 1998), yet Merçon-Vargas et al. (2020) dispute this, stating that a consistently negative environment would also be

producing its own proximal processes. However, it could be argued that by categorising the outcomes of proximal processes into competence and dysfunction in terms of behaviour and functioning, Bronfenbrenner and Morris (1998:1001) are already acknowledging that proximal processes are influenced by environment, stating that *“The greater developmental impact of proximal processes on children growing up in disadvantaged or disorganized environments to be expected to occur mainly for outcomes reflecting developmental **dysfunction**”* [emphasis in original].

Another criticism is the role of culture within the model. While Garcia Coll et al. (1996:1892) felt that global developmental theories have value in guiding studies of normal development of minority groups, which in this case were children of ethnic minority backgrounds, there remained a need to place *“social position and social stratification constructs at the core rather than at the periphery”* of child development. To do so, Garcia Coll et al. (1996) developed the Integrative Model for the Study of Developmental Competencies in Minority Children, which though describing development as a linear process in totality, consisted of eight interconnected variables of Social Position, Prejudice, Segregation, Environments, Adaptive Culture, Child Characteristics, Family and Developmental Competencies. This was to establish the chain of causal effect, as prejudice impacts environment, which impacts opportunity, impacting on culture and finally development, thus providing a more complete view of the exogenous influences upon child development (Fuller and Garcia Coll, 2010). Velez-Agosto et al. (2017) had similar concerns, believing that seeing culture as only existing within the macrosystem and thus externally to the microsystems does not accurately convey the role culture plays within children’s development and daily lives. Devising a Cultural Microsystem Model, where

*“systems flow from one another and interact with one another, not bounded and distinctly, but fluidly”* underlines the place of cultural pathways within transactional modes of development (Vélez-Agosto et al., 2017:906). However, while Garcia Coll is a named author in Vélez-Agosto et al., (2017), the integrative model created by Garcia Coll et al., (1996) is not mentioned, thus it is left unclear to the reader if Garcia Coll still views the Integrative Model for the Study of Developmental Competencies in Minority Children as a relevant model.

Nonetheless, there are other criticisms of the structure of the Ecological Model. Watling Neal and Neal (2013: 727) who observe that *“the ecological environment is an overlapping arrangement of structures, each directly or indirectly connected to the others by the direct and indirect social interactions of their participants”*, suggesting that a networked approach, which recognises that interactions occur across settings, may be more valid and more precisely define the patterns of interactions occurring within a system.

Despite these concerns, Bronfenbrenner’s (1979; 1993) three-dimensional theory of the developing child, not as a passive subject of biological processes, but as an individual being with their own characteristics and experiences who relates to their surroundings and develops in response to these stimuli, remains very influential, particularly within the sociology of childhood (Bronfenbrenner 2005, Bendtro, 2006). Furthermore, it has been widely utilised to examine the lives of children in a variety of settings. O’Leary and Moloney (2020) explored the experiences of young children (aged 3–6 years) with autism within the Irish early years education system, using Bronfenbrenner as an ontology to produce the premise that the lived experiences and voices of children are collectively co-constructed. Whereas Tamlyn (2002) used

the bioecological model as a framework to understand the phenomenon of interest, Emotional Based School Avoidance. Here, the bioecological model was used to explore the interactions children have at home and school at microsystemic and mesosystemic levels, while also considering the influence of wider school and educational policy at the exo and macrosystemic levels. The bioecological model was again used as a theoretical framework in Lin's (2017) research on resilience within children attending Taiwanese public schools to conceptualise the factors at an individual and ecological level which influence the development of resilience. However, while finding bioecological model to be a suitable theoretical framework for capturing her findings, Lin (2017) agreed with Velez-Agosto et al. (2017) that there needs to be a broader understanding of the role of culture with bioecological model and that some of the systems need to be updated to incorporate online interactions, a critique shared by Navarro and Tudge (2023) who suggest that microsystems should be divided into physical and virtual.

### 3.3 The socially active child

This concept of children as socially active agents was further developed by James and Prout (1997) into what could be considered a new paradigm for the sociology of childhood. A central feature of this paradigm is that children are active, not passive participants in their own lives and the lives and societies around them. This vision of children and childhood was underpinned by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) (1989). The UNCRC (1989) outlined that children not only had the right to be protected, but also to specialised provision and furthermore the right to participate, as stated in Article 12 "*States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views*

*freely in all matters affecting the child*". Therefore, this conceptualisation of children as rights bearers, and that children are social agents and children's lives are worthy of study in their own right; the perspective of the child is a source of knowledge of itself, as opposed to children being mere objects of study as greatly influenced the emergence of the field of childhood studies and the research conducted within that field (Clark et al., 2014). Hence, research should be structured to enable children's voices and participation. Therefore, this sociology deems children as rights bearers with participatory rights.

However, voice remains a contested term. Komulainen (2007;3) suggests that while much research within children's studies and broader fields aims to "*give children a 'voice'*", what is actually meant by the voice of the child remains ambiguous.

Furthermore, by viewing the voice solely as what is verbalised by the child, the social contexts which may determine what is said and what is unsaid are ignored. Mayes (2019;1193) broadens this view of voice by instead describing voice as emerging from "*relations among objects, spaces, affects, bodies, discourses, texts, and theory*". Additionally, Mayes (2019) posits that these relations are not occurring in a neutral space and are skewed by power differentials between the child and the usually adult listener. As James (2007) observed, even when children are directly quoted within research, it still remains that the choice of quotes and their framing will have been choices made by the researcher, not the child. When researchers discuss increasing children's agency and therefore their voice, or rather the authenticity of that voice, implicitly stated is the perception of power and therefore voice as something adults have overall control over (Spyrou, 2011). This can occur even in the context of discussing children's rights, as Coyne (2006:69) describes the

need to “*explore strategies that will give children a voice*”, thus implying that a voice is given to the child by adults as opposed to something a child inherently has. There is also the critique that categorising the voice only as verbal statements is phonocentric (Mercieca and Mercieca, 2026). Therefore, experiences or feelings which are more difficult to verbalise or “beyond words” may be excluded from research data, generating a disembodied and disconnected concept of communication, which is removed from children’s embodied and socialised contexts of experience (Cooper, 2023;75).

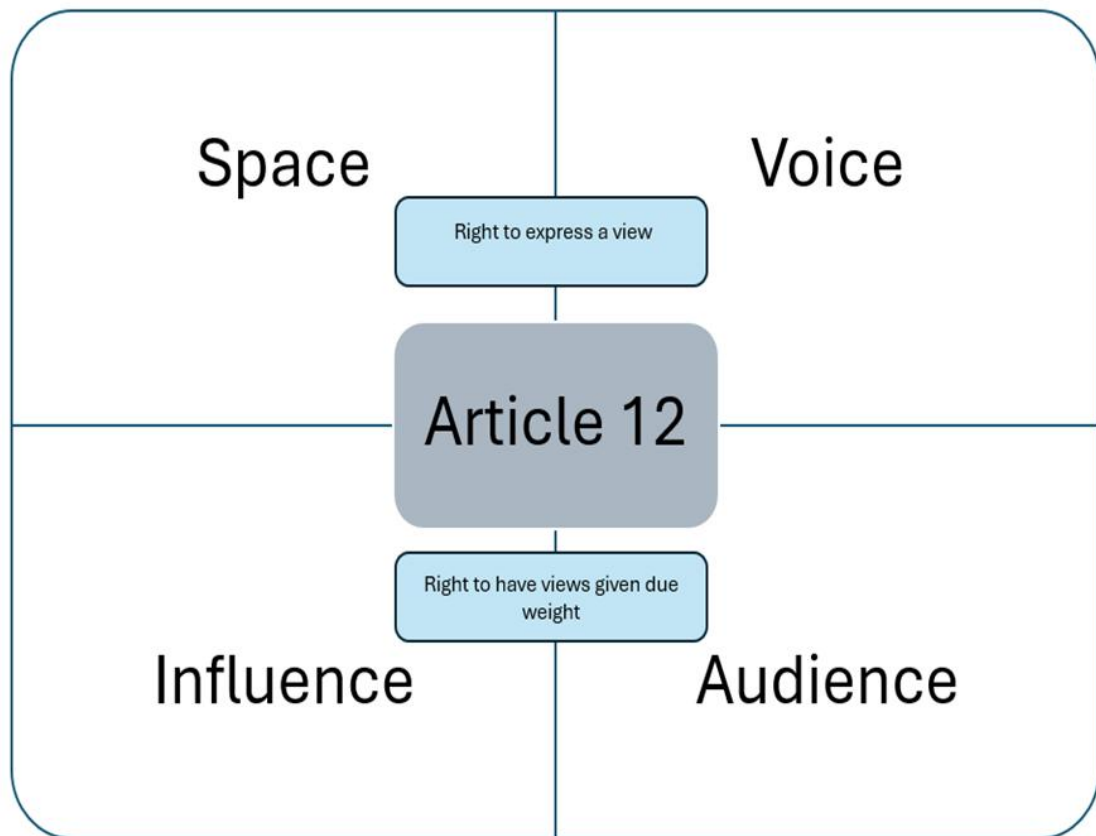
To counter these issues, Spyrou (2011) suggest that researchers need to have greater reflexivity and transparency about the processes through which knowledge about children is produced. While Cooper et al. (2025) suggest using multiple sources of information to build narratives which better illustrate the multifaceted nature of lived experiences. In this thesis, voice is theorised as relational and therefore constructed (Facca, et al., 2020). Methodologically, as a work of narrative inquiry, this thesis acknowledges that narratives of experience are co-created between the participant and the researcher (Creswell and Poth, 2019) and that process of co-creation is discussed in Chapter 4, Section 6.1 and reflected upon in Chapter 7, Section 7.6. Thus, the participant voice in this research is operationalised as a process. This process incorporates two interviews at different time periods, the latter of which used photo-elicitation and both interviews included a member checking stage, along with careful monitoring of body language (Chapter 4, Section 10), to assess the participants’ levels of comfort and engagement with the questions and that they were consenting to remain in the interview and answer questions. Recognising voice as constructed is congruent with the concept of participation

utilised in this research, that of Lundy (2007), which defines participation as a relational and socially situated process, as opposed to a verb solely enacted by the child.

### 3.3.1 Lundy's model of participation

When considering increasing the direct involvement of children, participation becomes a key concept. Hart's Ladder of Participation (1992) and Treseder's subsequent adaptation, Degrees of Participation (1997), viewed child participation as measurable in terms of what children and young people do. Lundy (2007) felt that both Hart (1992) and Treseder's (1997) models ignored the role of adults in enabling or hindering the participation of children and young people. Therefore, instead of using a model which focused on children's actions, as illustrated in Figure 3.3, Lundy provides a multidimensional way of interpreting and implementing Article 12 of the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child (UNCRC, 1989). Firstly, Article 12 is bisected into two halves: the right to express a view, and the right to have that view given due weight. For the right to express a view, Lundy attaches the elements of Space and Voice. This is where children are provided with the opportunity to express themselves. For their views to be given due weight, children require an audience to hear those views. The third element of Audience must do more than merely passively listen, this requires a fourth element, that of Influence, where the views of children are acted upon. Influence is integral to children's voices being given their

due weight as stated in the UNCRC (Kennan et al., 2019).



*Figure 3.3 Adapted from Lundy's Model of Child Participation*

The Lundy model works not only as a conceptual framework for analysing child participation, but also as a practice tool for professionals serving or conducting research with children (Strömpl and Luhamaa, 2020). However, Lansdown (2018:9), stated that there were nine additional quality requirements to be used alongside and that participation should always be:

- transparent and informative
- voluntary
- respectful
- relevant
- child-friendly
- inclusive

- supported by training for adults
- safe and sensitive to risk
- accountable

While not citing Bronfenbrenner (1979; 1993) directly, Lansdown (2018) also stated that adolescent participation takes place within a social ecology as they are impacted by local and national factors, from family and peers to the government and environment. This demonstrates a coherence between Bronfenbrenner's (1979; 1993) theory and Lundy's (2007) model, and will be further outlined in Chapter 4, Section 4.4.3 when discussing and justifying the methodological decisions made within this study.

Furthermore, facilitating child participation is not solely about following a model, but adhering to the necessity of child participation as a "*philosophical commitment*" which underpins all work with children (Davidson, 2017:228). Hence, it has been suggested that an ecological perspective of child participation is required, which builds upon Lundy's (2007) model, considering levels of participation, the frequency of participation and the extent to which participation is standardised within systems (Gal, 2016). Yet, what participation means to children should not be assumed, as voice may be just one aspect of participation to children (Twum-Danso Imoh and Okyere, 2020). Likewise, what happens after participation is also important, with later work from Lundy (2018) emphasising the importance of meaningful feedback, which is a perspective shared by Kennan et al., (2018) after their use of Lundy's model (2007) with children in the Irish child welfare system.

Accordingly, there has been a shift from children being viewed as objects of research to participants to conduct research with (Groundwater et al, 2015). Hence, the consideration of what participatory methods could be used in my research, which is discussed further in Chapter 4, Section 4.6. The next section of this chapter formulates the theoretical models discussed into a theoretical framework

### 3.4 Theoretical framework

Within my study, by looking at the realm of experience, particularly experiences throughout the life course, I am examining child development from the perspective of the developing child. Bronfenbrenner's (1979; 1993) bioecological model is therefore congruent with the examination of the development of the research participants while also considering their interactions with others and how both of these evolve over time. It is also congruent with the ontological perspective of social constructionism within the research and that childhood and twinship are constructed within societal influences. The bioecological model (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) will be used to generate a theoretical understanding of the society in which the twins live, while also being used as a lens for analysing their experiences and situating them within the broader literature of twins and twinship studies.

As this research seeks to explore the experiences of adolescent identical female twins, Lundy's (2007) model of participation can be used as an additional lens to explore how participants interact with their environments and the mechanisms of influence they affect and are affected by. The social constructionist paradigm of this work, combined with the stance of children as social actors (James and Prout, 1997) and twinship as a social phenomenon (Stewart, 2000), lends itself to a theoretical framework which enables the examination of the interplay between interactions,

experiences and development, meaning that Bronfenbrenner's bioecological model (1979) is a fitting addition to the theoretical framework.

Thus, in this thesis, the twin theoretical poles are:

1. Twinship is a social construction of a biological relationship.
2. Children are social agents with the right to express their views on matters relating to them.

This sense-making is a developmental process, hence the need for a research methodology which views the participant as an evolving being. Both theoretical poles have had an impact on the selection of research methodology, which is narrative inquiry and subsequently the method of initial data analysis, Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) three commonplaces framework of sociality, temporality and place. This framework provides an inquiry space that explores participants' individual feelings within their social and geographical contexts and lived history.

### 3.5 Conclusion

This chapter has explored theories that place children in a sociological context. Bronfenbrenner's (1979; 1993) bioecological model theorises child development as a process within nested social settings. Prout and James (1997) assert that children are socially active beings who are influenced and can influence those around them, while Lundy's model (2007) examines how children can participate in society. As this thesis aims to understand experiences from a socially constructed viewpoint and twinship from a social perspective, it is necessary to consider the world of the child and the theories underpinning this worldview and how they structure the conduct of the research as a theoretical framework.

By exploring how being a twin has influenced the participants' lives, I am asking for a story of twinship, a narrative. For Bruner (1991), our words are also storied into a coherent narrative construction of reality. In the next chapter, the methodological decisions to conduct this study are discussed.

# Chapter 4: Methodology

## 4.1 Introduction

Following on from Chapter 3, which explored theoretical models pertinent to this study, Chapter 4 will introduce and discuss the research design, paradigm and data collection methods, to aid in answering the three research questions. In addition to this, research positionality, integrity and ethical considerations will also be discussed.

## 4.2 Research aims

The paucity of current qualitative research on twins in general, both identical and fraternal twins, means little is known about the experiences of identical twin girls from their perspective. From some quantitative research studies, it is reported that identical twin girls have higher levels of codependency than identical male twins, and non-identical twins of both sexes (Akerman and Suurvee 2003; Fischbein, Hallencreutz and Wiklund 1990 and Penninkilampi-Kerola 2006). However, this codependency can have reportedly negative consequences, with identical twin girls more likely to experience low self-esteem (Akerman and Suurvee, 2003) than other twins.

Obtaining a more in-depth knowledge of the experiences of identical twin girls requires research in which they are the sole focus. To gain this knowledge of twinship during the adolescent period is of particular interest as adolescence is a time of greater challenges for twins. While adolescents seek independence from their parents, twins also seek independence from each other, making adolescence both a pivotal and potentially stressful time for twins (Ainslie, 1997; Smith, 2007; Zhou, 2015).

Twins are a growing population (Human Embryology and Fertilisation Authority, 2018) and professionals must understand the realities of twinship as opposed to stereotyped ideas of how twins should behave (Ncube, 2018). This is particularly the case for identical twin girls, as they are arguably the most stereotyped and therefore the most misunderstood category of twins. Adding to this body of knowledge about identical twin girls could therefore benefit twins in educational, healthcare settings and elsewhere (Sandbank 1999; Hay and Preedy 2006; Bekkhus et al., 2011). A better understanding of the lives of twins could ensure that children's services are aware of what additional requirements or preferences twins may have, as opposed to relying on preconceived ideas of twins and twin behaviour (Hay and Preedy, 2006). Thus, this narrative study aims to explore the experiences of adolescent identical female twins in England, to dispel stereotypes, and provide greater insights into their lives, with the overall aim to educate professionals who interact with twins so that practice becomes more meaningful, relevant and supportive.

### 4.3 Research questions

To achieve this, the following research questions were generated from the gaps within the literature.

1. What are the experiences of identical female twins in England?
2. What is the role of twinning in the life course of identical female twins?
3. What is the evolving nature of twinship over their life course?

Question One echoes the core aim of the study, acknowledging that they are an under-researched yet stereotyped group. However, to explore those experiences in

more detail, an examination of other features in the lives of identical female twins is required. The phrasing of the questions reflects the life course approach taken by Pietilä et al. (2013) when examining the experiences of elderly twins. Hence, Question Two explores being a twin during the life course in terms of both personal perception and their twinning or being perceived as a twin by others. Question Three focuses on how the twinship relationship has evolved through time, offering a unique perspective in the development of the twinship in contrast to the adult perspectives currently within the literature (Greenwood, 2018; Ncube, 2018; Rosambeau, 1987)

## 4.4 Research paradigm

As the ontology and epistemology sections will detail, this research is rooted in a social constructionist paradigm, because the worldview it is situated in is one where meanings are created socially (Gergen, 2015). Therefore, although the study features people in a specific biological relationship: twins, it is the experience of twinship in society and the twins' perceptions of societal expectations of twins that are being explored. This section will examine the ontological and epistemological stances of this research and connect them to the chosen theoretical frameworks used within this study

### 4.4.1 Ontology

To discuss identical twins via an ontological perspective of social constructionism seems initially incongruous, as being an identical twin is an undeniable physical reality. However, as social constructionism is not a monolithic framework and contains differing positions on the nature of reality, further clarification is required as to why this ontological position has been selected. Although Berger and Luckmann argued that reality is socially constructed, they also conceded a biological element to

this reality, “*the human organism is developing biologically while already standing in a relationship to its environment*” (Berger and Luckmann, 1966;66). This is a recognition of physiological limits and, therefore, objective facts. What they do consider socially constructed are the human subjectification and signification of these objective facts within interactions and environments. While Searle (1969) does not refer to Berger and Luckmann directly, he does introduce new terminology to social constructionism, referring to “*brute facts*” such as geographical location and the laws of physics, as compared to “*institutional facts*”, which are facts which exist due to the existence of human institutions (Searle, 1969;50). Bloor (1976) countered this, contending that all knowledge, including the empirical, should be treated as material for investigation by social science, deeming this the “strong programme” (Bloor, 1976:3).

However, Hacking (1999:24) countered that Bloor’s stance was rooted in philosophy, not sociology and that while some may decry “universal social constructionism” it is difficult to identify any social constructionists who claim everything is socially constructed as opposed to “local” elements. Nonetheless, Smith also (2010;122) categorised social constructionism as being in two different categories. The first is the “strong” category, which claims that our reality and everything we encounter within it is socially constructed. The second is the “weak” or “realist” version, which appears to be in alignment with both Berger and Luckmann(1966) and Searle’s (1969) conceptualisation of social constructionism, as Smith (2010;122) defines that what people perceive as reality is shaped by “*objective reality but also by their sociocultural contexts*”.

The realist position within social constructionism coheres with the ontology of twins and twinship adopted by this thesis: while being a twin is an objective reality, twinship is an objectivation of subjective reality. This informs the research design, which centres on co-constructed narratives, as opposed to seeking objective truths, while also having clearly delineated inclusion and exclusion criteria. Twins exist in a twinship having a relationship both with each other and wider society as twins (Stewart, 2000). The difference between being a twin and twinship can be further understood using the theories of Berger and Luckmann(1966), concerning objective versus subjective reality. This means that twinship is loaded with connotations in society beyond the birth of two children from the same pregnancy. Primarily this is the expectation of sameness (Bacon, 2005; Watzlawick, 2009) and not only in physical appearance but in interests and personality. These societal assumptions about twins form wider expectations of how twins should behave and subsequently 'perform' twinship.

Therefore, how twins experience the world is not fixed, but is instead built on multiple societal interactions and influences, such as family, the education systems and the wider societal perception of twinship (Schave and Ciriello, 1983; Segal, 1999; Bacon 2005). The social construct of twinship is illustrated by the variance in the perception of twins within diverse cultures, where twins may be viewed dichotomously as either a blessing or a bad omen (Aspeloff, 2013). For example, among the Yoruba of Western Africa, the birth of twins was once viewed as a curse but is now viewed as a fortuitous event (Stewart, 2003). Whereas in Native American tribes such as the Chippewa and Yuma, twins were traditionally viewed as immortal souls who required special care to stay in the earthly realm (Pector, 2003).

As my research involved working with children, the ontological perspective of children and childhood also needed to be considered. A new paradigm for the sociology of childhood was further developed by Prout and James (1997) into the concept of children as socially active agents. A central feature of this concept is that children are active, not passive, participants in their own lives and the lives and societies around them. As children are social agents and children's lives are worthy of study in their own right, the perspective of the child is a source of knowledge of itself, as opposed to children being mere objects of study. This ontological perspective has been incorporated into the selection of the concept of the socially active child as a theoretical framework (Prout and James, 1997). Hence, the knowledge of adolescent identical female twins and twinship of interest in this research is itself socially generated, which connects to the ontological position of social constructionism.

#### 4.4.2 Epistemology

Building upon this reality, it is understood that knowledge itself is not fixed but is instead created in various social or cultural contexts (Braun and Clarke, 2014). This knowledge is obtained as subjective evidence, which is generated by the relationship between the researcher and the participant, and this evidence generation occurs throughout the research (Lincoln and Guba 1994; Creswell and Poth, 2018). This subjective stance moves this research into the realm of qualitative enquiry.

The first research question seeks to explore what the experiences of adolescent female identical twins are, which would be an interpretivist perspective. However, research questions two and three focus on the impact of twinning and then the evolving nature of the twinship relationship. These questions move beyond the

personal experience to instead explore the twins' perspective of being a twin in society and the evolution of their relationship over their life course. This coheres with the social constructionist epistemology posited by Berger and Luckmann(1966), which is that it is the interactions and particularly the conversations between individuals within society, which generate knowledge. Therefore, the knowledge produced is not just of the individual's experiences. Instead, it is also how the individual makes sense of those experiences to examine how those experiences affect their self-perception and how they feel they are perceived by others. This view of the individual influencing and being influenced by their social context coheres with Bronfenbrenner's (1979; 1993) bioecological model, which views child development as an individual and sociological process, with the child at the centre of interdependent nested contexts. Consequently, from my chosen ontological and epistemological stances there is a clear connection with the theoretical framework outlined in Chapter 3, Section 3.4. These stances also influenced the choice of research design as discussed in the next chapter.

## 4.5 Research design: narrative inquiry

The phenomenon to be researched should also be reflected in the choice of research methodology. This choice should ideally proceed linearly, beginning with the nature of the enquiry and its ontological and epistemological underpinnings (Cohen et al., 2017). Lundy and McEnvoy (2011:141) stated that researchers need to "*develop a methodology that engages children and supports them to form views freely*". The omission of the voices of twins within research means that accessing and centring the voices of twins is integral to the design of this research. Therefore,

the choice of research design was critical to ensuring that the voices of participants were centred within the study.

Creswell and Poth (2018) recommend that if the research focus is to explore the life of an individual, narrative inquiry may be the most suitable approach. Narrative inquiry is a qualitative methodology that explores experiences via stories as told by the research participant (Clandinin, 2016). Through the sharing of these stories, it is possible not only to hear the lived experiences of individuals but also how they may see themselves or view their identity (Creswell, 2013). Such an exploration of perception and identity can therefore provide insight into the experience of twinship. However, it must also be acknowledged that these narratives are co-created with the researcher. In narrative inquiry, the researcher does not separate themselves from the data (Clandinin, 2006). Furthermore, narrative inquiry was developed to gain access to the experiences of groups in society, which were often previously unheard of, such as ethnic minorities or the socio-economically disadvantaged (Clandinin, 2016). This telling of stories is considered to be emancipatory as it potentially challenges established narratives (Weiss and Johnson-Koenke, 2023), which coheres with the sociological understanding of childhood, underpinning this study. With its emphasis on the required interaction between children and adults, Lundy's (2007) work illustrates, as her work is titled, "*Voice is not enough*"; instead, the process of children speaking and adults listening needs to be mapped. Thus, what is referred to as the "voice" of the child is, in itself, socially constructed (Komulainen, 2007:13), and there may be many factors such as setting, time and method of communication which impact what the child says, and the adults hear (Spyrou, 2011). Thus, narrative inquiry connects with the underlying theoretical framework of this research.

A criticism of the narrative approach is that it can be overly focused on the individual, without a wider context or awareness of the roles of others (Groundwater-Smith et al, 2015). Nonetheless, narrative inquiry does not aim to provide an accurate retelling of past events to generate an objective truth but instead explores participants' interpretations of the past (Riessman, 2005).

While narrative inquiry may initially seem to be concerned solely with interviewing as a data collection method, data can also consist of field notes, observations and photographs (Clandinin and Connelly 2000). Indeed, as there is no fixed agreement as to what a narrative is; there is significant methodological variance within narrative inquiry (Riessman 2005). This means that while Clandinin (2016:51) emphasises that narrative inquiry is a "slow" research methodology which involves long periods of being embedded in the research setting, Pietilä et al (2013) interviewed their participants for approximately one hour to generate their narrative data. Mishler (1995) asserts that as a problem-centred, multi-disciplinary form of research, narrative inquiry is inherently going to generate a variety of approaches. It is this lack of boundaries regarding what narrative inquiry is which can make it a challenging qualitative approach (Cresswell and Poth, 2018).

A way to gain clarity when considering using narrative is to consider the type of narrative the research question seeks to obtain, a narrative of events or a narrative of experiences. Returning to my research questions, I seek to explore the experiences of adolescent identical female twins. Examining experiences as opposed to events is an adept method of generating narratives which make sense of their lives, who they are and how they view themselves (Squire, 2008). Lawler (2008: 38) extended this argument further, by stating that individuals use stories to make sense of their place within the world, that our social world is, "storied". Storied

accounts contain central characters and actions which occur within a plot.

Generating narratives is not a linear event, even if the narrative is being told chronologically and participants refer to past events even while telling a story that occurred in more recent times. This is because narratives are not fixed but are created between the teller and the listener (Clandinin, 2013). Furthermore, narratives exist in a state of flux, subject to revision and reinterpretation depending both on who is being told the narrative and any subsequent life experiences of the narrator (Lawler, 2008). Thus, it is the meaningfulness, as opposed to the accuracy of a narrative, which is relevant (Squire, 2008).

This prioritising of meaning over accuracy applied to my research as participants could have and indeed some did have diverging narratives concerning past events. This research aims to explore experiences in the plural sense and narrative inquiry makes space for competing meanings and understandings. The conceptual underpinnings of the research influenced the choice of research methods. An important part of viewing children as socially active agents (James and Prout, 1997) is for researchers to examine their preconceptions about the capability of children and consider research methods which enable children to be research partners as opposed to research subjects (Alderson and Morrow, 2011). Therefore, the collaborative view of data collection embedded within narrative inquiry needed to be reflected within my data collection methods (Creswell and Poth 2018).

## 4.6 Data collection methods

The data collection strategy consisted of semi-structured interviews and a photo-elicitation interview. Data was collected in two stages as set out in Table 4.1 below:

*Table 4.1. Stages of data collection.*

<b>Stage</b>	<b>Data collection method</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Participants</b>
Stage one	Interview via Microsoft (MS) Teams	August–September 2021	All participants were interviewed together except one pair.
Stage two	Photo-elicitation Interview via MS Teams	January–February 2022	All participants were interviewed individually

#### 4.6.1 Interviewing children and young people

Interviews have traditionally been an important tool for data collection in qualitative research (Braun and Clarke, 2014). If interviews are conducted face-to-face or via video calling, the researcher gains both verbal and non-verbal information, such as body language and gestures from the participant, adding to the richness of the data (Redlich-Amirav and Higginbottom, 2014). This richness is particularly important to narrative inquiry, where the data is co-created with the participant (Creswell, 2013). In narrative inquiry, the relationship between the researcher and the participant is at the centre of the research and again, direct encounters are cited as integral to building this relationship (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000). The participants in this research are aged 10–16 years of age. For children and young people, interviews can be one of the most feasible methods for them to talk about their experiences in

depth, particularly as compared to focus groups and surveys, they have more time to consider the questions and to express their answers (Brady and Graham, 2019).

A further aspect to consider during interviews is that an integral aspect of narrative inquiry is that the narratives are not obtained from participants, but are instead “co-constructed” (Riessman, 2008:32) or “co-composed” (Clandinin et al., 2016:137) by the participant and the researcher. Placing this concept within the wider context of researching with children and young people, means that typical concerns about ensuring the authenticity of the voice of the child (Davidson, 2017) are to some degree lessened, as narrative inquiry does not seek to obtain singular, verifiable accounts, but the stories from fluid lives, with whatever gaps or caveats that may entail (Clandinin et al., 2016).

An issue to consider in the first interview was if the participants should be interviewed individually or as a twin dyad. In Bacon's (2005) study, twins were interviewed together, and then separately. Bacon found little difference between the answers. Being treated as a unit instead of an individual can be upsetting for twins (Ncube, 2018). Nonetheless, some twins may find it more comfortable to be interviewed alongside their twins. This is because a paired interview, where a child and a peer are interviewed together can again help alleviate the power imbalance between the child and young person (CYP) participants and the adult researcher (Shaw, 2011).














Both interviewing CYP individually or in pairs have positive and negative aspects. Solo interviews can be seen as more private and CYP may feel more at ease, whereas for other participants it can seem overly formal and intimidating (Flewitt, 2014). Paired interviews may mean that one participant feels overshadowed, yet

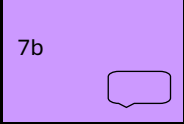

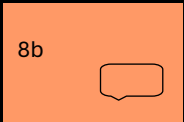
these interviews also mean the researcher gains the interplay and communication between participants (Brady and Graham, 2019). Therefore, in keeping with the participatory ethos of the research, I allowed the participants to choose if they wished to be interviewed alone or alongside their twin. In the Stage one interviews, all participants except for one twin pair, chose to be interviewed together. In the Stage two interviews, all participants were interviewed separately, to ensure that they had the opportunity to speak as an individual, without any potential influence from their twin. Having dual and individual interviews allowed me to see the interplay between twins but also enabled them to share stories and perspectives that they may not have been willing to share in front of each other.

#### 4.6.2 Participants

In total, there were 16 participants, from eight pairs of identical twin girls, as listed in Table 4.2 below. For clarity of presentation, each pair has been colour coded and differently shaped speech bubbles are used to distinguish the twins in the pair.

*Table 4.2: List of Participants*

Pair Number	Participant Code	Self-chosen Pseudonym	Age at the time of the first interview	Other Siblings
1	1a 	Vicki	12	Three siblings
1	1b 	Courtney	12	Three siblings
2	2a 	Elizabeth	12	One younger brother
2	2b 	Jane	12	One younger brother aged 4
3	3a 	Milly	10	One younger brother aged 9
3	3b 	Lily	10	One younger brother aged 9
4	4a 	Alison	12	One older sister aged 16
4	4b 	Robyn	12	One older sister aged 16
5	5a 	Beau	16	One older brother aged 20
5	5b 	Pingu	16	One older brother aged 20
6	6a 	Bob	11	One younger brother
6	6b 	Billie	11	One younger brother
7	7a 	Bea	14	No siblings

7	7b 	Luna	14	No siblings
8	8a 	Amy	13	One younger brother
8	8b 	Marie	13	One younger brother

All interviews were conducted via Microsoft Teams. In the Stage one interview, except for Bea and Luna, who chose to be interviewed separately, the participants were interviewed together. Questions from a topic guide (see Appendix 8) were used to conduct a semi-structured interview. The topic guide questions in the Stage one interview were ordered to generate a chronological picture of the twins' lives.

For the Stage two interview, participants were interviewed separately. As mentioned in Chapter 4, this interview featured photo elicitation. Participants were asked to choose a photo that felt important to them, to explore in more detail, how they see themselves and wish others to see them (Smith et al., 2012). One photo was from any point in the past and one from the present time. They were also asked questions that had arisen from the Stage one interview. Except for Bea and Luna who were interviewed separately on both occasions, all twins were interviewed together for their Stage one interview and separately for their Stage two interview.

### 4.6.3 Conducting interviews via VoIP

Due to the social distancing required by the Coronavirus pandemic at the time of data collection, face-to-face data collection was no longer feasible or ethical (Birmingham City University, 2020). An alternative method of conducting qualitative interviews is to use Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) technologies such as MS Teams. These technologies enable audio/video communication to occur in real-time, producing synchronous environments (Sullivan, 2012).

Despite being a forced alternative, there are advantages to conducting interviews via VoIP. Research participation can be more accessible as travel is not required by either the researcher or the research participant, which can enable participants to be recruited from a wider geographical area (Mirick and Wladkowski 2019). The research occurs in a neutral space for the participant and the researcher, as both are sat within familiar settings without physical encroachment (Redlich-Amirav and Higginbottom, 2014). This can make being interviewed a more comfortable experience (Whale, 2017).

If video calling is used, it has been established that it is still possible to see non-verbal cues such as facial expressions and that may boost the rapport during interviews (Mirick and Wladkowski, 2019). In a recent longitudinal study, most participants rated a VoIP interview as being as good as a face-to-face interview (Weller, 2015). For digital natives, who have grown up with online communication, communicating online may feel more familiar than an in-person interview (Sullivan, 2012).

When conducting research with children and young people (CYP), the power imbalance between the researcher and the participant is a concern (Brady and

Graham, 2019). An example of this is that it may be difficult for CYP to pause or halt a research interview conducted in person, as this would require stopping the interview and asking the researcher to leave. Yet during a VoIP interview, the participant can stop the interview at the press of a button, by choosing to end the call. CYP can enact the right to withdraw instantly, without feeling the need or pressure to provide a justification (Janghorban et al., 2014). During the interviews, I observed the body language of participants to ensure that they were still happy to continue with the interview and that such an issue did not arise. This is further explored in Section 4.10.

#### 4.6.4 Considerations of VoIP

In research involving the use of VoIP, the major disadvantages are technical issues, such as loss of connection and audio or video delay (Sullivan 2012; Redlich Amirav and Higginbottom 2014; Weller 2015; Whale et al 2017 and Mirick and Wladkowski 2019). Technical issues were a frequent problem during the interviews, with one interview requiring a parent to move the modem for better connectivity and two other interviews featuring a degree of disruption due to wi-fi issues.

In addition to this, while CYP may be considered to be digital natives who have grown up communicating via technology (Prensky, 2001) and the prevalence of online learning during the Coronavirus pandemic meant that many children are familiar with using VoIP programmes such as MS Teams and Zoom, it is important to not assume that all CYP can access VoIP, are comfortable using VoIP software, or wish to participate in research using this technology (Weller, 2015).

Although video calling means it is possible to obtain some non-verbal cues, these are still limited in comparison to face-to-face interviewing, especially if the participant

is using a small screen, such as a mobile phone (Mirick and Wladkowski, 2019). This can impact the participant and the researcher. In a face-to-face interview, it is easier to demonstrate that the interviewer is engaged with what is being said and uses body language to encourage the participant to speak. This is more difficult in online communication and may lead to the researcher over-compensating verbally, which can disrupt the flow of the interview (Weller, 2015). During the interviews, care was taken to note if the interviewees seemed uncomfortable with a question, or if they simply did not have anything else to say in response. Narrative interviewing takes a conversational approach and therefore emotional attentiveness is important (Reissman, 2009). When asking more emotionally charged questions, I made sure to state that participants could choose not to answer those questions, thus respecting their choice to not provide information (Brady and Graham, 2019).

#### 4.6.5 Stage one – interviews

The interview questions (Appendix 8) were inspired by Pietilä et al.'s (2013) life course work with older adults and they still enabled a chronological picture of the participants' lives to emerge. This was combined with a semi-structured approach (Reissman, 2008) so that the children's narratives could be explored. As discussed in 4.7.1, all participants, except for one pair chose to be interviewed together.

This element of participant choice coheres with the participatory ethos of the research. However, there are some advantages to interviewing the participants together first. Spudich (2014) argues that interviewing twins individually first may introduce tension into the dyadic interviews, as each twin may wonder what was stated by the other twin in the previous, separate interview. Furthermore, Bacon (2002) in her research with twins found that interviewing twins individually and

separately allowed her to see how narratives may change depending on the absence or presence of a twin sibling.

Nonetheless, as the epistemology of this research centres around the concept of children as social actors and participation as a right for children, a tool which would generate a more participatory interview process was required for the second interview.

#### 4.6.6 Stage two - photo-elicitation interviews

Simply defined as the inclusion of a photograph into a research interview to ignite discussion (Harper, 2002), photo-elicitation originally centred on interviews using images selected by the researcher (Woolhouse et al., 2017). With the influence of the participant action research PhotoVoice technique (Wang and Burrs, 1997), this has changed, and photos taken by participants are commonly used (Fritz and Lysack, 2014, Pini et al., 2018). Ultimately, photo-elicitation uses photographs to stimulate a conversation between the researcher and participant (Smith et al., 2012).

The participatory nature of photo-elicitation has led to its increased use as a research method for researchers working with children and young people (Groundwater-Smith et al., 2015). This is because, by asking the participant to select the photograph, the researcher is acknowledging the status of the participant as an expert in their own lives and the participant becomes a collaborator in the research process, as their choice of photographs also translates to a choice of which data source to analyse (Pain, 2012). When discussing broad or difficult to define concepts such as experience, a photograph can provide a sound starting point for discussing (Smith et al., 2012). This has relevance to my research, as my interviewees, particularly in the Stage one interviews, often initially struggled to discuss their

experiences without prompting from the interviewer, as the questions were sometimes things they had not been asked previously.

Each participant was interviewed separately and was asked to select two photos that were important to them featuring themselves and their twin, with one photo from a point in the past and one from a more recent time, echoing the chronological approach of the interviews. The reason for not being specific about which time point in the past to select a photograph, is because why the twin has chosen that time point may in itself generate interesting data. The photos were not included in my thesis but were stored securely in line with university data storage policy (discussed in depth in Section 4.10).

Using photography reflects that children are growing up in a world that is increasingly shifting from text-based to verbal communication (Hall et al, 2007). Thus, children are increasingly becoming comfortable in using photographs and pictures, particularly of themselves as a mode of conveying their emotions (Poku et al, 2019). This may be particularly relevant for twins, whose very presence in the world is deemed a source of visual fascination by singletons, even their parents who may document the lives of their children using social media. Photo-elicitation provides the twins participating in my study, the opportunity to discuss their own perspectives on their visual selves.

As is common in narrative inquiry (Riessman, 2008) my fieldwork has a chronological theme which coheres with the Chronosystem in the theoretical framework of Bronfenbrenner (1986), with the twins being interviewed discussing their past, present and future (See Appendix H). Some of the questions explored how the twins present themselves and interact with their surroundings in terms of

clothing, bedrooms, and choice of hobbies to build a picture of their Microsystem which again connects to Bronfenbrenner (1979) and Goffman (1959) and Bacon's (2005) work in relation to the use of props in identity formation. The use of photo-elicitation explored in more detail, how they see themselves and wish others to see them. With the Stage one interview, the questions were balanced to ask about the positive and negative aspects of twinship in equal measure.

Due to the technical issues previously experienced conducting interviews via Teams, during the photo elicitation interviews, rather than screensharing the photographs, I asked for the photos to be emailed to me, so that I was able to see them and ask questions about the photos. In some interviews, the photos were already in frames and were held in view of the webcam.

## 4.7 Recruitment strategy

The involvement and recruitment of twins in this study has been informed by previous research on young twins. Bacon (2005) initially tried to use schools within the local area to recruit participants, but this proved ineffective, so she instead utilised local groups for parents of twins. Maguire (2021) recruited parents of twins for her doctoral work using the social media pages of a national twins charity. Therefore, as this research was to be conducted via the Internet, recruiting via online methods in addition to broadening the scope of the recruitment, ensured the participants had the Internet access required to participate in the study (Braun and Clarke, 2013). Following Maguire's strategy of using a charity the recruitment strategy in Appendix 17 shows, there were twenty-two different organisations approached to try to recruit participants. These organisations included both online social groups for the multiple birth community and charitable organisations. In terms

of social media, both Twitter and Facebook were utilised as two of the then-most popular social media networks (Bellan, 2020). Despite this broad appeal, only the national twins' charity yielded any recruits, with all participants being recruited via a twins charity Facebook post containing information about the research.

#### 4.7.1 Sample size / inclusion criteria

Determining sample size for a narrative inquiry project is hindered by the lack of discussion of sample size by narrative researchers. Neither Riessman (2008), Andrews et al (2008), nor Clandinin (2016) as narrative inquiry researchers provide guidance concerning participant numbers. Cresswell (2013) states that he has seen examples of work featuring only one or two participants and that larger groups are only required if the researcher aims to generate a collective story. A contrasting perspective is provided by Braun and Clark (2014) who instead look at methods of data collection to determine sample size. This may lend itself to a smaller sample size of between 8 to 10 participants, as this is the typical sample size of a small-scale qualitative study (Baker and Edwards, 2012).

Nevertheless, the core principle of this research is hearing children's voices, hence the inclusion criteria was that participation was open to all identical adolescent female twins who wished to participate in the United Kingdom, for whom parents would consent and this is reflected in the wording of Appendices 1 - 15. However, all those recruited to the study were based in England, therefore the thesis has been written to accurately reflect the geographical location of participants.

Adolescence was categorised as ages 10–19 years per the World Health Organization's (2023) definition of adolescence, as identified in Section 1.2.5. The term identical is being used in this research to include twins who are aware of their

zygosity (whether they are identical or non-identical twins) or who perceive themselves to be identical (Ncube, 2018). In total, eight pairs of identical adolescent female twins took part, which equated to 16 participants in total.

## 4.8 Data analysis

Narrative data can be analysed in a variety of methods, depending not only on the type of data requiring analysis but also on the approach of the researcher to the narrative itself (Kim, 2016). To conduct narrative analysis, the story within each interview must remain “intact” (Riessman 2008:53). Each story should be arranged into a chronology and then key moments or epiphanies identified (Creswell and Poth, 2018). Examining the time, place, plot and scene occurring in a narrative can be a tool to uncover such epiphanies (Clandinin, 2013) and from this point, codes can be developed (Reissman, 2008). This process is called ‘re-storying the data’ and from this process, the broader meanings of the data can be identified (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000).

The Three Commonplaces process of data analyses builds on Clandinin and Connelly’s (2000) theories of experience being personal and social and continually changing, in terms of three commonplaces as a framework where the narratives take place. These three commonplaces are: Sociality - the personal and social interactions of the individual, Temporality in the form of past, present, and future situations, and finally Place, the settings or context in which narratives occurred. While these commonplaces may exist in other forms of qualitative research, it is the exploration of all three commonplaces which generates the storied narratives produced by a narrative inquiry approach (Connelly and Clandinin, 2012). The

process of using the three commonplaces framework to conduct data analysis is illustrated in Figure 4.2.



*Figure 4.2 Data Analysis Process using the Three Commonplaces Framework*

The fruits of this method are that it can produce a more detailed analysis, with richer descriptions and it is less bound by a linear structure (Ollerenshaw and Creswell, 2002). While Kim (2016) argues that a researcher can embrace different elements of the methods of narrative data analysis, as a novice narrative researcher it is important to select a method which has a coherent structure that can be applied to each piece of interview data (Pettifer, 2021). Therefore, the Three Commonplaces, is a congruent framework for my research, particularly as the three-dimensional approach is congruent with the multidimensional view of children's worlds as expressed by my theoretical framework, Bronfenbrenner's bioecological model (1979).

## 4.9 Role of the researcher

This work is a qualitative inquiry. As such, I accept that I am not a neutral observer, but that I am situated within the research. Furthermore, qualitative research is not a

product of inquiry, but a process co-constructed between the researcher and the research participants (Malterud, 2001) and in my research, to generate storied narratives (Clanadin and Connelly, 2000). However, it is important to note that the term co-construction in research with CYP, has a different meaning, instead indicating research which has been co-led or co-designed with participants (Groundwater-Smith et al., 2015). Whereas in this thesis, despite the co-construction of narratives to produce data, the overall research project has still been designed and conducted by me as the researcher and therefore has not been co-constructed with CYP in terms of possessing a participatory research design.

Therefore, to understand my influence on the research, reflexivity is required. To be reflexive is to critically assess one's own values, knowledge, and experience and how they may interact throughout the stages of the research process (Greenbank, 2003). Yet, it is necessary to be aware of my positionality and the resulting “backpack” of preconceptions (Malterud, 2001) which create our worldview (Bourke, 2014). Otherwise, it may be difficult to achieve the reflexivity needed to understand how I am co-creating the research data with participants (Mosselson, 2010).

#### 4.9.1 Positionality

From a reflexive analysis, the researcher is then able to locate themselves in relation to their research. This is particularly important within narrative inquiry, as the relationship between the participants and the researcher is part of the generation of narratives (Clandinin, 2016). However, while examining and considering positionality is a process of self-analysis, this positionality must be stated and shared within the research (Holmes, 2014). This disclosure then is akin to a conflict-of-interest statement, enabling readers of the research to consider how the researcher may have influenced the research.

The first statement of positionality that I must make, is that in contrast to Bacon (2005), Conlon (2009), Apseloff (2013) and Segal (2017); I am not a twin.

Furthermore, I must respect the findings of Garro et al (2015) in that singletons will never be able to truly understand what it is like to be a twin. In Clark's (2011) work, her opening statement is that the first question she is always asked is "What is it like to be a twin?". The answer to which Clark (2011:1) states is "*unspoken, unknowable something which permeates our existence, a something (...) I have never been able to explain to another human being*". My research will be from an outsider's perspective, as opposed to an insider with direct experience.

As a female, someone with sisters, and the mother of two daughters, I have experiences which are adjacent to my research participants. Nonetheless, there will remain a limit to my understanding. The full impact of this outsider status may shift during the undertaking of the research (Zempi, 2016) and not be fully appreciated until the research is completed (Merriam et al., 2000). From the literature, it is clear that many twins find stereotypes and assumptions about twins and twinship to be burdensome (Segal 2017, Ncube 2018). Hence, I must consider my preconceived ideas and how they may influence my interactions during the research. During the interviews, I kept field notes as recommended by Clandinin et al. (2016) as a record of my interactions with participants. In addition to this, Riessman (2008) considers keeping a diary as an important part of narrative research to document the decision-making process and generate continual reflexivity. Throughout the research process, I maintained a reflective journal. Maintaining a journal provided a space not only to discuss and record my research activities, but also to document my emotions and experiences, thus ensuring that the layers of reasoning underpinning my research are preserved. This was particularly important as this project encompassed a six-

year time period, during which I was also in full-time employment, which meant, like many part-time students, there would sometimes be periods where I had less time to work on this research (Harvey and Howard-Hunt, 2021). In such circumstances, the journal also acted as a tether, keeping me connected to the project by providing an informal space to document my ideas, feelings and decisions. This journal is incorporated into the thesis when I reflect upon the research and my role in co-creating narratives in Chapter 7, Section 7.6

The second statement of positionality is that I am a Registered Children's Nurse. My postgraduate study has been generally within the field of childhood studies. These studies have broadened my perspective, considering children and young people not only from a holistic viewpoint, but a societal one, as I was introduced to the theories of Bronfenbrenner (1979; 1993). The bioecological model (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; 1993) illuminated the interactions between children's familial relations and the society they functioned within. Childhood studies also have a strong focus on children's rights and children's voices, and this made me reflect upon the Nursing and Midwifery Council Code (2018), particularly 1.5 which stated that nurses must "respect and uphold human rights". For children and young people, this should mean their rights under the Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC, 1989). I valued these unearthed connections between academic theories of children and young peoples' lives and rights and child nursing practice and sought to incorporate them into my teaching within nursing education, so that students could view children and young people as rights holders first and patients second. This view of wanting to uphold children's rights and ensure their perspectives are heard is integral to the "research puzzle" (Clandinin et al., 2016:26) which drives this thesis.

Yet while my master's course was targeted to professionals from education, social work and health, frequently in the academic discourse, the only health professionals featured are psychologists. As an example, Green and Hogan (2005) and Clark et al (2014) have both compiled popular texts discussing various aspects of conducting research with children, but none of the contributing authors are nurses. This absence of the nursing voice is not only an absence of perspective, but it is also an absence of nursing vocabulary. The language nurses use differs to that of educationalists, reflecting differing worldviews. In an earlier version of this work, I had used the word impact to discuss something I wanted to examine, not realising that impact was a quantitative word. Yet for nurses, thinking about the impact on the lives of our patients is part of thinking of them in a holistic, qualitative manner, as we are thinking beyond the biological impact of illness.

My experiences and role working with children have occurred in very different circumstances compared to many in childhood studies. Reflexivity will be important as I consider how my nursing experience influences my research. While some researchers have considered what their role is when researching with children (Bacon 2005, Davidson, 2017), as stated above, as a Registered nurse, my primary guidance must always be the Nursing and Midwifery Council Code (2018). This code means I have specific responsibilities concerning disclosure of information, and I had to make this clear when working with research participants, both when taking informed consent and throughout the research process.

Within the interview process, this took the form of an awareness of what my role was as well as what it was not. Davidson (2017) suggests that openness about the role of the researcher is essential to build openness and trust. In contrast to the "least adult role" suggested by Mandell (1988), I was honest with my participants about being an

adult, notably an adult who was significantly older than them and had children of a similar age to themselves. While I was in the participants' lives as a researcher, as part of the consent process, I also mentioned my professional background as a registered children's nurse. As previously stated, this professional registration influenced the wording of the consent material. Nonetheless, my professional experience affected the interviews in ways both expected and unexpected. As children's nurses, patients expect us to be able to communicate with them in a kind and caring manner from the moment we meet them (Loureiro et al., 2019) and I was able to use those skills to enable them to feel comfortable talking to me. However, I was working with the participants as a researcher, not a nurse.

#### 4.9.2 Quality and trustworthiness

In contrast to positivist research, where the terms validity and reliability are referred to, in qualitative research, the use of other paradigms and their ontological and epistemological differences on the nature of truth mean that such concepts of validity are not congruent (Cohen, et al., 2017). Nonetheless, there is still a need for quality evaluation of qualitative research. Lincoln and Guba's (1985) checklist created a new vocabulary for evaluating what they termed "naturalistic inquiry". Under the umbrella term of trustworthiness, there were four new terms: credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. Credibility is the various tools, like triangulation and member checking to maintain the quality of the data while the research is in progress. To enable the research to be relevant to other settings, Transferability is generated by thick description, whereby the context the data was generated is also provided, to enable outsiders to understand how the data was created. Dependability is the process of the research study, how data was generated, stored and analysed.

Confirmability is the final auditing of the data, to check the findings are supported by the data (Lincoln and Gubba, 1985).

However, narrative inquiry takes a rather less structured approach to quality.

Clandinin (2013:212), instead outlined 12 “touchstones” which focus on the relationship between the researcher and the research participants during the research. Reissman (2008) describes such aspects of quality as multi-faceted, but the central issues are the coherence and presentation of narratives and the pragmatic use of the research.

Such a varied approach to quality has produced concerns that narrative inquiry is vulnerable to being deemed as lacking in rigour and therefore trustworthiness (Loh, 2013). This variance can also make undertaking narrative inquiry daunting to novice researchers. Therefore, Creswell and Poth (2019:270) developed a five-point list titled *Guiding Aspects for a “Good” Narrative Study* which I incorporate into my work. A good narrative study should have a clear focus on individuals, collect stories about a significant issue, arrange the stories in a chronology, provide a wider context to the story in terms of the tone or themes of the narrative and finally, because narratives are co-created between the story-teller and listening, the reflexivity of the researcher must be embedded into the research (Creswell and Poth, 2019). As part of this acknowledgement of the co-creation of narratives, member checking is an important quality control tool to improve trustworthiness (Lally, 2014). Member checking enables the participants to review their transcripts and therefore verify that they accurately reflect their recollection of the conversation (Braun and Clarke, 2016). This also fulfils one of the relationship touchstones between the researcher and the research participant (Clandinin, 2013). All interview transcripts were sent to the

participants via email, to ensure that they were able to review my record of what had been said and to add any additional information if required.

However, Loh (2013) suggests this checking can go further, by seeking input from peers and the intended audience or users of the research, calling this peer and audience validation. As a doctoral study, this research received validation from my supervisors and I have presented the research at internal and external conferences within various disciplines, before finalising my work.

In terms of transferability, I assert that, as Clandinin and Rosiek (2007:42) state, *“stories matter and that, increasingly, we are interested in knowing the stories that all people live and tell.”* While the small scope of this study does not lend the findings to generalisability, the findings tell a story from the perspective of adolescent female identical twins, which is currently absent from the broader literature. Reissman (2008) concluded that the ultimate test of the quality of a research study is its utility and whether it makes any changes to policy or practice. Due to the ongoing connections I have with the Elizabeth Bryan Multiple Births Centre, it is intended that my work will produce some tangible change.

#### 4.10 Ethical considerations

This research study has obtained ethical approval from the Faculty of Health Education and Life Science Academic Ethics Committee (FAEC) at Birmingham City University. In considering the ethical dimensions of this study, the British Educational Research (BERA) Guidelines (2018;2024) have been consulted alongside the guidance from the HELS Research Integrity advisors.

All participants for the study were recruited via social media, the Facebook page of a national twins and multiple births charity. A critical ethical consideration when using

social media for research recruitment purposes is one of transparency, being honest about the purpose of the research and what research participation entails (Gelinias et al., 2017). I ensured that the wording on the Facebook post matched what was stated in the participant information leaflets. I also only communicated with potential participants via email so that any questions could be asked and answered privately, as involuntary sharing of private information can also be a possible issue, as the boundaries between public and private spaces can sometimes become blurred on a social media site such as Facebook (Parsi and Elster, 2014).

In some ethical guidelines, children and young people are seen solely as a vulnerable group (Birmingham City University 2022; British Psychological Society 2014). Yet, how we conduct research with children is firmly rooted in our concepts of children and childhood. These are concepts which have undergone a significant shift in paradigm in a post-UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC, 1989) world, which posits CYP as competent actors in society with their own knowledge and perspectives. (Davidson, 2017).

Alderson (2004) further outlines this development as an evolution of children from being unknowing subjects to aware subjects, culminating in CYP being active participants. Indeed, children are considered to have a right to their voice to be heard (Buchwald et al 2011). However, these roles are not autonomously generated by the CYP. Instead, they are potential abilities, largely dependent on the researcher's concept of childhood. Thus, if researchers view childhood as a "glass box", with the child as a visible object as opposed to an active participant, it will affect both the methodology of the research and the ability of the researcher to perceive ethical issues (Alderson, 2014). As stated in Section 4.4.1 when discussing my ontological standpoint, this research is rooted in the new sociology of childhood, which views

children as social agents and seeks to embody the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) in practice. This ontological perspective is reflected in the selection of narrative inquiry as a research methodology and a participatory method, such as photo-elicitation to centre the voices of my participants.

It is valid to argue that there are many ethical and methodological similarities between researching with adults and children (Christensen and Prout, 2005). There is a further argument that the idea of child-centred methodologies could be patronising (Punch, 2002). Nonetheless, to ensure research is accessible to children and young people, both the structure and content of the research study are important to consider (Brady and Graham, 2019).

Hence, research ethics are essential to the research process itself (Alderson 2004) and should be considered throughout the lifespan of the study (Hill, 2005). This consideration is an inherent part of reflexivity and that I as a researcher consider my influence on the research data (Fraser et al, 2014). The ethical issues to consider within my research will be divided into four categories: consent and assent, adult/child power relationships and the role of parents, confidentiality and privacy and finally, risks of research participation.

#### 4.10.1 Consent and assent

For consent to be informed, it should be clearly outlined what benefits research participation may have for participants. Likewise, any risks must also be stated (Cohen et al., 2017). While my research would not be seen as particularly risky as the research questions do not in themselves seek to obtain any sensitive information, such as experiences of violence or substance abuse, it is important not to underestimate the potential for the distress that research participation may cause

participants (Alderson and Morrow, 2011). A debriefing session, via MS Teams after the research has finished may also be beneficial for participants (Twycross, 2009). Therefore, at the end of each interview, I asked if the participant wished to continue with the research and allow them space and time to provide their feedback on the research process if they felt the need to do so.

In accordance with the Faculty of Health Education and Life Science Academic Ethics Committee (FAEC) Birmingham City University Guidelines, Participant information leaflets for parents and the children or young people were sent electronically via email and consent was obtained via MS Teams video and recorded as a separate file to any subsequent research data. For participants under the age of 18, these files documenting their consent will be stored securely until their 21<sup>st</sup> birthday, in line with university guidance.

Parents were also required to provide their consent, with the legal concept of parental responsibility placing them in a gatekeeper role (Alderson and Morrow, 2011). However, all participants under the age of 16 provided their assent to research participation as it is still considered best practice to seek assent from children, whereby the research is explained to them, and they can voice if they are happy to participate (Health Research Authority, 2018). Furthermore, space to dissent should not be a singular occurrence; the child's decision to participate should be renegotiable (Alderson and Morrow, 2011). To build voluntariness (Kumpunen et al. 2012), assent should be reaffirmed by the researcher throughout the research process (Buchwald et al. 2011, Graham et al., 2013) and the children should be aware that they can withdraw from the research without negative consequences (Kumpunen et al., 2012). In an online setting during my research, this entailed seeking assent at the beginning of the conversation, but also at the end, when I

asked the research participant if there was anything they wished to clarify and if they were happy for their conversation to be used. I also had to consider the “Expressions given off” which may also indicate if the participant was still happy to continue the interview and ensure that both participants still wished to participate in the research (Weller, 2015:23).

Power relationships, most notably the general imbalance of power between children and adults are a key locus of ethical concern when researching with children and this is especially so when seeking consent. Being able to convey the risks and benefits of the study in a manner that is comprehensible to CYP is integral in obtaining informed consent (Birmingham City University 2010; Economic and Social Research Council [ESRC], 2022).

Power relationships can mean that children may feel deferential towards adults, therefore, this again requires the researcher to be reflexive (Buchwald et al., 2011). This meant giving the children space to dissent or refuse to take part in the research (Graham et al., 2013). For my research, the entire process of giving information and obtaining consent needed to be considered carefully. Not just in terms of the information to be conveyed but also doing so in a setting where the children and their families feel comfortable asking questions and expressing dissent if they wish. This is a practice I am familiar with in my former role as a clinical research nurse. Conducting these conversations via MS Teams, however, was unfamiliar to both me and the research participants.

The starting point was to schedule time for these conversations to occur and to ensure that parental guardians and the CYP research participants were present. Here we could discuss not only the purpose of the research and what it would

involve, but also what time they would like the research interviews to occur. Issues such as if they have thought about where in their house, they would like conversations to be located, considering noise, privacy and Wi-Fi connectivity, were also important to discuss before research commenced (Weller, 2015). Generally, participants and their families had already chosen a location that they felt was suitable. While it did not arise as an issue, I also had to consider what asking for a time-out or even to withdraw 'looks' like in an online setting. From the beginning of the research process, I had to ensure the participants knew they had the right to take a time out or withdraw at any point and this right was emphasised throughout the research interactions. For example, when asking a more personal question, I would state that they did not have to answer the question and could decline to do so as bluntly as they wished.

Obtaining assent from children is a trilateral relationship, as it is the parent who acts as a gatekeeper and provides consent. This gatekeeping role should not necessarily be viewed negatively, parents frequently are motivated by their child's best interests (Graham et al, 2013). Also, parents can be a source of support if children are discussing difficult topics (Pini, 2019) and the BERA Guidelines (2024) emphasise that the rights and duties of parents are considered. This balance between protection and participation is a common motif in child participation and children's rights generally. In the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), Article 3 upholds the rights and duties of parents and guardians, while Article 12 asserts that children have the right to express their views in matters pertaining to them.

#### 4.10.2 Adult/child power relationships and the role of parents

In addition to the communication requirements, as previously stated, there is also the trilateral power relationship between the researcher, the child research participant, and their parents (ESRC, 2022). While parental consent is required for participants under the age of 16 years, parents were not required to be present during the interviews. Parental presence during research is a contentious matter. Parents can provide a source of support for CYP, nonetheless, they can also impact how CYP responds to questions or potentially put words in their mouths (Simeonsdotter Svensson et al., 2013, Brady and Graham, 2019). The research study sought information from the CYP, not their parents and it was important to be clear that even if parents were present, all questions during interviews would be directed towards the CYP participants (Whale, 2017).

However, as a researcher, I had to also acknowledge that despite advertising the study via a charitable organisation the participants and their families were familiar with, I had had no direct contact with the children or families prior to the research recruitment process. Hence, I was a stranger in an online setting and in accordance with the online safety guidance given to schools and parents, it is unsurprising that parents would wish to be present during interviews (Leslie et al., 2023) and indeed some online researchers working with children have insisted on parents being present during online interviews for safeguarding reasons (Barley et al., 2025).

During the Stage one interview, for 12 participants, the mothers were in the interview setting. They appeared to be a supportive presence for participants and there were no signs of the participants being uncomfortable with this parental presence, nor did they state that they did not wish for their parents to be present. By the Stage two interviews, only four participant interviews featured their mother in the interview setting for the duration of the interview, which may have been influenced by the age

of the participants as two of whom were the youngest participants. Again, no indications of coercion or discomfort were observed in participants. This diminishment in parental presence in the second interview reflected that parents felt reassured that the research would not be harmful to their child. Ultimately, I could not determine the choice of the parent to attend the interview, but I could ensure that this is documented in my field notes and considered when analysing data.

#### 4.10.3 Confidentiality and collecting, coding, interpreting and storing the data

Intertwined with confidentiality is the issue of privacy. This entails not only ensuring children's research data is stored securely to uphold privacy and that the child's anonymity is maintained, but that the information is obtained in a manner which means it cannot be accidentally encountered by others (Graham et al., 2013). An example would be researchers ensuring interviews cannot accidentally be overheard while ensuring that a parent or gatekeeper is within the vicinity to safeguard the child and the researcher (Shaw et al, 2011). As part of the consent process, discussing where the online interview should occur is important so that the child and parent agree and a quiet area with internet access is available, but ultimately, it was the choice of the parent and child where the interview occurred (Weller, 2015; 2017).

This research developed recorded interviews as video data; consent also included what permissions were given for the use of this data. Research participants were informed of what would happen to any data collected, how their confidentiality will be maintained was considered and discussed, including the use of pseudonyms instead of their real names (Hill, 2005). Research participants were allowed to select their pseudonyms, as this choice was seen to respect their individuality (Braun and Clarke, 2014). The Data Protection Act 2018 emphasises that children have the

same rights as adults regarding their data (ICO, 2023). In addition to this, anyone seeking permission from a child to access their data needs to do so in a manner that the child can comprehend and therefore, I ensured that the use of data was conveyed to participants in an age-appropriate manner. Per university policy, the storage and disposal of data needs to be explained to research participants as part of the consent process (Birmingham City University, 2010). All research data must be stored in my PhD file on the University OneDrive system, which is password-protected. This must be done within 72 hours of the data being obtained and any local copies of the data should be deleted. This was stated in the participant information sheets (Appendices 2-4 and 11–13)

However, it is accepted that confidentiality is not without limits. If disclosure of abuse or harm had been made by a research participant, then the researcher has the duty both to override the confidentiality and to know what action to take (ESRC 2022, British Sociological Association 2017). This duty to disclose was clearly outlined to research participants and their parents/guardians as part of the process of gaining informed consent (Moore et al., 2008). Also, in the event of such disclosures, I may have required support either from my supervisors or the university counselling service.

#### 4.10.4 Risks and benefits of the research

As previously mentioned, while the research questions did not in themselves seek to obtain any sensitive information, such as the experience of violence or substance abuse, it could not be guaranteed that a research participant will not say anything that could be considered sensitive (Dickson-Swift et al., 2009). Equally, nor can it be certain that a research participant will not become distressed during an interview.

This did not occur during my research, however, had it done so, it would have been necessary to ask the participant if they wished to continue this discussion or to take a short break or indeed reschedule. The sources of support as outlined in the participant information sheet would be emphasised. If the research participants had made any disclosures that they were being harmed, then in accordance with the NMC Code (2018) and the HELS Ethics Guidelines (2010), I would need to report this.

In terms of risks to myself as a researcher, conducting interviews online removed the physical risks normally associated with lone working (Whale, 2017). Nonetheless, conducting qualitative interviews can be mentally and emotionally challenging and I kept in regular contact with my supervisors for support during this time.

Brady and Graham (2019:64) state that one of the main benefits of research is that children and young people will attain the “*opportunity to have their realities and views investigated*”. This benefit is congruent with the aims of my research, which aims to explore the experiences of my participants. Despite the Stage two interviews taking place several months after the Stage one Interviews, all participants agreed to be interviewed again, which indicated a positive feeling towards the research. In addition, one of the stated aims of the research was to improve the understanding of twins and twinship among those who work with twins in education, healthcare and other settings. Thus, the interviews offered participants the space and opportunity to share experiences allowing those who are not twins to gain insight into the twin experience.

## 4.11 Conclusion

This chapter has set out the aims and research questions of this study. The ontological and epistemological positions have been stated and related to the theoretical framework. Despite the increase in the twin population, qualitative research on identical adolescent female twins has been very limited. This means that the reality of being a twin is largely absent not only from research literature but also from relevant education and health policies. The most recent qualitative study of twins during adolescence was published by Bacon in 2005, and that included male and female identical and non-identical twins. This study explores the experiences of adolescent identical twin girls. Due to this participant group, I have had to consider my positionality as an outsider researcher, while also ensuring my chosen research methodologies and methods reflected my theoretical and ethical stances on children as social agents. Finally, the wider ethical issues of co-creating research with children and young people have been considered, with a particular focus on consent, assent and parental presence during interviews.

The following chapter will utilise Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) Three Commonplaces framework to examine the results from the Stage one and Stage two interviews.

# Chapter 5: Results

## 5.1 Introduction

The previous chapter outlined the methodological approach to conducting the research, setting out the consonance between the research paradigm, theoretical framework and research methodology. This chapter will focus on the findings of two interviews conducted with the participants in Stage one and Stage two of the study. Firstly, the chapter will introduce the participants, followed by a discussion on parental involvement in the interviews. Next, it will recap on the research questions, outline the data analysis process, after which, the themes will be introduced. Finally, each of these themes will be presented. Bronfenbrenner's (1977, 1993) ecological framework is utilised throughout the chapter to place the research findings into the social contexts of the lives of children and young people.

## 5.2 Interviews: parental involvement

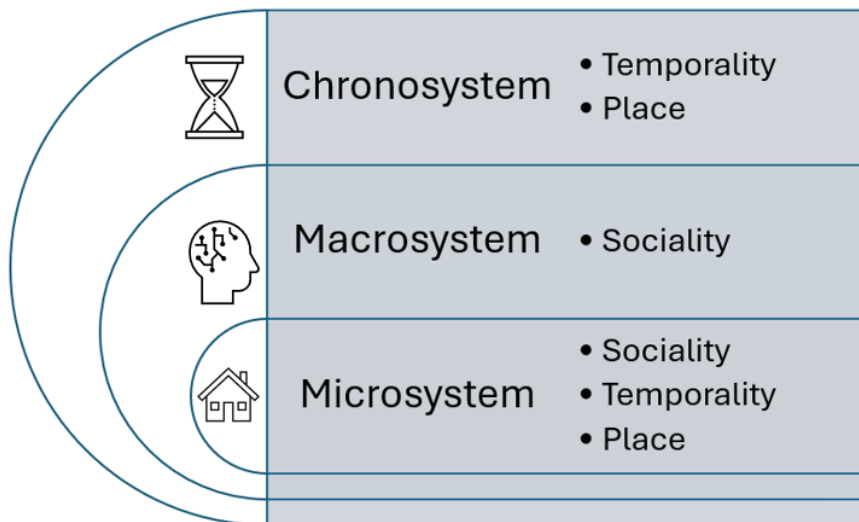
Apart from Beau 5a and Pingu 5b, who were over the age of 16, parental consent was required for research participation, with children under 16 providing their assent (see Chapter 4, Section 4.10.1). In the Stage one interview for all participants, aside from Beau, Pingu, Bea 7a and Luna 7b, who were the oldest participants, mothers were present in the interview setting. They appeared to be a supportive presence for participants, and I observed no signs of coercion or discomfort. By the Stage two interviews, this had changed, with only Vicki 1a, Courtney 1b, Milly 3a and Lily 3b's interviews featuring their mother in the interview setting for the duration of the interview, some of the youngest participants within the study. Again, there were no

indications observed of coercion or discomfort and the participants appeared happy with their presence.

### 5.3 Data analysis

Once the initial data analysis had been conducted as described in Chapter 5, Section 4.8, the next step was to return to the research questions. Each research question is focused on a different dimension of the participants' lives. Research Question One is concerned with the experiences of each identical twin as they interact in society, Research Question Two explores the role of being a twin in the life course, and Research Question Three focuses on the evolution of the twin relationship, again with the life course being the time period under examination. Those dimensions can be mapped onto Bronfenbrenner's (1979:1993) bioecological model of human development as outlined in Chapter 3. Questions 1 and 2 explore the experiences of participants in the Microsystem, where the child has direct interactions with others. Question 1 is concerned with the microsystem, including school, peers and social activities and Question 2 reflects the macrosystem between the individual and their twin and wider society and how that impacts daily life. Time was later viewed as a missing element from the Theory and thus Bronfenbrenner added the Chronosystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1993), in which occur the changes that take place in a person's life, whether in their personal circumstances, family or educational settings or wider society. Therefore, Questions 2 and 3 are linked to the Chronosystem, particularly Question 3, which examines the evolution of twinship throughout the life course. However, the interplay during the data analysis between the bioecological model (Bronfenbrenner, 1979;1993) and the data analysis framework of the three commonplaces (Clandinin and Connelly 2000) led to a shift in the initial mapping, particularly as the importance of the Macrosystem in the lives of

twins and their interactions with others emerged. Therefore, the final mapping was altered as displayed in Figure 5.1



*Figure 5.1 Mapping Clandinin and Connelly's Three Commonplaces (2000) to Bronfenbrenner's bioecological model (1979; 1993)*

Initially, the data was going to be analysed drawing on Braun and Clark's Thematic Analysis, as modified for narrative inquiry by Lainson et al. (2019). However, the cohesion of the dimensions of the research questions to Bronfenbrenner's bioecological model echoes Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) own consideration of narrative structure occurring in a three-dimensional space. For Clandinin and Connelly (2000), these three dimensions are the commonplaces of sociality, temporality, and place. These commonplaces are not impermeable, as many of the

twins' experiences occur across dimensions. Both sociality and place are subject to the impacts of temporality, particularly as the participants are adolescents and living in worlds of change and development. Thus, the commonplace selected by the researcher was the one considered most relevant to the experience being told.

Hearing the voice of the child is essential to the epistemology of this research and placing the words of participants at the forefront of results is a primary aim of narrative methodology (Lainson, 2020). Therefore, this chapter makes extensive use of direct quotes to provide rich descriptions of the data and ensure the perspective of the children's worlds is conveyed as accurately as possible, consequently boosting the confirmability of the data. For ease of reading, each pair has been colour-coded, as shown in Table 5.1.

## 5.4 Results

The analysis of the data from the Stage one and Stage two interviews, using Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) three commonplaces as a framework, produced ten themes spanning the three commonplaces of sociality, temporality and place. The ten themes are outlined in Table 5.3 and are discussed below.

*Table 5.2 Themes categorised into the three commonplaces*

<b>Sociality</b>	<b>Temporality</b>	<b>Place</b>
<b>Always someone there</b> – the permanence of the inter-twin relationship	<b>Developing differences</b> – the changes in physical appearance through childhood and	<b>Bedrooms</b> – the usage of bedrooms as a space of separation and togetherness

	adolescence	
<b>Struggling against stereotypes</b> – dealing with preconceived perceptions of twins and twinships	<b>Role differences in twinship</b> – roles of responsibility and reliance within the twinship	<b>School</b> – The multifaceted nature of schools in the narratives of participants
<b>Coping with comparison and competition</b> – The contrasting experiences of inter-twin comparisons and intra-twin competition.	<b>Future divergences, future togetherness</b> – Participants' perceptions of their twinship in the future	<b>A space apart</b> – The motivation for seeking places away from their twin.
<b>Friendship groups</b> – How participants experience friendship with other children.		

## 5.5 Sociality of twins

This thesis uses narrative inquiry, which is concerned with both the personal and social conditions of participants and analyses them using Clandinin and Connelly's three commonplaces framework (2000) which features sociality, temporality and place. The first commonplace to be discussed is sociality. Sociality contains two elements, the personal and the social (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000). Personal conditions are the emotions, needs and desires of participants, while social conditions are the milieu in which events and experiences are taking place and these combine to create the sociality of narratives (Clandinin and Connelly, 2006). By

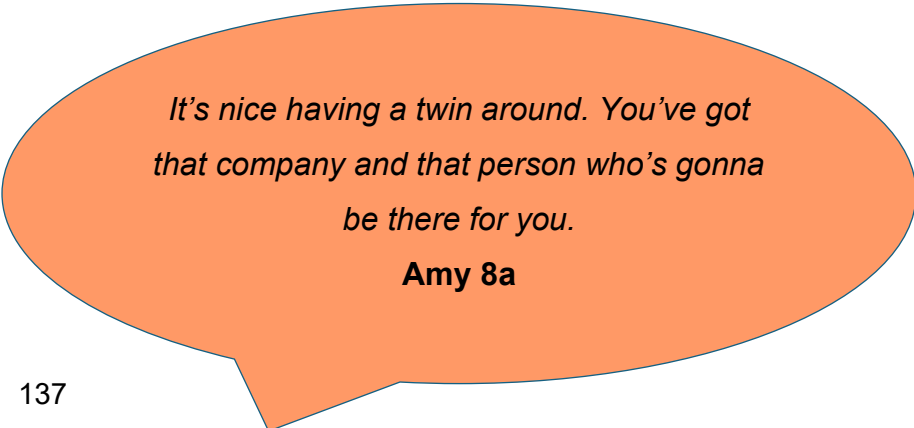
focusing on these two elements, the attention of the researcher is focused on both the internal and external facets of participants (Dewart et al., 2019). Maintaining this focus is necessary to prevent narrative inquiry becoming overly focused on the participant's thoughts and emotions and ignoring the social context or being overly absorbed in social conditions and depersonalising the analysis (Kim, 2020).

Several themes arose from the exploration of the participants' experiences of twinship, including their perspectives on their relationship and the reactions and behaviour of those outside the twinship. The themes are: *Always someone there*, *Struggling against stereotypes*, *Coping with comparisons and competition*, and finally, *Friendship groups*.

Sociality refers to the interactions experienced by the storyteller or person being interviewed. The experiences, feelings and hopes in conjunction with their perceptions of the relationship are all considered within the analysis (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000).

### 5.5.1 Always someone there

When discussing their life with their identical twin, participants often provided a perspective on their relationship, which focused on the presence of their twin sibling in their life.



*It's nice having a twin around. You've got that company and that person who's gonna be there for you.*

**Amy 8a**

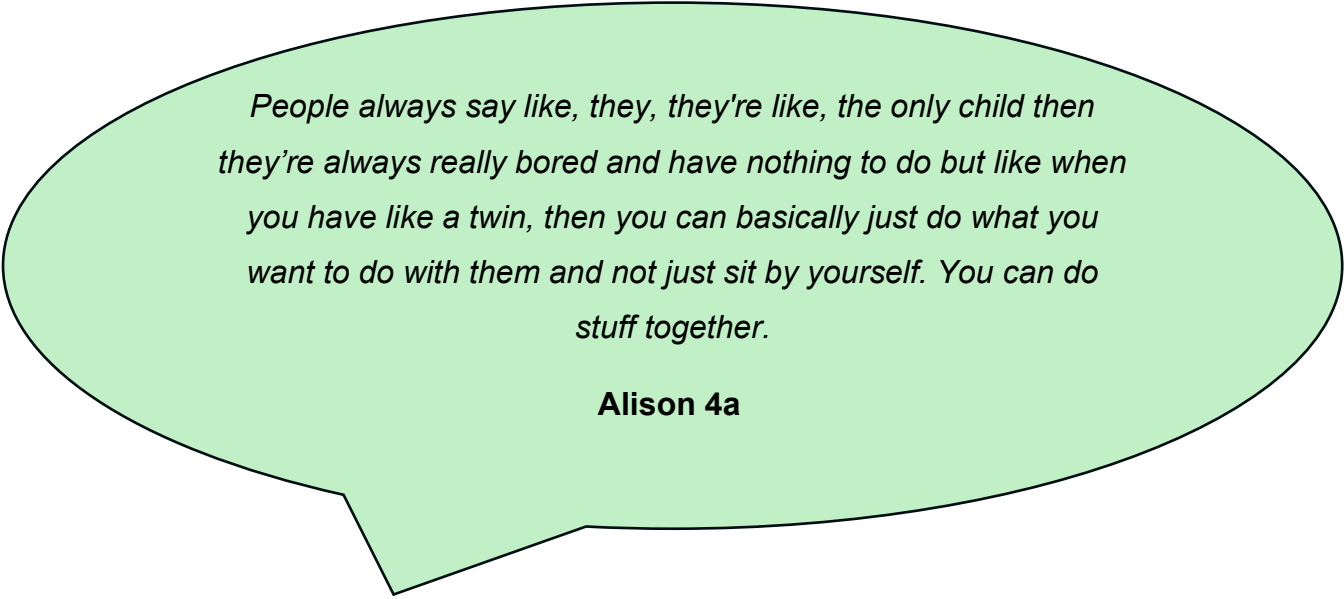
A key factor of their relationship was encapsulated in the phrase “always someone there”, with ten participants using some version of this phrase. The experiences of participants were replete with examples of the benefits of having an identical twin. Indeed, participants were able to describe exactly when and how having a twin sibling had been beneficial.

*There's little things and then there's bigger things as well. So, it's like, when you have somebody and you know that they're always there, then you know, you can always talk to them. And then like Elizabeth said, if you are moving schools, and you know, you'd automatically have a friend, or like, if you were at home, you could just like play with you'd have someone to talk to. And then on holiday, you'd also have somebody to talk to have fun with. And there was just loads of advantages to being a twin.*

**Jane 2b**

The awareness displayed in this quote of the many ways living with a twin provided support throughout life was by no means restricted to this participant. The interviews of participants were filled with examples of when having an identical twin had been positive, from completing schoolwork to practising dance routines. Returning to the quote, Jane effortlessly lists all the places her identical twin is beside her, providing “loads of advantages”. A key advantage is a social one, particularly when moving into unfamiliar environments as the twin is able to be not only a sibling but also a friend. In addition to being a friend, a twin can also help build friendship groups. All participants had shared friendship groups, except Alison 4a and Robyn 4b. If one twin befriended a child, then the other twin would also view them as a friend. Some participants contrasted their experiences in comparison with children without siblings

or with large age gaps because they did not have this companion. As Alison explains,



*People always say like, they, they're like, the only child then they're always really bored and have nothing to do but like when you have like a twin, then you can basically just do what you want to do with them and not just sit by yourself. You can do stuff together.*

**Alison 4a**

Returning to Jane's words, the word "always" is used twice, and this is an integral part of the social world of twinship. Even when looking towards the future, there was an understanding that while their identical twin may not be as physically close, due to wanting different careers or to live in different areas, their twin would still be there for them. Further supporting the security of this relationship is that Jane quotes her twin in agreement, underpinning the concordance of their views on their relationship.

In Jane's quote, there is a shift between tenses. The benefits of having a twin were listed as past examples, but the *always being there* is in the present tense. For Jane, the permanence of her twin is an ongoing fact of her life as is the support she receives from her. The second time Jane says 'always' is "*you can always talk to them*", emphasising that her twin is not just a physical presence, but also someone you can share your thoughts with. Luna's words agree with this sentiment:

*I was just lucky because I always had someone and they had like older or younger siblings and I just felt so lucky to be able to always have someone with me.*

**Luna 7b**

Again, Luna's quote says the word "always" twice. It is clear to her that having a twin means not only there being someone to fulfil the role of confidant or support, but also the immutability of that relationship. As subsequent themes will illustrate the external factors and passing of time that impact a twinship, it is that inherent permanence of the twin relationship that is viewed as its greatest positive. Nonetheless, while "always" could be perceived as a word connected with time and therefore this finding could be considered within the commonplace of temporality, the integral aspect of the twin relationships, as narrated by the participants, is its closeness and the feelings of security derived from that proximity. Therefore, this finding has been categorised as more closely aligning with the commonplace of sociality.

### 5.5.2 Struggling against stereotypes

The previous theme, *Always someone there*, found that participants could clearly articulate their perceived advantages of twinship. Those advantages centred around the constant presence of their twin in their life. Thus, the benefit of twinship is having a twin sibling and it is the twinship relationship that generates the positives. As

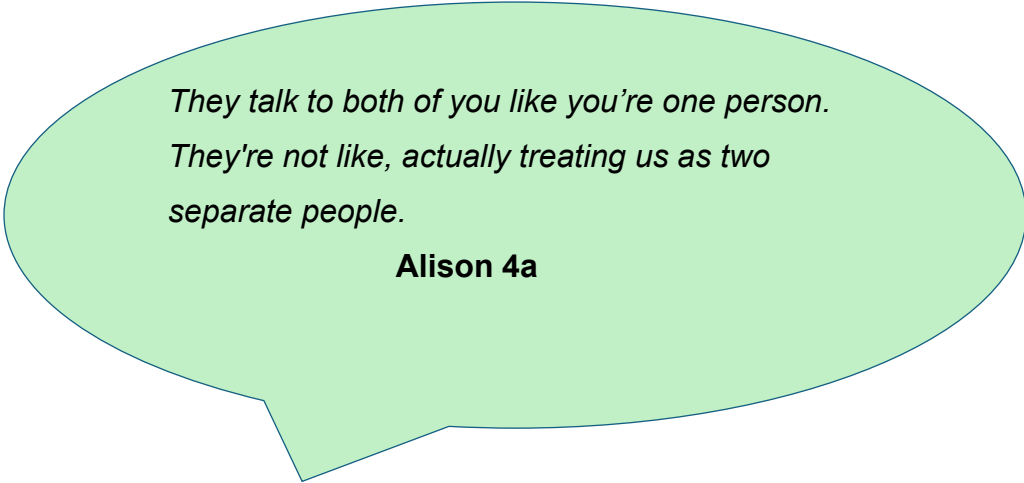
Elizabeth explains:

*"Oh, you're a twin that's so cool". Yeah, it's cool. But like, I don't really care that much. I just like the fact that I actually have a twin and that I have like a sister. But I don't really like care as much that other people like know that and stuff.*

**Elizabeth 2a**

The contrast between Elizabeth viewing herself foremostly as having a twin sister and others viewing the twin status as overarching the twin relationship is notable. An intriguing finding during the interviews was that while the participants could all think of films, books and television programmes which featured twins, none of them expressed a particular need to seek out such portrayals or felt that seeing twins in the wider media was important. Possibly this is connected to viewing being a twin primarily as a relationship as opposed to an identity.

However, this is not how identical twins and twinship are perceived by those the participants encounter. Instead, they view identical twins not as two individuals, but as a single unit.



*They talk to both of you like you're one person.  
They're not like, actually treating us as two  
separate people.*

**Alison 4a**

The perceptions of twins stretched beyond assigning them a unit identity. There were also specific attended expectations in terms of twin personality and behaviour. These expectations were considered a negative burden by participants.

*I just think it's like a stereotype. Because it's like, just what they expect. So, two twin girls that look the same, dressed the same? Just like frustrated some of the time because people don't like always see what it is like. We don't always like dress the same or do the same things... Because they don't understand what it's like. So, then you can't really explain it to them because they've already got their mind set on like that...Just keep having to explain and explain... Explain that we're different.*

**Alison 4a**

There appears to be some frustration here and 'frustrating' is a word used several times by Alison during her interview. Furthermore, even if twins had any differences, those were not naturally occurring differences; instead, twins were trying to actively generate those differences and were therefore not truly authentic actions. The "explain and explain" statement emphasises another persistent feature of twins' interactions with others, having to face questioning on what it is like to be an identical twin. The questions were also often loaded with expectations and unspoken stereotypes, presumably absorbed from the macrosystem of wider society (Bronfenbrenner, 1979;1993), about how twins should be. While there was an understanding that people would be curious, the recurrent nature of questions meant that they became a burdensome mark of difference.

*The questions are annoying and so's like the expectations like you're expected like just know everything really quickly about your siblings? Like, it gets a bit annoying or repetitive quite quickly.*

**Marie 8b**

It is not just the repetitive nature of such questions that is irksome, but also the perceived impossibility of being able to answer what it is like to be a twin, as no twin knows what it is like not to be a twin. In addition to being irritating, some questions were also viewed as intrusive, particularly those about the intertwin relationship.

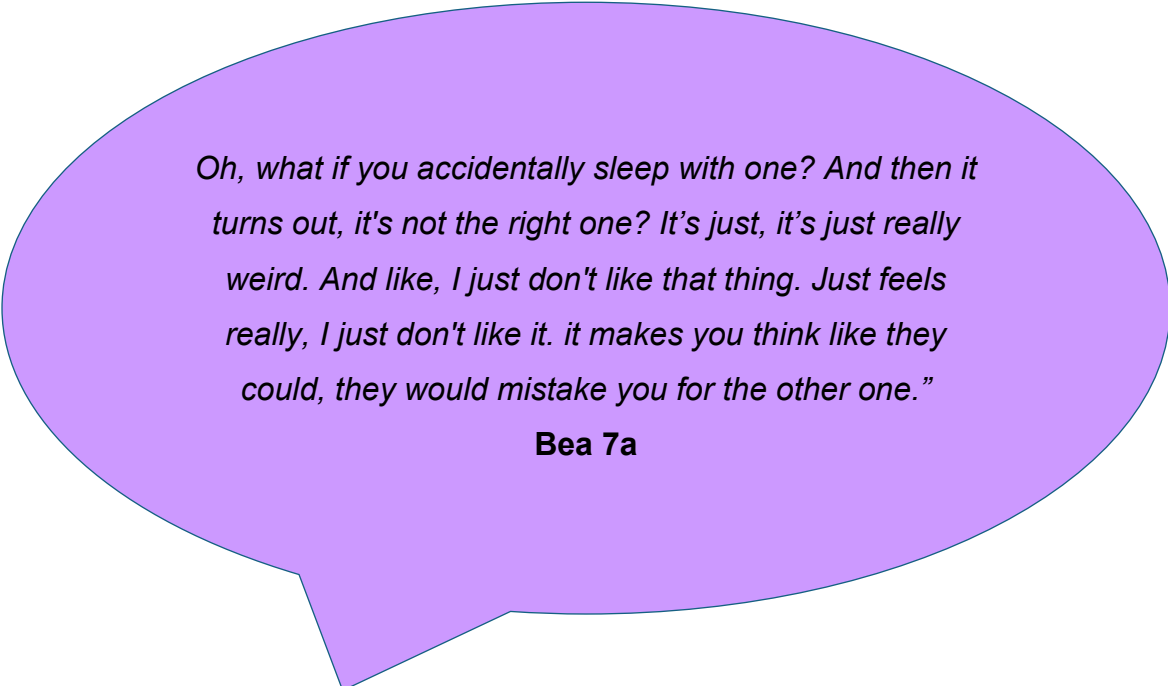
*I'm sure my brother doesn't get asked. Like, "Oh, how's your relationship with your sisters?" ...I just feel it's private, it's very private. Like, I wouldn't, I wouldn't go asking around people or how's your relationship with this person... but we still get asked them like "How close are you?" or stuff like that.*

**Beau 5a**

This intrusiveness about twin relationships and stereotyping them as interchangeable people generated an even greater emotional impact when it involved romantic relationships. This was experienced by Bea and Luna when Luna began having a boyfriend.

*People find it weird that, like, why did he choose me, not Bea because we're the same. Like people don't understand we do have different personalities, we don't actually look that similar anymore...I'm a bit upset because they don't just see you as who you are. They see you as like, just one person who, like but we're separate people. And like, a bit annoyed because I think that clouds their view of us. Because they don't have time to think we might be different.*

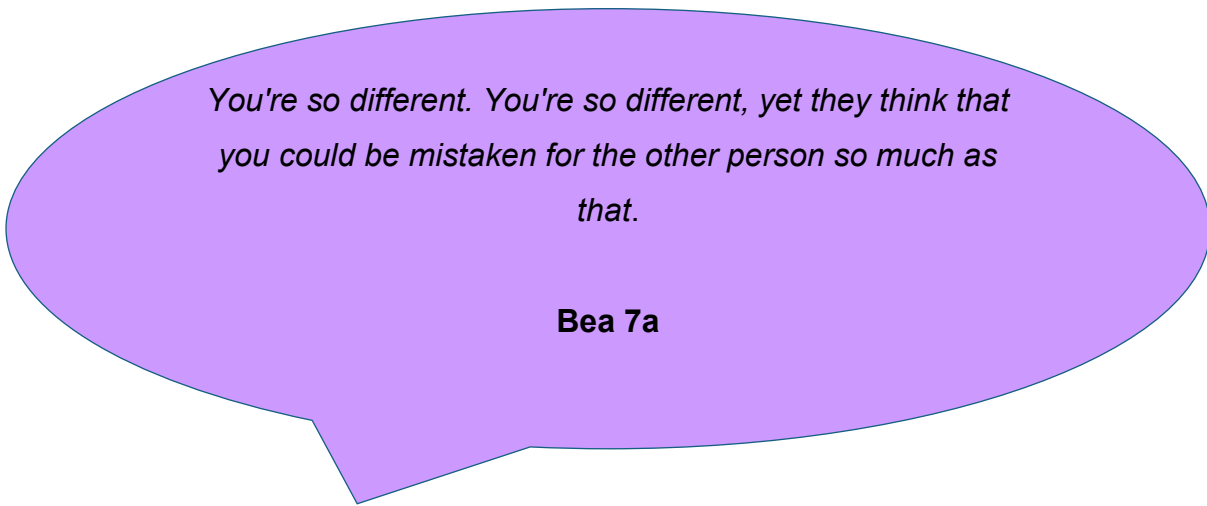
**Luna 7b**



*Oh, what if you accidentally sleep with one? And then it turns out, it's not the right one? It's just, it's just really weird. And like, I just don't like that thing. Just feels really, I just don't like it. it makes you think like they could, they would mistake you for the other one."*

**Bea 7a**

In both quotes there is a firm expression of unhappiness in response to these statements made by others. Luna is upset at not being seen as an individual “*who you are*”, instead she is just viewed as a single unit, not as two separate people. This discomfort with being viewed as one unit is shared by Bea. Bea is not upset that someone may think she would sleep with her sister’s boyfriend, but that someone could view her and Luna as interchangeable and indistinguishable from each other at such an intimate level. She emphasises,



*You're so different. You're so different, yet they think that you could be mistaken for the other person so much as that.*

**Bea 7a**

There is an interesting use of language here. Bea says, “*the other one*” and “*the other person*”. This could be a form of distancing, underlying how erroneous and wrong it would be to mistake her for another person, regardless of that person being her sister. The annoyance and frustration voiced in other interviews in reaction to incorrect names, twins may often outwardly accept as the actions of busy teachers, or distracted classmates, but to Bea, thinking that she and her sister could be interchangeable to people who knew them well was more hurtful. Twins can understand that people may struggle to differentiate them initially. When this attempt at merging is done by people who have known them for a prolonged time, it has a greater emotional heft.

*We're in year 10 now. We've known these people for quite a while and like, you think that you, they understand. But then they come out with weird things like, but “Why did he choose you?” And now we're like, Oh, so you don't actually understand? And it's a bit. It's a bit confusing, to be honest.*

**Luna 7b**

For Luna, the realisation that despite years of friendship, people still do not understand that twins are individuals, is troubling. Adolescence and the changes it produces may introduce many new situations where twins and twinship are misunderstood.

Running throughout the experiences of experiencing stereotypical assumptions of twinship, there is a feeling of being the centre of attention. Koch (1966) theorised that twins, particularly identical female twins, enjoy the attention they receive for

being twins, labelling this the prima donna complex among female twins. During the second stage of interviews, participants were asked if they enjoyed the attention that they received for being twins. There was one response in the affirmative, which stated that the attention for being a twin differed from other types of attention.

*Like the attention, I get on a performance like same as, as anyone else gets? The attention I get for being a twin, not everybody else gets it.*

**Vicki 1a**

This response was very much an outlier compared to the other participants. While some asserted that they did not enjoy being the centre of attention in any way, for others, the issue was that attention for being an identical twin felt unearned, or undeserved when compared to the attention they may receive for personal achievements.

*Like, I've not worked for it. I've just gotten attention for no reason. Not worked, I've not done anything.*

**Courtney 1b**

I don't want that attention. It's just like, you don't, I don't like people like, staring at me too much. Like so like on a stage, in drama and stuff. But mostly drama is like, I'm not there with my sister. And I'm this completely different character. So like, I'm not when it's just like, outside of acting or anything on stage. It's, you know, you don't want the attention of being a twin. You just want to be this normal, like human person...Like, everyone gets you're a twin when but like, it's like, I don't want to because it's like normal for me. It's not something like that so special. Like everyone else might put it.

**Marie 8b**

Marie's words of wanting to be "*this normal, like human person*" indicate that this attention for being a twin may carry an air of stigma, as it is attention received for being born outside of the norm. This echoes Pingu's remarks that she and her twin sister being referred to as a single unit was "dehumanising". Beau further elaborates on the negative burden such attention may bring,

*No, I'd rather I'd rather not get the attention because I just feel because you're a twin you get obviously you get more attention because you look alike, obviously, when we're back at secondary school. I know. Also, people are, "Because you're a twin you can get away with so much stuff. I bet you can do this, but you can do that".*

**Beau 5a**

Here the attention for being a twin is felt as a form of comparison between identical twins, and that comparison occurs at the cost of being able to be "my individual self" (Beau, 5a). This statement appears to cast twinship in a rather negative light.

However, several participants qualified their distaste for attention with a statement of enjoying being an identical twin.

*I think I do like being a twin and sometimes I like, like but I wouldn't say that like I really like the attention that people get because of being twins because sometimes it actually gets a bit annoying.*

**Bob 6a**

*I hate being the centre of attention, and I think, I love being a twin and I think it does just set me apart from everyone else. But I hate, I do hate, you know, you sitting in the classroom, it's when they start comparing you and things. I just don't like being the centre of attention.*

**Bea 7a**

Bea's statement that being an identical twin sets her apart from everyone else seems an intriguing one, as it is instantly followed by declaring that she hates the attention that being an identical twin brings. Possibly, what sets her apart is the relationship that she has with her twin sister, with twinship being viewed as a unique

relationship (Stewart, 2000) as opposed to being physically identical to another person.

Participants were also asked if they felt that twin boys were treated differently to twin girls. No one was able to identify any way in which this was the case, however, there was a sentiment among several participants that twin girls were in some way more visible than twin boys.

*I think being as a twin girl, you get a lot more looks when you walk down the street.*

**Beau 5a**

*I think it's [being an identical twin] a lot more noticeable maybe in girls than boys.*

**Bea 7a**

Two participants also stated that there may be differences in relationships between twin boys compared to twin girls, although there was disagreement as to whether these were expected differences or actual differences.

*I think it's more special because I feel like girls have more of a bond than boys.*

**Milly 3b**

*I think the expectations would be a little bit different as in like, well, people expect sisters to get on more than like brothers do.*

**Robyn 4b**

While limited findings, these do indicate that there may be an element of gendered perceptions related to how identical female twins and twinships are perceived by society at a macrosystemic level.

Many of the participants' quotes about the social experiences of twins seemed to have focused on the negative aspects. Yet all participants asserted that being an identical twin is something they viewed as a positive. The relationship with their twin sibling outweighs external negativity experienced by an identical twin.

### 5.5.3 Coping with comparisons and competition

From the previous quotes, twins appreciate being treated as two separate people as opposed to being viewed as one unit. However, when people would look for differences between identical twins, it then leads them to compare each identical twin against the other. Unfortunately, such comparisons are usually binary, falling along a positive/negative axis.

*It is nice if you're the one being complimented... but when you're the one who's not, it's kind of a bit, it makes you want to work a bit harder to achieve that.*

**Pingu 5b**

*We're constantly asked who's the smart one? Or who's like the most sporty one...I feel like it shouldn't matter. Because people don't ask like just normal siblings. It doesn't make me necessarily feel upset. Just like, it's a bit of a, I don't see why you want to ask that question.*

**Luna 7b**

Again, as the participants generally perceive themselves as having a twin sibling, as opposed to being a twin, there is bafflement at being asked questions that “*normal siblings*” would not receive. Though Luna found such questions and comparisons annoying, Bea, her identical twin, found them more distressing.

*You always feel worse than the other one. You always feel like, you're always put against each other. And you're always compared that it, it does hurt more because, like, probably my biggest insecurity is the fact that I look like Luna. And like, I always feel compared to her in a way.*

**Bea 7a**

Amongst peers, a point of comparison would arise when people would say that X was their favourite twin. This may seem a rather throwaway comment, but the unfavoured identical twin experienced this differently. Hence, the seeking of the label of favourite identical twin leads to a dual struggle, wanting to be popular, but concerned that to be popular requires being less of an individual:

*I think they mean to say it funny. But it's not funny... it just makes you compare each other more? So, it's like, oh, how can I be like better? Like, what can I do to become better? More better than Alison, then?*

**Robyn 4b**

*I just think it's like, you know that the other one like just say like Billie as their favourite, right? Then you just try to be more like better and a bit more like Billie. But then you're just exactly the same as her. And then it's annoying when you're the exact same as well*

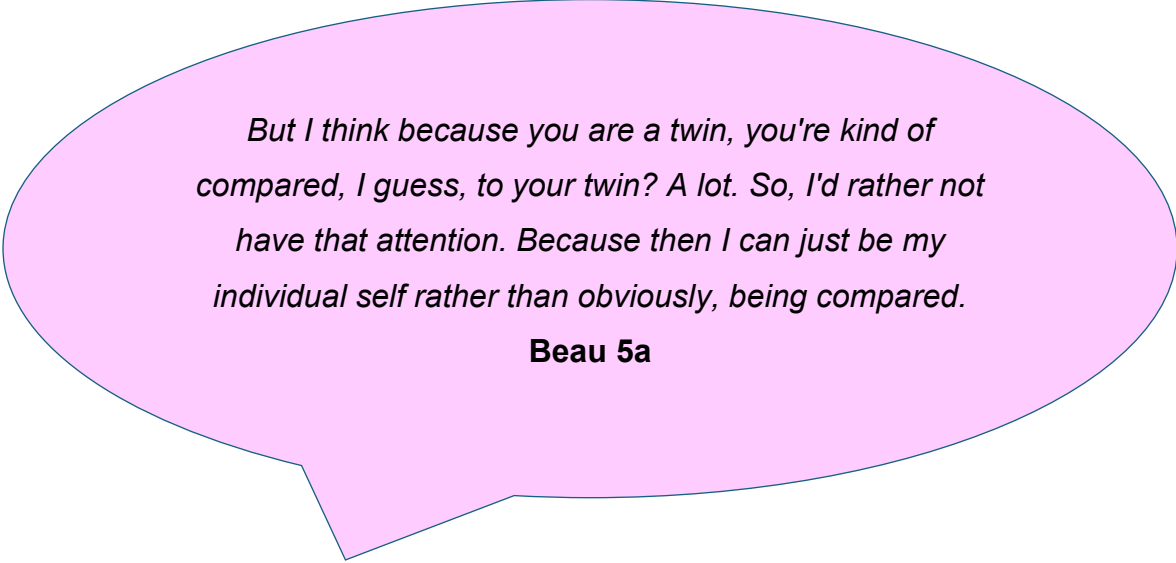
**Bob, 6a**

It is not just peers who compare identical twins. As identical twins progress through high school, they may experience being in different academic sets from their identical twin. This again can generate negative comparisons.

*Yeah, it's just like if people then compare like, oh, Alison is better than you. Like, no, I just learn a bit slower than her, don't pick things up as quick... I only remember happening once with a teacher and then a couple of times with other people... it was only said in Alison's class, I couldn't really do much about it... And it's like, why has she been telling you this?... It was a bit annoying because, and they said it in front of the class as well. So, it's like, why are you sharing my scores with other people?*

**Robyn 4b**

In the final questioning statement of Robyn's quote, there is an unspoken inquiry as to why personal information being shared about her is acceptable just because her twin sister is present in the classroom. For any other student, even a sibling, this could constitute a breach of confidentiality. That the teacher seemed to view publicly sharing information about a twin sibling as acceptable, seems to underpin that they do not recognise Robyn and Alison as two separate people, with rights to privacy from other students, including each other. Beau elaborated upon this cost of comparison further.



*But I think because you are a twin, you're kind of compared, I guess, to your twin? A lot. So, I'd rather not have that attention. Because then I can just be my individual self rather than obviously, being compared.*

**Beau 5a**

Being compared to her identical twin sister removes her individuality. Instead of being viewed as herself, she feels that she is always seen in juxtaposition to her sister. The participant table on page 124 (Table 5.1) shows that all the participants except for Bea and Luna have siblings, but they did not mention being compared to their singleton sibling at any point. As previously stated, comparisons typically seek to categorise one twin as "better" or "worse", yet neither twin feels comfortable with the labelling, with those viewed more positively feeling discomfort and unease and those labelled negatively feeling inadequate. This is entirely a problem inflicted by those around the participants by making such comparisons. When participants

discussed their own personal feelings about feeling in competition with their twin siblings, a more upbeat perspective emerged.

*Usually, we work together. So, it was different. So, it just, it didn't feel like bad to compete with each other. It just felt, well, this is different...there wouldn't be any arguments because there wasn't like, any time where we'd be jealous of each other.*

**Jane 2b**

*Some bits one's better than the other and then the other bits the other's better than the other. And then some bits kind of equal... Like sometimes you get annoyed by it or like maybe you want it too, but also like it depends what it is, like sometimes you're actually like "I'm fine not having that*

**Marie 8b**

*It can be annoying at first, then you get used to it and then you're proud that they got it.*

**Amy 8a**

Both participants admit to mixed feelings, but the final assessment is a positive one. Either the difference is accepted, viewed as personally advantageous or as a source of pride.

Previously, Robyn discussed being compared to her sister due to their differing maths sets. Returning to Robyn's words about Alison being in a higher maths set supports this perspective that participants have on their own competition.

*It might have been a bit annoying, like, on my side, because if Alison was going higher sets, it's like, she's better at learning. But really, it's not the case. It's just how quick you learn things or how easy you find it to pick up on things*

**Robyn 4b**

Here, Robyn immediately rebuffs any idea that Alison is superior to her. Rather, they are different and learn at a different pace, which Robyn later states that she prefers. By asserting this difference, Robyn places the comparison in the wider context of her knowledge of Alison and removes the sting from the comparison. Thus, the microsystem of the twinship is not impacted by tensions occurring within the microsystem of school and both girls actively manage the mesosystem where school and home interact. This ability to compartmentalise comparisons was an important coping mechanism for participants.

#### 5.5.4 Friendship groups

A consistent feature of the social world of participants was having the same friendship group at school. This was an organic occurrence for most participants, with only Alison and Robyn having separate friendship groups. However, sometimes, one twin would lead the friendship-making process.

*I remember, I, we didn't have a lot of friends when we started year seven. And then, Jane got loads of friends in our class, and then I just immediately started being friends with them. So that was kind of good.*

**Elizabeth 2a**

Elizabeth is very comfortable with this, probably because as her comments in Section 5.7.2 will show, she is generally content for Jane to take the lead in their day-to-day lives. For Bea, who feels more concerned about the role differences in their twinship, inheriting a friendship group through your twin can feel more troubling.

*I always worry sometimes, that my friends only started being my friends because I was a twin sort of thing. And because I had Luna sort of thing. I think that does worry me that when I don't have Luna, will I be able to like, make friends or things like that, without her.*

**Bea 7a**

As Bea has only experienced making friends with Luna, she lacks certainty in her ability to make friends as an individual and is concerned about the motivation within the microsystemic level of her peers to befriend her. While this is an understandable perspective, it is not one shared by the other participants who were generally more sanguine about having shared friendship groups. As Beau explains:

*I have a couple of friends that Pingu is not friends with. But otherwise, we have a group of us though just friends with each other. And it's the same friends. Pingu, I think has a couple of friends that I'm not friends with as much as she is, but we're still like alright.*

**Beau 5a**

Nonetheless, though Beau's comment seems initially to be a basic description, it is clear to see where tension might arise: having different levels of friendship within the same friendship group. Beau states that both she and Pingu have "a couple" of friends that are closer to them than their sister and then immediately clarifies that this is still acceptable: "...but we're still like, alright". There is therefore the tacit statement that this situation might have a negative impact upon both twins if there were to be any imbalance.

Unlike singleton children, where friends are generally an issue in microsystems taking place outside of the home, for twins in shared friendship groups, problems with friendships can also affect the relationship between their twin and themselves.

*Well, sometimes if two of my friends are having an argument. Yeah, I agree with one and she agrees with the other one. Yeah, it's kind of hard to deal with because if we go home, we have an argument about who's in the right or wrong. Yeah. It breaks up the friendship even more. But apart from that it's really good having the same friends.*

**Jane 2b**

This is an understandable dilemma. As individuals, differences of opinion are always likely to occur. An alternative perspective is that these arguments may cause difficulties for the twins, but they also demonstrate their ability to assert their own beliefs, even when it may be more straightforward for one twin to acquiesce to the viewpoints of the other. This may be why like Beau; Jane ends this example by clearly stating that a shared friendship group is a positive. This was not the

experience of all participants. Despite wanting to be in separate classes at school, Billie and Bob have a shared friendship group and it causes them both unhappiness.

*"It's kind of hard because there's sometimes, well, I really don't want to do something. But then I knew that if, if, like, if sometimes we go out to the park with one of our friends, and I don't. We got invited one time, and I didn't want to go. Well, I knew that if Bob went without me, then yes, the next day when we go to school, that they would be really good friends, and then leave me out.*

**Billie 6b**

*Oh, yeah. Wait, which one were you saying about? Yeah, I wasn't leaving her out. She wasn't in a very good mood. So, she was being a bit grumpy...So then I said that I didn't just want to sit there and let her and let her like, just sit there and be grumpy and I didn't want to just sit there and be bored. So, I just went, it was, it was only like five metres away from her.*

**Bob 6a**

The fear of being left out and the other twin being better friends with the other girls brings an air of competitiveness to the friendship group. Billie feels that she must prioritise remaining as close to her friends as her twin over her own wishes, which indicates a possible feeling of insecurity regarding her own friendships. This echoes

Bea's worries that her friends are her friends because of Luna. For Alison and Robyn, disharmony within their shared friendship group, led to them actively rethinking their social circle. Each purposely created a separate microsystem for their friendship group. When asked if there were any negative aspects to being a twin, both spoke about issues with shared friendship groups.

*Just generally because it's like, um, if, if like someone's being mean to the other twin, and it's like, "Oh, well, I'm being mean to your sister". It's like, I don't need to know that. Because do you not think she already told me? And then it's like it just like, yeah. And then it's like if you fall out with someone, and then the other one is still friends with them.*

**Robyn 4b**

Again, there is the obvious discomfort at the encroachment of friendship issues into their home life and the intertwin relationship. Also, while participants in five twin dyads mentioned owning a mobile phone, discussion of friendships seemed to focus on face-to-face encounters. Robyn later clarifies that these events happened during primary school, several years prior to the time of the interview, but they were clearly troubling enough to immediately be remembered when asked about the downsides of twinship. Alison agreed with the difficulties presented by this situation, which occurred during primary school.

*Probably was just like groups of friends? Yeah, it's almost trying not to leave both of you out. So, they need to include both of you. But then if one of them's getting left out, you almost both get that.*

**Alison 4a**

Within the quote is the double-edged nature of twins being treated as a unit, both initially included when things are going well, but then both are excluded if there are issues. It is intriguing to note, that when Bea is discussing an unpleasant situation in Section 5.6.3 she describes her twin in the third person, Alison does the same here *“But then if one of them's getting left out,”* as does Robyn *“and then the other one is still friends with them.”* Whether this is to distance oneself from an uncomfortable memory or is a coincidental figure of speech is not possible to categorise definitively, but it is an interesting use of labelling. Ultimately, unlike the other participants quoted, Alison and Robyn decided that they would prefer not to have shared friendship groups.

*It's kind of why we wanted to like have different friendship groups. And like a different opportunity to see.*

**Robyn 4b**

However, there was one overlapping friendship group for Alison and Robyn; they were both friends with another pair of identical female twins. Aside from Jane and Elizabeth, who had previously attended a local twin festival, no other participants mentioned directly socialising with twins, even if there were other twins in their class. Robyn described this friendship as

*It just gives me a bit more reassurance like to know, me and Alison aren't the only twins who do sometimes fall out or like, do things differently and have different styles.*

**Robyn 4b**

This reassurance from other twins was not something mentioned as lacking by other participants, who instead seemed rather nonchalant about the proximity or otherwise of fellow twins.

However twins' friendship groups were formulated, it did not seem that participants struggled to make friends or experienced peers being dissuaded from friendship due to their twin status. Yet Jane 2b did encounter someone using her friendship with a twin as an insult, "*She was like, are you gonna go to the park and play with your little twin*", a comment which seemed to mock having a twin as a playmate as somehow childish behaviour as opposed to other children who make friends outside of the home.

In general, friendship groups are a social arena where twins have to balance both their own social needs and their relationship with their twin. This balance was seen as worthwhile by most participants, yet if the friendship group was negatively impacting the twinship, in the case of Alison and Robyn, it was the friendship group that needed to change. This emphasises the primacy of the twinship microsystem.

As Pingu states

*Beau has her best friend, but then I always knew that I'll be her, I'll always be above them. I guess. Not like, but I'll always be more important to Beau. Yeah, just because we have such a strong relationship. Like, I will have a best friend but then it'll be Beau, above them. Like, she'll always be first. Like, that say if my best friend didn't like Beau. Then I would be like, but Beau is my best friend. So, you know? Something would have to change like, so we can work it out.*

**Pingu 5b**

The statement, “*she’ll always be first*” typifies the feelings expressed above. While friends are important, the twinship relationship is more important still. Therefore, friendships need to incorporate that hierarchy. Thus, the twin relationship is central to the sociality of twins, but as they spend more time away from the home microsystem, new issues arise both with being viewed as a twin and in balancing their relationship with their twin and others. Despite the negative experiences discussed in 5.6.2 and 5.6.3, the positivity of having a twin bond remains the most important aspect of twinship. How this relationship changes through the life course is explored in the next section, temporality.

## 5.6 Temporality

Aside from sociality, central to narrative research is the concept of temporality (Ollerenshaw and Creswell, 2002). This is a dimension that looks at the interrelation between past, present, and future and the ongoing changes within this realm (Clandinin et al., 2016), a concept which coheres with Bronfenbrenner’s (1986) concept of the Chronosystem, the system where development across time occurs. “*Events under study are in temporal transition*” (Connelly and Clandinin, 2012;479), therefore experiences are not fixed and are continually in a state of transition (Clandinin, 2013). Attending to temporality means gaining an awareness of participants’ past, present and their future plans, as it is these details which convert a description of an event into a narrative (Connelly and Clandinin, 2012). As the participants are experiencing adolescence, their lives are ones of continuing alteration. Even between interviews, they had experienced birthdays, moved up a school year and in the case of Milly 3a and Lilly 3b, transitioned from primary school to high school.

### 5.6.1 Developing differences

A frequent topic during the interviews was the differences that participants felt existed between themselves and their twin sibling and how those differences had evolved. While Luna 7b directly stated that her parents “*do encourage us to be ourselves and not be like a replica*” for most other participants, what role parents may play in the development of individuality was not stated. It was clear that participants felt their differences to be innate. When asked at the end of the Stage one interviews, “*If you could tell people one thing about being a twin, what would it be?*” 12 of the responses related to being an individual who was different from their twin.

*We're different, we're not exactly the same.*  
**Courtney 1b**

*We're two different people. We don't live the same lives.*  
**Alison 4a**

To which her twin, Robyn added,

*We see the world differently*  
**Robyn 4b**

This sentiment was also expressed by Lily 3b, one of the youngest participants who stated that

*Twins do still have a lot of differences*  
**Lily 3b**

Yet, despite this innate feeling of individuality, how participants asserted their individual differences had clearly evolved as a temporal factor and there were detailed discussions of tools used to signify their individuality. Clothing in particular, was a tool used from early childhood to differentiate themselves from their twin. Aside from the youngest participants, Milly 3a and Lilly 3b, who occasionally like to wear matching outfits, none of the participants currently wear similar outfits. For some, they had always been dressed differently, while for others, this was a conscious decision.

*“Well, we kind of stopped it a little bit. But when we get birthday money, we go on like a shopping day. We call it a girly girly shop. So, then me and Bob always used to buy one outfit the same. And it would be like a nice dress or something nice dress the same. And we would wear it if like we went out on special occasions, we have both. We would both like wear the same dress. But then we kind of stopped doing that. Because people might get mixed up. We don't like it if people will get us more mixed up. And like some people make jokes about it like to try and annoy us like sometimes they'll go even if they know that I'm Billie, they'll purposely call me Bob and it just gets really annoying.*

**Billie 6b**

For Billie, any pleasure from wearing the same clothes as her sister was not sufficient to counter the annoyance of being viewed as indistinguishable from her sister. There could also be a careful management of clothing items to avoid dressing too similarly.

*We normally dress differently because we've both got ..sometimes we'll wear our tops, leggings and our leather jackets, but that's the most similar we would dress. My jacket's red and hers is black and that's the most similar we dress.*

**Courtney 1b**

Courtney stating twice *"that's the most similar we dress"* seems a way of emphasising that they generally dress differently. Their similarities exist, but only within a certain boundary. Their differences in clothing are more prevalent and more of a reasoning underpinning outfit choice. Hair was another way of providing a marker of difference, with haircuts, colours and styles all being used to define one's individuality, especially in school where uniform requirements provide limited leeway for clothing choices. However, some participants felt that they were naturally more different in physical appearance now.

*I think now that we're a bit older, we don't look as like, I mean, obviously, we're still identical twins, but we don't look as alike as we used to.*

**Elizabeth 2a**

The interviews did not have any direct questions about the physical impacts of puberty and therefore, there was little mention of them in the interviews, apart from Luna. In her second interview, in addition to stating that she did not look that similar to her sister Bea anymore, she also discussed how having differences between her and her sister's bodies could also draw unwanted attention from those around them.

*Well, I mean, it's not easy to be like, especially in your teenage years, any girl because you're constantly compared to like, celebrities, and your body has to be perfect. And I do think I probably compare myself to Bea because we look the same. So surely our bodies should look the same. Like, I look at her and think she was skinny or whatever, but in the end. I don't really mind.... Well, I don't know [comments from others]. Like the exact, I can't remember the exact words, but it's usually based on like, our different breast sizes and the fact mine might be slightly larger than Bea's... Mostly girls, which is a bit upsetting, but some boys, yeah.*

**Luna 7b**

Here Luna is experiencing a double burden of scrutiny. She feels her body should look the same as her sister's, but she also has comparisons from others. She can accept that she looks different from her sister, but the opinions of others are more distressing.

Wearing orthodontic braces is a frequent development during adolescence. It might be expected that both twins would need to wear braces (Lundström, 2007), but for Robyn and Alison, only Robyn needed to wear braces. Considering that braces can be uncomfortable, hinder food choices and be aesthetically displeasing (Long et al., 2016), it would be easy to assume that Robyn may feel resentful of requiring braces. Instead, she saw it as a pleasing development, as it provided a clear difference between her and her twin sister:

*I quite like it because it like, just gives us another difference, which I think is always good. So, then people don't have to ask us they can just like look for themselves. Because otherwise, it gets annoying and repetitive if not.*

**Robyn 4b**

This underlines the importance of their individuality being recognised by others. No participant expressed any difficulty with feeling like an individual, instead, it was being treated as an individual by others, which was sometimes challenging to attain. The desire to be viewed as an individual meant that participants could also feel uncomfortable with being perceived as overly similar to each other. Yet this could be frustrating, as due to their age and relationship, some level of similarity is almost certain to occur.

*Cuz like, you might like the same music, music artists, but your favourite song by that artist, may be completely different. But you may like two different artists, but your favourite songs from each of those favourite songs. And those artists are quite similar to each other...It's like, being friend, just like a normal friendship, like, you can come together. Because, you know like similar interests, you kind of just like, click so... I don't really know. It's just like, something I feel like needs to be recognised more. You know, you can have similarities that aren't dead on the same. And you can have differences that still have slight similarities in them....Because I think then they can then like, like, notice that within friendships, rather than, just it's a twin thing, liking the same things, or it's a twin thing being very different from each other.*

**Marie 8b**

Marie is frustrated about her preferences being viewed as solely deriving from being a twin, as opposed to personal choice, and furthermore, that these similarities are viewed on a superficial level. Instead of a division between differences and similarities, there is more complexity taking place, particularly as her twin is her friend, as opposed to just being a sibling. Participants generally embraced developing differences from their twin as part of the natural development of their personalities and experiences. Therefore, within the commonplace of temporality, there is a combination of chosen actions and physiological changes, both of which are influenced by time.

*I think we've just like grown up and then have become different.*

**Robyn 4b**

It is also clear that from their daily choices of presentation, learning how to assert these differences is a form of proximal process, an interaction between the individual and “the persons, objects, and symbols in its immediate external environment” (Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 2006:797).

Nevertheless, there remained external scrutiny upon any differences and similarities which means that twins were sometimes concerned about not appearing authentic, but instead trying to appear different as opposed to just preferring to wear a particular hairstyle or item of clothing. While indeed, sometimes participants did choose visual props to distinguish themselves from their twin, they did not appreciate genuinely held interests being dismissed as merely trying to not be the same as their twin.

### 5.6.2 Role differences in twinship

Over the two interviews, three pairs of participants, Jane and Elizabeth (2a and 2b), Beau and Pingu (5a and 5b) and Bea and Luna (7a and 7b) discussed their role differences within their twinship. In most interviews, birth order in terms of being the older or younger twin made little difference. For Jane and Elizabeth, although Elizabeth was the older twin by 13 minutes, it seemed as though Jane had an older sister role, compared to Elizabeth, who took the younger sister position.

*It's always been like, Elizabeth's been a bit of a baby. I know it sounds bad to say it but it's like, Elizabeth has always been like younger, not technically, like, younger in her mind.*

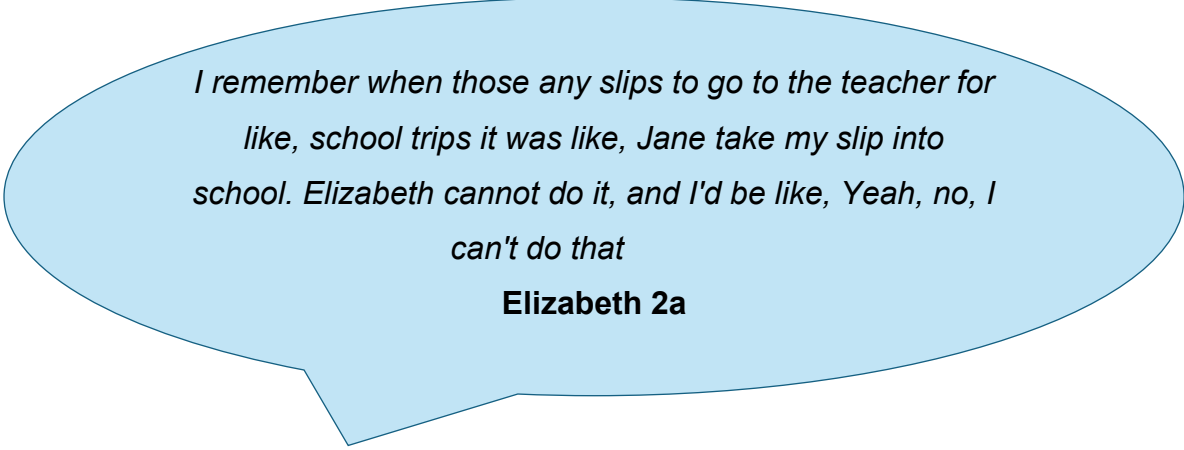
**Jane 2b**

*I would always like look for Jane's opinion on quite a lot and then always be like should I do this, should I not and then Jane would always point me in the direction cuz I couldn't really be bothered to do it myself. So, I used to just be like, Jane should I do this and you know, she'd point me in the right direction.*

**Elizabeth 2a**

Initially, it appeared that Elizabeth was very much dependent upon Jane, her twin. However, on re-watching and transcribing the interview, it was apparent that through being more reliant upon Jane, Elizabeth was able to wield a lot of influence. She generally avoided household tasks and responsibilities such as holding a key,

because Jane was seen as more competent. Another example of Jane being assigned a task instead of Elizabeth is the handling of letters to and from school.



*I remember when those any slips to go to the teacher for like, school trips it was like, Jane take my slip into school. Elizabeth cannot do it, and I'd be like, Yeah, no, I can't do that*

**Elizabeth 2a**

The choice of wording is significant. “*Jane take my slip into school*” is a straightforward request from Elizabeth, but “*Elizabeth cannot do it*” sounds as though Elizabeth is quoting the words of someone else. While Lily 3a did not discuss her role differences in depth, she did say “*When we're left home alone, she's usually the one in charge she's (Milly, her twin) the one in charge*” when discussing being left home alone, which again indicates the input of a parent into the assignment of that role. Household tasks are usually allocated by parents, and those responsibilities likely impact the wider role within the family (Cunningham, 2001). Despite being present in most of the stage one interviews and generally absent in the stage two interviews, parents were very rarely mentioned in either interview by any participants and thus were a hidden microsystem in terms of data. Nonetheless, while parents may not be directly mentioned by participants, it is important not to overlook their influence on the twinship and the wider lives of twins. A point of change in the relationship between Jane and Elizabeth appears to have been starting high school and being in separate classes.

*I think that like I remember when No, it was like when we started Year 7. And I remember I found out that I wasn't in the same class as Jane I was like, Oh my goodness, no she'll not be able to remind me when my homework is due and like stuff like that, because I, because we were always in the same class.*

**Elizabeth 2a**

*That's pretty good. At first, Elizabeth was quite upset about it. She actually came home and like was crying and complaining about it. But I think it's good to have because we see each other everywhere, every lunchtime, every form.*

**Jane 2b**

These recollections are from the Stage Two interviews, when participants were interviewed separately and there is an obvious difference in their recollection of the emotional impact of this separation. Elizabeth claims to be more shocked than upset, while Jane portrays Elizabeth as distraught, but supports this with the clarification that despite Elizabeth's initial upset, this separation was not total, and it is beneficial for them both. Elizabeth agrees with Jane's assessment that the separation in school has been positive.

*[I was] A little bit [reliant on Jane] but not a lot anymore. I used to be very dependent on Jane*

**Elizabeth 2a.**

For Jane, this lessening of dependency has also been advantageous. While there are still clear roles in their twinship, these are roles that feel “normal” as opposed to burdensome.

*It's like, it's a bit now that the responsibilities kind of divided among us. It's more well, it just, I don't know how to describe it. It's like a weight lift. A small weight lifted off my shoulders, but also like, I'm still gonna know when our homework is and tell her to take in like, it just feels normal to do that. And to like, remind her of things that she needs to do.*

**Jane 2b**

Bea and Luna chose to be interviewed separately for both interviews. This decision was not questioned to ensure there was no implication of there being a correct or incorrect decision. This is possibly why, compared to the other participants, there was more discussion during the interviews on their differing views about their twinship. When asked about being a twin, Bea stated:

*Well, there's always someone there. And I think being a twin, you're a lot closer than just being like a brother or sister because there's less of an age gap. Luna definitely sees some perks of it [being a twin]. But I don't think as much as I do, perhaps.*

**Bea 7a**

This is a common anxiety expressed by Bea, that Luna is less emotionally connected than she is. *“I definitely think I need her a lot, lot more than she needs me.”*

Nonetheless, when Luna was interviewed, she was very articulate in her feelings for Bea and her positivity with being a twin. Despite Bea’s concerns that Luna felt less deeply about the “perks” of twinship, Luna’s feelings on twinship were remarkably aligned and equally emphatic

*You've always got someone there to, like, say that, talk about the things or say, tell them like, things you don't want to necessarily tell other people. And there's always someone there to, like, support you, and they know what you're going through. Just someone who's there, in every way.*

**Luna 7b**

Nevertheless, there are role differences within their twinship, and these generate further differences in recollection. An example of this is who goes into whose bedroom for a chat.

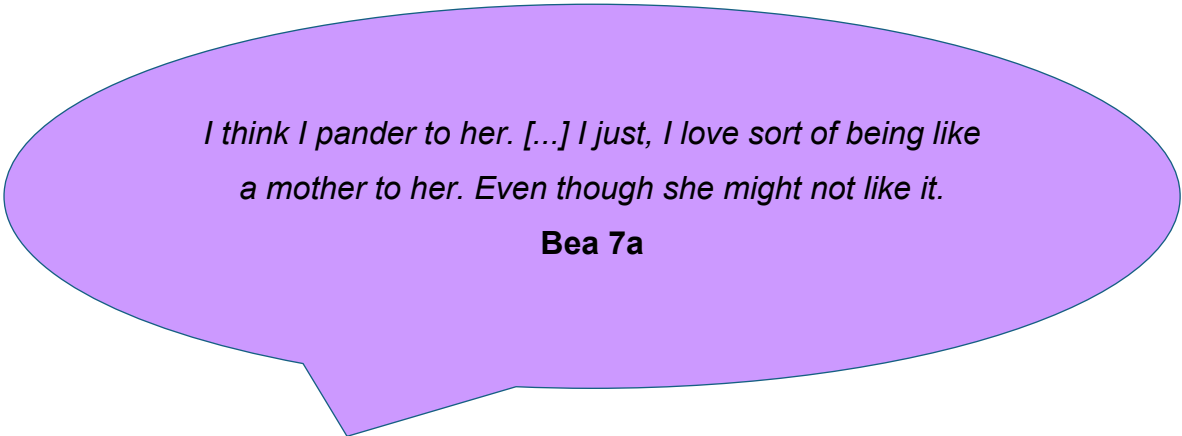
*But sometimes, I think Bea comes in. Like if we're not tired for a chat, and then she'll probably go...Yeah [Bea always comes to her bedroom], but if there's like something I really need to get off my mind. I'll, go into her.*

**Luna 7b**

*Oh, I'm always the one who has to go into Luna's bedroom, but I'm not very quiet about it.*

**Bea 7a**

To Luna, it seems fairly equitable that if Bea wants to chat, she comes to her and if she really needs to talk then she will approach Bea. Bea, conversely, does not mention Luna approaching her. To her, she is the one who always has to make the overtures towards Luna and so it becomes ingrained into her routine that she needs to approach Luna and therefore needs Luna more, or rather that Luna needs her less. The conflict between needing and wanting to feel needing manifests in other ways. Bea explained:

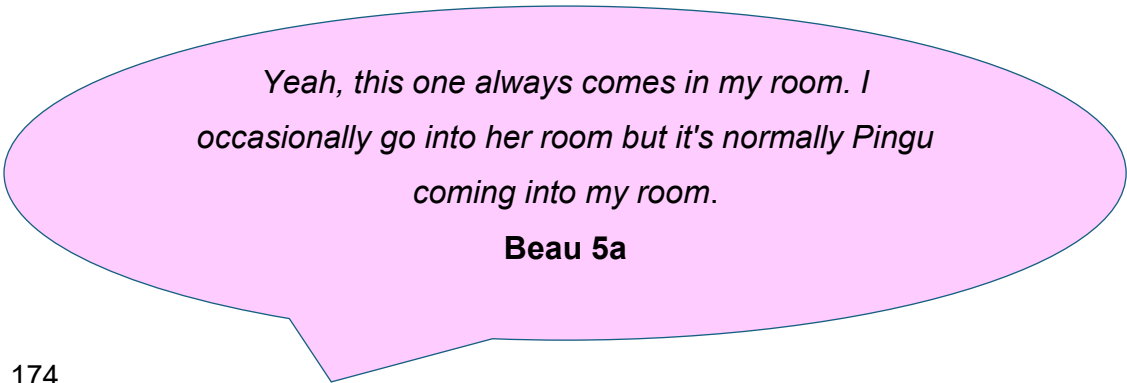


*I think I pander to her. [...] I just, I love sort of being like a mother to her. Even though she might not like it.*

**Bea 7a**

By adopting a motherly role, Bea is able to express her affection and feel close to her sister, even though as she admits, that affection is not necessarily desired by Luna.

Like Bea and Luna, Beau and Pingu also have set places for where late-night conversations occur



*Yeah, this one always comes in my room. I occasionally go into her room but it's normally Pingu coming into my room.*

**Beau 5a**

As with Bea and Luna, this also reflects their wider relationship. However, there is no concern about their emotional connection, instead like Elizabeth and Jane, there are issues of dependency.

*Sometimes Pingu won't go out like because we have like a little green area outside where we live. And then we have some other kids around and some older ones. So, we go out and just like, catch up with them. And I wouldn't say we go out to play we just go out and talk. But if I'm not going out Pingu won't go out. Because I think she doesn't like going out without me. But I would happily go out and go without her.*

**Beau 5a**

*I don't like to do things without Beau. And I'm a very shy person; I like to stay within my comfort zone. I think that's why one of my earliest memories is in my house, because it's comfort, like. But when I'm older, I want to become more confident. And so I do hope that I will have a lot more independence and won't have to rely on Beau as much as I do now. Because I knew, at the moment, I rely on Beau a lot more like, I'll ask her, oh, can you do this for me? Or can you do that for me? Can we go do this? Or can you go to the bar and get me a drink? Or can you go get me a drink from somewhere? Oh, can you go order this? Can you see my order for me? I want to do that on my own.*

**Pingu 5b**

Pingu's quote talks about the present, but it also conveys a hope for the future, where she *"will have a lot more independence and won't have to rely on Beau as much as I do now"*, thus recognising that her dependence on Beau is something that is desirable to change.

Elizabeth needed the shift of being separated at school to appreciate the benefits of being less dependent upon her sister. Whereas Pingu is older and already used to spending time apart from Beau at school, hence she is able to envisage why being less dependent on Beau is a positive move. While Elizabeth 2a and Pingu 5b seem more dependent on their twin siblings in a practical sense, for Bea 7a, the role difference is an emotional one, as she believes that she is more emotionally reliant on her twin and the twinship relationship. Throughout this theme, the twins show a high level of insight and awareness into these role differences, this does not appear to have been thrust upon them by adults. It would be tempting to look at these three twinships and assign labels of dominance and dependency upon the twins. Yet this rather two-dimensional perspective would overlook how the role differences play out in the lives of twins and the multi-faceted reasons behind those differences.

### 5.6.3 Future divergences, future togetherness

When asked about the future, participants held a clear vision of their future, which included their twin, and it also included a world aside from their twin. For some, this was because they had differing career goals. While for others, there was an unspoken need to specify what would be a comfortable degree of closeness and separation.

*Different towns, but like, not too far that you'd have to travel to the other side of the country or a completely different country to go see them... I don't know what I'd want to be doing, but in terms of like relationship with my sister, I'd kind of want to be friends and like maybe like see her maybe like once a week or always talk or meet up, you know, after work being that we're close enough to go say "Hi, can we have a coffee off work?"*

**Marie 8b**

This quote contains a level of specificity in terms not just of geographical distance, but also the tenor of their future relationship. Here the relationship is classified as a friendship and one which has the level of priority to allow for meeting spontaneously or at short notice. Considering this desire for closeness, it seems initially unclear why the first element of this future vision is that her twin lives in a different town.

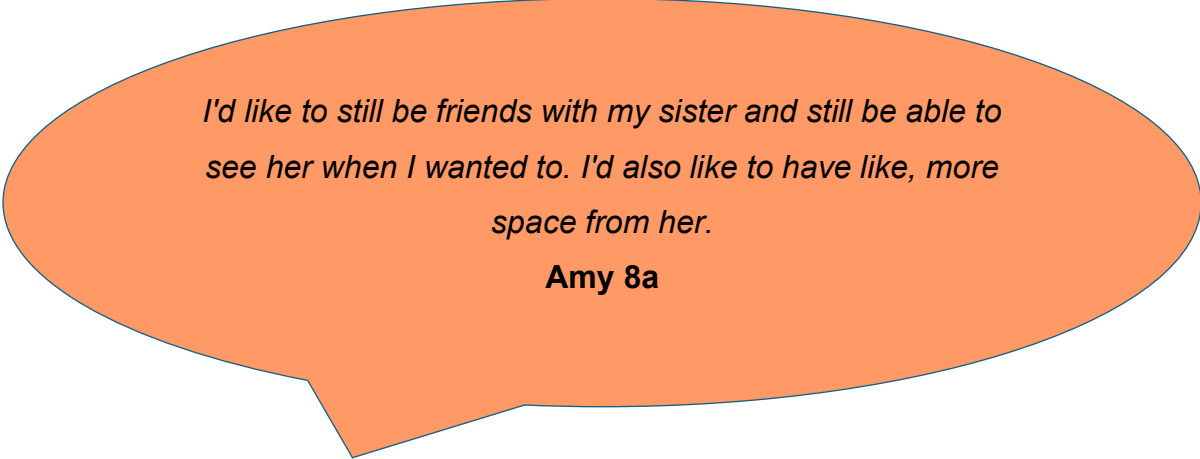
However, as Marie explains further

*I think, like when you're, when you get older and stuff and you plan like go and live your life by when you are, you're an adult and have family in like, different jobs. You kinda think maybe like, I think maybe people are gonna get confused when they see my twin. And wouldn't it be easier if you didn't have a twin? Then there wouldn't be boring people who are gonna get mixed up when they meet your twin. Or get confused. Sometimes it's annoying that someone looks a lot like you.*

**Marie 8b**

As much as Marie clearly wants to have a close relationship with her twin, this must be balanced against the need to be seen as an individual and what changes to enact within the mesosystem to ensure this occurs. Her twin living in a different town would

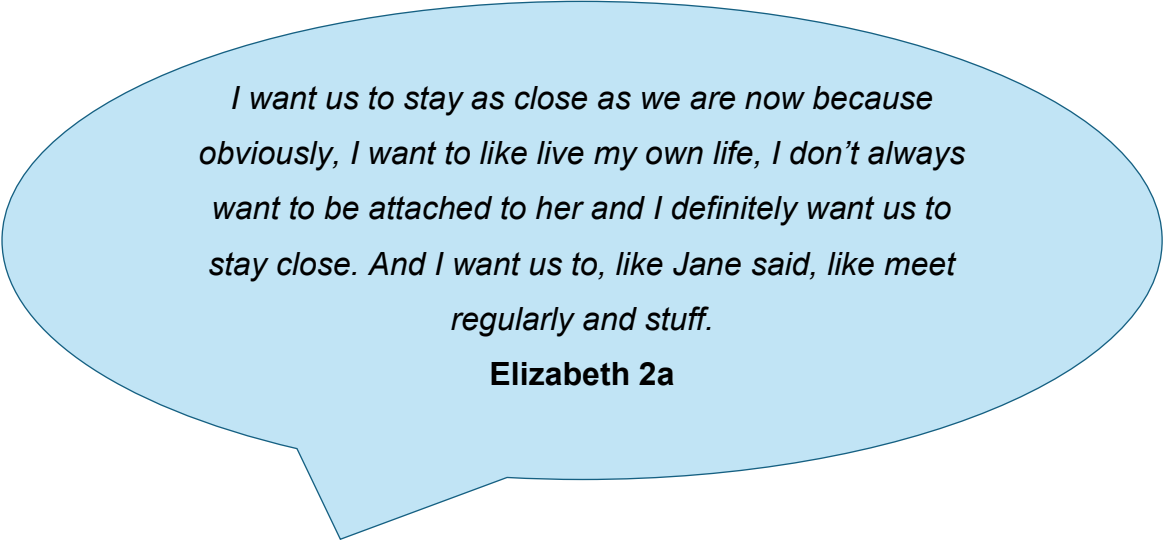
hopefully keep her away from work colleagues and friends, ensuring Marie is viewed as an individual. This duality of wanting a close relationship, while also wanting to build a separate life was a frequent feature of participants' discussion of the future:



*I'd like to still be friends with my sister and still be able to see her when I wanted to. I'd also like to have like, more space from her.*

**Amy 8a**

This need for balance is also present in twins who are concerned about their dependence upon their twin siblings:



*I want us to stay as close as we are now because obviously, I want to like live my own life, I don't always want to be attached to her and I definitely want us to stay close. And I want us to, like Jane said, like meet regularly and stuff.*

**Elizabeth 2a**

Elizabeth's wishes are very congruent with those of Jane, her twin sister. A need for regular social interaction and space is stated. The sentence "*I don't always want to be attached to her*" indicates that Elizabeth may currently feel slightly too attached to Jane. Hence, this vision of the future is a reassuring one; Elizabeth can be independent and still be friends with Jane. During both interviews, Bea expressed

concern that she is more dependent on Luna than Luna is upon her. This concern is reflected in her answers when asked about her future plans.

*To be the same. I would like it to be exactly the same. Just like in separate houses, hopefully...Because I think we do plan to, like when we first move out, we're hoping to go to university and would have the same flat there. But then, because we want to do different things in our life. We have, we want to personalise like our own space, we need our own space as well. I think it's more important to have our own different houses...Yeah, but I think she would definitely want to move out a lot quicker than I do... I'm not really sure. I think I definitely think I'm a lot, I like being where I am. At the moment, I think, I think Luna just really longs to be an adult, really. And then that. So, she's going to try and move out and have her independence a lot more than I do.*

**Bea 7a**

Here Bea wants to go to university with her twin but then wants to have separate houses afterwards. The separate houses cohere with all other participants have said, apart from Vicky and Courtney (1a and 1b) and Milly and Lily (3a and 3b) who want to live together. Nonetheless, Bea's wish to attend university with her sister is quickly overshadowed by her concern that Luna does not feel the same and instead prioritises her independence over her relationship with Bea. However, during Luna's interview, she stated clearly that she wanted to go to university with Bea.

*Because just like, every time we've moved school, like go to another school, or that the time we moved school, she's always been there. And like, it [going to university] is scary. It's scary your first day, and we're not going to study the same things. Just to have someone go through the same thing and know how you're feeling is like, it's comforting.*

**Luna 7b**

Though openly stating that they will study different topics, thus setting a clear barrier, Luna still feels she needs to have Bea in the supportive sibling role. These conversations took place during the first interview. Yet this is a topic that carries a lot of weight for Bea, as inspired by that interview, she broaches the matter again with her sister.

*I think it might have been after the first interview. Yeah. That conversation does come up quite a lot. Like, especially when we're just sitting on each other's bed, like what we're doing when we're older. And she keeps saying she's, wants to move to America and I keep trying to tell her not to do that...I'd definitely feel very different without her even though I could talk to her through the phone, I'd much rather talk face to face.*

**Bea 7a**

This is the only indication of the interview process impacting participants post-interview, but it does indicate that the act of conducting an interview, should not be considered as an event which is hermetically sealed from the rest of the participant's life, instead it could potentially be viewed as a microsystem occurring in the virtual world (Navarro and Tudge, 2023). Being questioned about your life and feelings is an unusual event and so may have additional impacts. Returning to the interview,

Bea is perturbed by the thought of her sister being so far away. When asked directly if she thought she would cope, she replied:

*Yeah, I think so. Yeah. After a while. Yeah. Yeah. Because, definitely, I had been able to, I didn't know maybe a few years ago, I didn't think I'd be able to cope. But now I think probably I would have. I would be able to.*

**Bea 7a**

Bea's ability to cope with her sister's absence is something she believes that she can now do, whereas previously this was not the case. Hence, not only does the twinship alter through time and circumstance, but the emotional needs and capabilities of twins are also subject to evolution with the chronosystem. Those capabilities are not only related to the twin whose sibling has moved away but also to the twin who chooses to move away, as Beau explains:

*Now, I'd say because if I wanted to go to America, and Pingu wanted to stay here, I know, my parents wouldn't like it, because obviously, we're quite far apart. But I know, Pingu, I know if Pingu wanted to go there. I would be like "Okay. It's what you want to do. I know, you'll do well over there." So, I'd be happy. And I'm sure she'd be the same for me... What would I want? I'd want to do what I want. If I wanted to go to America, I'd go to America. If I want to stay here, I'd stay here.*

**Beau, 5a**

Unlike the other participants, Beau indicates that her parents have an interest in her not moving too far away from her twin, possibly because Pingu is openly quite socially dependent on Beau. However, for Beau, both she and Pingu being able to do what they want to be happy is more important. She is confident that knowing the other twin is happy is sufficient, but ultimately, her main desire is to make her own choices. That ability to make individual choices, whether in career or location is highly valued by the participants and these choices are enacted in several dimensions, in the individual microsystems of twinships and families and evolving within the chronosystem. While the twins' worlds may combine or overlap, each twin views themselves as having a singular chronosystem.

## 5.7 Place

As Clandinin and Connelly (2006) state, all events occur within a specific location. Therefore, place is also an integral part of narrative inquiry. The bioecological model is also rooted in physical spaces such as home and school and the relationships that occur within them (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). For participants, many of their anecdotes were rooted in a particular location, whether it was the classroom or the home. As the interviews progressed, another place began to emerge, a space apart from their twin. Although this place could not be connected to a particular location, as a desired place, it was still an influential location in the worlds of participants and hence needed to be explored. This section reports on participants' experiences in school settings, their bedrooms and finally, places without their twin.

### 5.7.1 School

Unsurprisingly considering the age of participants (10 - 16), school was a frequently mentioned place throughout interviews and is therefore worthy of focus as a specific place, particularly as some notable events for participants, such as being placed in different sets, could only occur within a school setting. Schools could have a positive and negative impact on twins, yet the participants stated that they generally enjoyed school. Potentially this is because school provided them with the opportunity to choose to be apart from their twin. This choice was usually made when transitioning from primary school to high school.

*We don't have any classes together. We made it that way... So, we got the choice of whether we wanted to be in the same class or not, and we chose not to be. So, then there are almost two parts of the year. So, because there's too many of us it got split into two. And the people who you're on the side of the year with it as almost people who you're in classes with, yeah, you formed friendship groups with your side of the year. Yeah. So, because we were on different sides of the year, we had different people to talk to*

**Alison 4a**

*We both wanted to go in different ones. So, then we could like, argue less, just because otherwise we would sit next to each other a lot of the classes because it's register order.*

**Robyn 4b**

Both twins were very emphatic about this decision. Note that both use the pronoun “we”, to underline the joint nature of the decision. This discussion was taken from the first interview when they were interviewed together. Alison outlines the mechanism of the decision, and what they were able to choose, and Robyn provides the reasoning behind choosing to be in separate classes. Unfortunately, for Bob and Billie, the school asked them which class they wanted to be in but then failed to fulfil the girls’ requests.

*I was just like because we had said to all of the teachers from our primary because they asked us if we wanted to be together or separate. We said that we wanted to be separate. But we still got put in the same one.*

**Billie 6b**

*“I was quite annoyed because me and Billie wanted to make different friends and different friend groups that we weren't, like, always constantly together. And I was a bit upset then. Because they were the tutor groups that we were going from year seven to year 11. And I didn't want to be with Billie for that long in a tutor group*

**Bob 6a**

Again, there is the repeated use of the pronoun “we”, this is a decision that both Bob and Billie felt was an important one that was in their best interests and so they found it very frustrating that they were not listened to. It was a joint statement, yet it seems not to have been taken entirely seriously by adults located within the decision-making exosystem of the school. However, when Bob is discussing her feelings, she does so as an individual, using the pronoun “I”.

While being in different classes could be viewed as desirable, being in different sets could cause some distress. Not due to competitiveness between twins, but because it was felt that the school had not handled matters well. In Section 5.6.3, Robyn shared her unease at her results being discussed in front of her sister in another classroom. For Luna, her sister Bea being moved to a lower maths set was also handled poorly.

*“We like didn't get any warning. She just got moved. And like, I think usually you get, like, they should have told them before they were planning to move down, and maybe like, see if she needed any help. But they just went away with it. Everyone got told apart from when she was...I can't really remember having any feeling about it which is probably bad. But I just felt sorry for her because she was, she felt upset about it...I just don't think it was handled in the right way”.*

**Luna 7b**

That unease with the way the school had handled the moving down of a set was expressed similarly by Vicki when she was moved down a set:

*I didn't get any warning. So, I was really annoyed about it. Because it's not like I'd been told before the holidays or anything. Just sprung on us as soon as we got back to school.*

**Vicki 1a**

In both cases, it was accepted that moving down a set was the correct thing to do. Vicki stated that she had not worked hard enough in French, and though Bea did not discuss being moved down a set directly, she did acknowledge that Luna attained higher grades than her. The negative feelings emerged from the perception that the teachers did not seem to appreciate the distress being moved down a set would cause, which is potentially another example of demonstrating an unawareness of the needs of twins within the wider school mesosystem.

Many of the issues covered in Section 5.6.3 took place during school time. However, while participants accepted that their classmates would be curious and have questions, the behaviour of teachers was also not always desirable. As an example, for some of the participants, not only did teachers not remember their names, but they would also find it amusing to refer to them by a portmanteau.

*In primary school, this one teacher used to like merge our names because she'd say Alibin. Because she didn't know the difference. Or she'd say Alison and Robyn, and then we'd both turn around and she'd go "Which one's Robyn?"*

**Alison 4a**

*What really annoys me sometimes one maths teacher, actually he's a great teacher. And he's very funny in lessons. And sometimes he says both our names, he goes, like Marie and Amy, and then it's just kind of a bit annoying sometimes. You kind of get used to it.... and sometimes we call out yes, sometimes you think he shouldn't do this, but you just want to get the lesson done now.*

**Marie 8b**

Despite disliking such treatment, as it was teachers making such statements, in both cases each girl felt unable to object. The root of such dislike was not just the feeling that it was a lack of consideration on the part of the teachers, but that instead of being treated like two separate individuals, each twin was instead merged into a singular unit. This chafing against feelings of being merged was a repeated theme, particularly when discussing the world of school. This is because carelessness around the correct usage of names was viewed not only as unprofessional, as Marie says, "he shouldn't do this", but also an early marker for the ongoing disrespect of each twin's individuality. Failure to differentiate between twins could also impact behaviour management, where not correctly identifying twins could lead to a child being unfairly punished.

*But if it was like in primary school for talking, it'd be like, Oh well, you're talking. So, like, You're both talking and so both stay behind. And it's like, no, one of us is talking, but the other one's telling us to be quiet. And it's like, oh, you're both talking. So, both stay behind.*

**Robyn 4b**

During the second phase of interviews, Milly and Lilly discussed that at Christmas, their form teacher had written a Christmas card to all the students in the class, except for Milly and Lilly who received one Christmas card addressed to both of them.

*I feel I'm quite angry that she's treating us as one, not two because we are two different people. And I find it quite unfair that lots of people treat us as one."*

**Milly 3a**

*We're separate people and everyone else got separate cards.*

**Lily 3b**

These events hold significance to the participants and generate anger and annoyance because they show a careless attitude towards the twins' status as individuals. Being viewed as individuals matters hugely to the participants, yet they must spend large amounts of their time in an environment that may not be fully aware of or concerned with those needs. This is possibly why in Section 5.7.1 participants were able to provide so many examples of how they created physical differences between themselves. If they looked like individuals, they may be more likely to be treated as individuals.

Nonetheless, there was one example provided of when twins were able to use their perceived physical similarity in an advantageous manner at school. As Billie (6b), explains.

*“So basically, sometimes it's good to get yourself out of things...If you get three strikes on your conduct card, you have to get a detention. So, Bob had two strikes on their contact card, and she forgot her book. So that's another strike. And I had no strikes on my contact card. So, she made me pretend to be her so that she didn't have to get the detention...It was bit scary, because like it got, I don't know. I've got the same library next week, and I've still got her book that she forgot. So technically, we're gonna have to do it again to get it through with, like, finish it...It's kind of a way you can get out of trouble quite easily.*

**Billie 6b**

Here Billie and Bob are turning the inability of staff to be able to distinguish them from each other, into something which is beneficial for them. This was a recent event, which only took place in the week prior to the interview, so it was not possible to know to what extent this incident would influence their future behaviour. As Sections 5.6.2 and 5.6.3 showed, the participants have a strong aversion to being viewed as a single unit and seek to emphasise their individuality. Bille and Bob are showing that instead of being countered, such stereotypes could also be utilised.

Throughout these experiences, there seems a continual thread of a lack of awareness from the school about the needs and perspectives of twins, with the microsystem of twinship remaining misunderstood by teachers who were seemingly unaware of the negative impact of failing to treat twins as individuals. This generates further speculation about what consideration takes place concerning educating twins within the exosystems of schools and what macrosystemic influences are occurring. A place with a more universally positive role in the lives of the participants were bedrooms, which are discussed in the following theme.

## 5.7.2 Bedrooms

After school, bedrooms were a frequently mentioned place during interviews. As with schools, bedrooms as a place also served a dual role, although, unlike school, both roles for bedrooms were positive. All participants had separate bedrooms, except for Vicki 1a, Courtney 1b, Milly 3a and Lilly 3b. Sometimes separate bedrooms came into being because of house moves. However, it was generally a purposeful decision, and it was frequently devised as a shared decision.

*It was a joint decision between me and Billie. We both wanted to have separate bedrooms.*

**Bob 6a**

*I think we both agreed on it.*

**Beau 5a**

*Because we had a lot of disagreement towards the end, the last few years*

**Pingu 5b**

Once this decision had been made, having a place where they could be alone became highly prized. Arguments related to tidiness and possessions were frequently cited as a precipitating factor for separate bedrooms. With separate bedrooms, such arguments diminished, and each twin was able to enjoy their own space. The bedroom was a place where they could be alone. In addition to this, a

bedroom was a space for their possessions and a space to develop their hobbies and interests separately from their twin.

*Like, it's almost like our timeout spaces that if we wanted to do something be alone, then we'd go to our bedrooms.*

**Alison 4a**

For those who still shared a bedroom, it was their shared space, where they could be together, without any other distractions. Courtney 1b, described themselves during the Covid 19 lockdown as

*We were locked in our bedroom together, chatting (both giggle) ...We locked ourselves in there...We share a bed...My mum had to get us a double bed as we would just climb into the single bed together.*

**Courtney 1b**

The shared bedroom as a space for comfort was also evident in Milly's account of when she lost a soft toy:

*It's one time I lost one of my favourite toys, P\_ that's a pug and she was reading stories until our Mum came back. You [Lily] hugged me but then eventually I fell asleep.*

**Milly 3a**

Yet for those with separate bedrooms, this space played a dual role. Although bedrooms could be a space away from their twin, they could also provide this place to be close, away from others. In the bedroom, twins can relate to each other in private. A commonly mentioned way of doing this was through late-night chats.

*Sometimes if we felt like I haven't spent as much time with Beau maybe. Or sometimes if we're just going to have a movie night or something. I'll just stay in here. So, I wouldn't wake up mum and dad crossing over in the room. Sometimes nightmares as well. I know Beau comes in my room if she's had a really bad one.*

**Pingu 5b**

Here, the late-night chat can serve a social function, such as watching a film, but also a place to seek comfort after nightmares and more than that, to work on their relationship, if they feel they have not spent sufficient time together. The duality of the bedroom is an example of how twins manage their twinship to enable themselves to have both time apart and time together. As for the reasoning underpinning the desire for time apart from their twin, this will be discussed in the final theme, *A Space Apart*.

### 5.7.3 A space apart

In Section 5.8.1 which examined experiences of school, it was a common sentiment to want to be apart at school, particularly on moving to high school. This theme will explore the underlying reasoning for wanting to be in a place apart from your twin. Returning to Bob and Billie, of all the participants, they were the most open about arguing with each other and not always having a harmonious relationship. Therefore,

it is possible to assume that their desire to be separate is born from this animus.

However, as Billie further explains, this would not be fully accurate.

*Sometimes I prefer being without her because it's, it's sometimes just like, sometimes it's just nice to be away from each other. Because we're with each other all the time... Cuz sometimes, it's just nice to not do everything together. And also, like, say, I don't know how to explain it, but it's like, you don't know everything that goes on in their life. Like there's like some things that you can like, just have this not same as, I might have done something really fun. That like she's not in like, not experienced as well. So, I can tell her about it and stuff without her already knowing all about it.*

Billie's need for a space apart from her twin has different elements. There is a desire to not be together all the time, but there is also the sentiment that having separate experiences would provide them with more to discuss. Pingu and Beau chose to be in separate classes and Pingu describes their reasoning as being centred on space and friendships:

*I think we got to choose if we wanted to be in the same mentor group, but we decided not to because we wanted to make different friends. And we didn't want to be on top of each other every 24 seven every day of the week.*

**Pingu 5b**

Again, the choice of a different class is defined as a space, a place where their twin sibling is not. To not have that space is expressed as metaphorical physical encroachment, "be on top of each other every 24 seven". Thus, rather than being a sign of disharmony, choosing to be separate at school was a shared, positive

decision that would benefit them and their twinship. Nevertheless, this was not universally the case. While Jane found being separated an enjoyable experience, it took Elizabeth more time to adjust, and she saw the time apart as something made bearable by shared time together:

*Well, in Year 7 when we first like moved in Year 7, and we got into different sets. I was really worried because I've never been in a class with without Jane before. But now that I'm in Year 8, and obviously I've experienced it. I don't really mind it as much anymore because we still get to see each other after school and during form and stuff like that.*

**Elizabeth 2a**

This illustrates that a parity between twins in decision-making should not be assumed. Not all twins may view time apart as beneficial, especially if they did not make that choice. Courtney and Vicki have been in the same class throughout primary school and high school. Courtney said that even when her Maths teacher wished to move her up a set, she refused as she preferred being able to work alongside Vicki. This term, however, Vicki was moved to a lower set in French.

*Since its first gone on, it's like, it's gotten easier. It has now I've gotten more used to it.*

**Vicki 1a**

When asked directly, Vicki stated that she would still want to be in the same French class as Courtney. One could presume that this means Vicki would never want to be in a separate class to Courtney. Yet, when discussing GCSE options, Vicki is far more sanguine about separation.

*I think we're gonna be picking different ones. Because we, because we're definitely doing two of the same thing because it is our favourite subject. Then there's and then like, drama and history, then I also want to do music, which she won't be able to do as she can't play any instruments...It's like, it'll just be like, alright, because I've had like my decision, I thought through it and I know that is going to happen and everything.*

**Vicki 1a**

Vicki does not have the same need for space from her twin as the other participants, but she is still willing to seek this space and view it as a positive requirement when there is a practical reason for her to do so. The final reason expressed for wanting a place apart is to be seen as an individual, as Alison 4a and Luna 7b explains:

*The teachers get to know you not as a twin, but as yourself. Not with like, one extra person with you.*

**Alison 4a**

*I don't know if it changed it just more that we were spending less time together at school, because we're putting separate forms and separate classes. And I just think maybe we became more aware of ourselves because we weren't together during the school day apart from break and lunch. And that was, that was good.[...] people, if they don't know if they just see you in the class and they don't, sort of compare or judge you to your twin. And sometimes I do miss her like when something comes up we both like or something. That's the only times I really think I wish she was here.*

**Luna 7b**

The twins interviewed sought space to broaden their social circles and to improve their relationship with their twin, again this space is sought within the microsystem of twinship, but what space is available may vary through the chronosystem. Once that space had been attained, there did not seem to be any regrets, or feelings of loss. Instead, there was a consensus that they still spend a great deal of time with each other at home and appreciate this time more.

## 5.8 Conclusion

This chapter has presented the findings from the two stages of interviews with all 16 participants. Participant transcripts were analysed using the Clandinin and Connelly (2000) three commonplaces approach of sociality, temporality and place to generate themes that explored the inter-twin relationship and the interaction between twins and their social surroundings, while also using Bronfenbrenner's bioecological model (1979; 1986) as a theoretical framework.

Sociality contained the contrast between the warm centrality of the twinship in participant's lives, with the difficulties dealing with the comparisons and stereotypes bestowed upon them by others. While twins perceived themselves as individuals and expressed no feelings of uncertainty concerning their identity, their social contexts were more troubling. Participants had to manage the dual difficulties of being denied an individual identity or only being viewed in contrast to their twin. Despite these challenges, their twinship was clearly a great source of positivity and remained the most important aspect of their lives as twins. Whereas the state of being a twin and receiving attention for this was comparatively unappealing, the twin relationship was viewed as the central element to being a twin, as opposed to any specific twin identity.

Difference was the main factor running through Temporality, both terms of naturally occurring differences and utilising available tools such as clothes to assert differences. Twins felt themselves developing differences both physically and in terms of future desires. While participants were able to provide rich past narratives of roles differences and developing displays of individuality, they were also able to envisage their future relationship with their twin, both in terms of closeness and location. Notably, there was a lack of anxiety about their future selves, with participants seemingly confident in their twinship, while contemplating divergences in career plans or living circumstances.

Finally in the third commonplace of Place, participants provided narratives where they made active, considered decisions about places, with minimal mention of parental influence. There was a duality in these decisions as both time together and

time apart could be viewed as beneficial for twins and their twinship relationship. However, participants would generally prioritise their individual needs. For example, separate rooms allowed more space for their possessions and GCSE options were selected on the basis of their own interests, again demonstrating that participants perceive themselves as individuals, without any difficulty.

This following chapter builds on the themes and findings from this chapter. Both Bronfenbrenner's (1979; 1993) bioecological model and Lundy's (2007) model of participation will be used as a theoretical framework to draw together the research findings and relevant literature to answer the research questions.

# Chapter 6: Discussion

## 6.1 Introduction

In this study, I have explored the experiences of adolescent identical female twins in England. The previous chapter set out the findings from the two stages of interviews conducted with all 16 participants of this research. This discussion chapter aims to position the findings in relation to existing research on the experiences of twins, twinness in the life course, and the evolving nature of twinship to answer the research questions and thus make clear my contributions to the wider body of knowledge on twins and twinship.

First, the aim and research questions will be revisited. Bronfenbrenner's (1977, 1993) bioecological model has been used as the primary theoretical framework. The experiences of twins from a bioecological perspective will be set out with considerable focus on the microsystems of twinship, the stereotypes and stigma from the macrosystem and how they filtered down into the microsystems and finally, the evolution of the twinship within the chronosystem. The Lundy (2007) model of child participation has been used as a secondary theoretical framework when considering participant voices and the spaces, audience and influence those voices may or may not have on their surrounding settings and those within them. The words of my participants have been placed at the forefront of the data, both in the results chapter and within this chapter (Lainson, 2020), which connects to Clandinin's (2016:206) views on the importance of "honouring narratives".

## 6.2 Research aims and research questions

The aims of the study were to gain insight into the experiences of adolescent identical twin females from their perspective, as this is currently a significant gap in the literature, despite quantitative research studies showing that identical twin females are more likely to experience codependency (Fischbein, Hallencreutz and Wiklund 1990, Akerman and Suurveen 2003 and Penninkilampi-Kerola 2006) and low self-esteem (Akerman and Suurveen, 2003). The adolescent period was chosen as the age of interest, as adolescence can be challenging for twins as they seek independence from their parents and their twin (Ainslie, 1997; Smith, 2007; Zhou, 2015).

The study aimed to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the experiences of identical female twins in England?
2. What is the role of twinning in the life course of identical female twins?
3. What is the evolving nature of twinship over their life course?

These research questions will now be discussed, and answered, in turn

### 6.3 RQ1: What are the experiences of adolescent identical female twins in England?

This study found that the experiences of identical female adolescent twins inside and outside the twinship encompass several microsystems of the twinship itself, the family and classmates. The twin bond proved central to the experience of twinship while displaying how the closeness of that relationship did not impact participants' sense of their own individuality. To answer Research Question One, the themes discussed within this section are *Permanence and Prominence of the Twin*

*Relationship*, which examines the nature of the bond between twins, *Companionable Competition*, which focuses on how twins perceive situations which give rise to inter-twin competition, and finally, *Roles of Reliance and Independence* explores the fixed roles twins may have within their twinship.

### 6.3.1 Permanence and prominence of the twin relationship

This theme is about the natural bond between twins. The findings highlight how the twin relationship and the benefits they felt it brought to their lives were vividly described by participants. The central factor of this gain is the presence of the twin sibling and this was the most prominent aspect of the sociality commonplace explored in Chapter 5. The presence of the twin sibling was not just an intangible sense of comfort but a perceived as an ever-accessible source of support in the social context. Instead of entering a new microsystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; 1993) as an individual, a twin sibling means they “*automatically have a friend*” - Jane 2b, someone alongside them, in an existing, shared microsystem as a positive form of support. Starting a new school or a new club is mentioned as previous examples of this being helpful, and moving to university was identified by participants as another instance of the utility of a twin sister, as mentioned by Luna 7b. Further examples of the advantages of overlapping microsystems (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; 1993) include completing school homework or competing in a particular sport. Unlike singleton children who may not have anyone to practice with,

“*with us two, because we live together, we would always be able to do it.*” -

Courtney 1b.

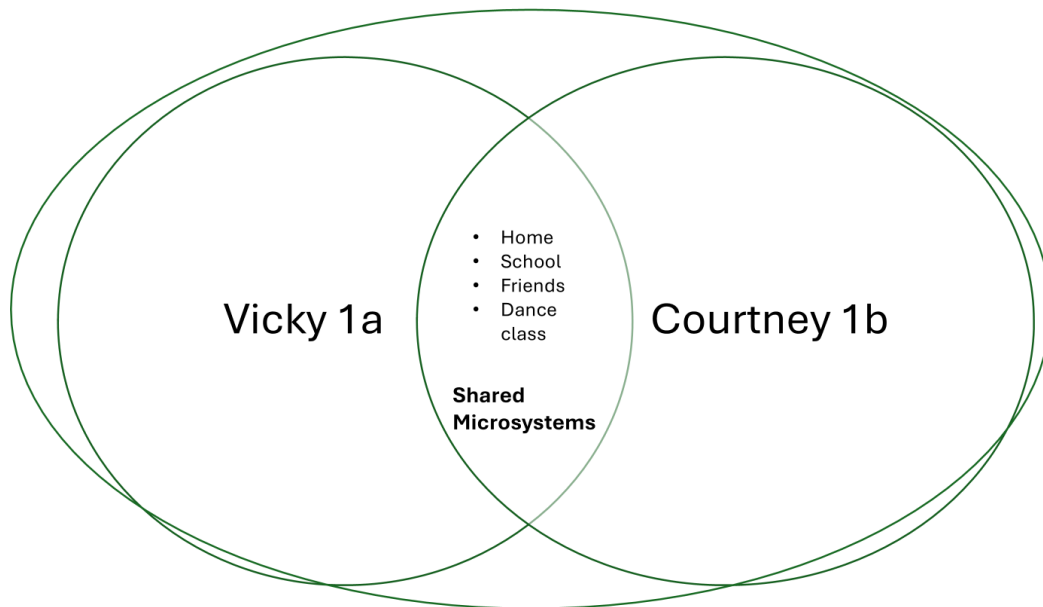


Figure 6.1 Mapping the shared microsystems of Vicky 1a and Courtney 1b

This presence of the twin is bioecologically mapped in Figure 6.1, using Vicky 1a and Courtney 1a at the time of their Stage one interview as an example. As Vicky 1a and Courtney 1b are together in the home, school and leisure settings, their twinship microsystem is present in multiple contexts. Klein (2017:37) posits that twinship is a “*unique same-age caregiving relationship*” and that this relationship is “*integral to twin identity*”, while one of Kozlak’s (1979:119) participants stated that in twinship the relationship differs from that between an older or younger sibling as it lacks the seniority issue. However, this research indicates that being the same age in itself is not what generates this closeness, but the increased presence of the twin in childhood because of that same age. In this research, all but one pair of twins had other siblings beyond the identical female twin. Despite this, while Beau 5a and Pingu 5b in particular talked about their close relationship with their brother, for most participants, the age gap between them and their siblings meant the experiences they shared with their twin sibling differed from those experienced with their other

siblings. Particularly as shown in this research and within the work of Bacon (2005) and Heinonen et al. (2016), twins usually grow up sharing bedrooms, classrooms and friends far more than most siblings.

This means that twins share the same settings and usually overlap micro and mesosystems, to a greater degree than differently aged siblings (Bronfenbrenner 1979; 1984). Thus, the analysis of twinship using a bioecological model framework in this research provides greater insight into why a twinship relationship may feel emotionally closer than sibling relationships. However, a limitation of this mapping is that whilst the bioecological model (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; 1993) can show which microsystems exist, they cannot show the differing relationships within each shared microsystem. For example, while Vicky and Courtney share friends, they may well not have similar levels of closeness with all the friends in a friendship group. For the participants in this study, they had spent most of their lives alongside their twin with whom they had a close, loving relationship, hence it is understandable from a bioecological perspective why they would view the presence of their twin positively. Furthermore, re-examining these shared spaces with a bioecological framework, means that these are not only what Bacon (2005) states are areas of shared presence, but places of shared proximal processes, “reciprocal interactions between an active, evolving biopsychosocial model and the persons, objects and symbols in its immediate external environment” (Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 2006:767) where child development takes place. Bronfenbrenner (2005) argued that for successful development, enduring parent-child relationships are required and was concerned that many children did not have enough time with their families. Yet sibling relationships are featured only from the perspective of the birth of a new sibling being a potentially disruptive “ecological transition” for the child (Bronfenbrenner,

2005:53). This seems to overlook the role siblings have in broader child development.

The high value placed by participants on the permanence of their twinship was a prominent theme from the findings. For instance, ten of the 16 participants directly stated, a twin sibling is always someone there. The word “always” cuts through the chronosystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; 1993), as participants stated through their narratives that their twin sibling had always been there for them and always would be as they passed through life, even though they may not be physically in close proximity. These findings agree with Greenwood (2018) in their research from the USA, with adult twins who were interviewed once, found that participants had a firm perception of the permanence of their relationship, which she categorised into two different themes: *Never Alone* and *Always*. Whilst the findings agree with Greenwood’s (2018) conclusions, this thesis adds to current knowledge, as it indicates that this perception of the permanence of the twinship is one that is developed from childhood, rather than having been generated by an adult looking back upon their past experiences. It is also important to note that, unlike in Greenwood’s (2018) research where twins were interviewed on one occasion, participants in this research were interviewed in two separate stages, six months apart, and provided a consistent picture of their relationship across this time period, demonstrating that this perspective on their twinship was consistently held.

A significant divergence between the findings of this research and the literature was participants' statements that twinship means “always someone there” and is therefore a protective factor against feelings of isolation or loneliness. This is in sharp contrast to adult views from Fitchmuller (2021), Klein (2017) and Hart (2021),

who all stated that physical separation from their twin can generate profound feelings of loneliness as twins try and fail to replicate the depth of bond or level of presence they had with their twin in other relationships. While participants may miss each other when apart, more prolonged feelings of loneliness did not feature in this research data as either a past experience or a future concern. Indeed, with the exception of Bea 7a, even when participants were asked directly about their future lives, there was very little anxiety expressed about the stability of the twinship as a microsystem, with participants confident that they could maintain a sufficiently close relationship with their twin, regardless of any issues such as geographical distance. This divergence in perspective may potentially be due to participants not yet having experienced living apart from their twin and is another example of the differing perspectives adolescent twins may possess, compared to adult twins.

Participants in this research were clear that having a twin was largely a positive experience and more importantly, were able to articulate its benefits readily, explaining with clarity what their twinship brought to them, in terms of both a day-to-day companion and that lifelong relationship, with someone who had always been available to them emotionally. This differs from Davis (2014) and Martinez (2021), who say that the twin relationship is difficult to describe because the twin relationship, or twinship is viewed through various lenses of stereotypes and idealisation, while Prainsack and Spector's (2006:2746) work, features one identical twin describing her relationship with her twin as "*inexplicable*". Within this research, a question that several participants disliked being asked was what it is like to be a twin, explaining that this was because they could not answer what it is like not to be a twin. Yet despite this perceived inability to describe the state of being a twin, in contrast to Davis (2014), Martinez (2021) and Prainsack and Spector's (2006)

findings, participants were able to discuss their relationship with their twin with rich descriptions.

Notably, these joys and positives are not about the state of being a twin and there is no mention of identicalness or similarity. Instead, the positive aspect of being a twin is simply having a twin sibling. This provides clarity to the definition of twinness, as discussed in 1.6.3, which discussed the tension between twinness defined as having a same-aged sibling, versus twinness being perceived as physically identical individuals. For participants, twinness is having a same-aged sibling. A twin is “*someone there, I’d known all my life*” - Vickie - 1a. The person “*there*” is viewed as someone always available to them for support, emotionally. This was considered as such a positive, that two other participants speculated that singletons must wish they had a twin, emphasising their feelings that this permanence and closeness is something only twins experience. “*I always had someone and they had like older or younger siblings and I just felt so lucky to be able to always have someone with me*” - Luna 7b. This quote neatly encapsulates the joys of having a twin: having someone with you, permanently. The research findings agree with Bacon (2005), Davis (2014) and Greenwood (2018) showing that the benefits of being a twin do not reside with the individual but within the relationship, twinship with their twin. From the perspective of bioecological development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; 2005), this is the microsystem that they share with their twin. The relationship is with another person who will always support you, hence, the twinship is always a relationship with another person. This means that contrary to Ortmeyer’s (1970:125) claim that twins experience a merged identity, where two personalities form a singular “*we-self*”, this research instead agrees with Hocter (2017) that twins view themselves as individuals and the self-other distinction between twins is always present. Therefore, this

research demonstrates that the twinship experience is a bond between two people, in a shared microsystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; 1984) which does not generate a conjoined identity.

This study demonstrates that when provided with the space and audience as encouraged by Lundy (2007), adolescent twins can communicate equally vividly and emotionally about their feelings for their twin and define the importance their twinship holds during adolescence, and that it is this relationship which is integral to their experience of being a twin. This contrasts with most narratives of twin childhood in the literature which are from a retrospective perspective, with adults looking back upon their childhood and adolescence as featured in Case (1996), Greenwood (2018); Ncube (2018) and Rosambeau's (1987) studies. A discussion of twinship from an adolescent perspective is advantageous, as it has been suggested by Pogrebin (2010) that adult perspectives of twin childhood and adolescence may contain an element of romanticisation of the twinship, particularly if the twins no longer spend as much time together as they wish. Instead, this study demonstrates that there is a consistency in the centrality and emotional warmth of the twinship relationship.

### 6.3.2 Companionable competition

*Companionable Competition* focuses on how twins perceive situations which give rise to inter-twin competition, such as sporting competitions or selection for dance events. While such situations may also arise between siblings or friends, due to the overlapping microsystems of twins, they are more likely to find themselves in competitive situations. Competition between twins in the findings was viewed as an organic occurrence. Several participants had shared interests, and thus it was

viewed as natural that this may sometimes lead to competition and therefore inter-twin competition was a normal event that participants could cope with. As Jane 2b explained,

*“Usually we work together. So it was different. So it just, it didn't feel like bad to compete with each other. It just felt, well, this is different”.*

This viewpoint was also shared by Conlon (2009:27) who decried the word competition as too negative to be applied to something that was *“just part of life as a twin”*. Nevertheless, rather than competition, Stewart (2000) argued that rivalry is a more apt term, akin to the type displayed among siblings but heightened due to twins' shared environments at home, school and among peers, which is more distinct compared to non-twin siblings. However, any sense of rivalry was absent from the narratives of participants in this research. Instead, in chosen activities such as sports, it was accepted that they were competing with each other and therefore it was still viewed positively as an unavoidable part of undertaking an activity alongside their twin. In another difference between the research findings and the literature, Greenwood (2018) found that sometimes competition was generated from twins being set against each other by parents and therefore experienced as negatively. Any element of parents influencing competitiveness was absent from these research findings. Instead, as mentioned in Section 6.3.1, this study found that twins see themselves as distinct individuals, therefore it may be that they perceive differing outcomes in competitions as a logical outcome of these individual differences.

There were sanguine attitudes towards inter-twin competition found in this study, such as Amy 4a saying *“It can be annoying at first, then you get used to it and then*

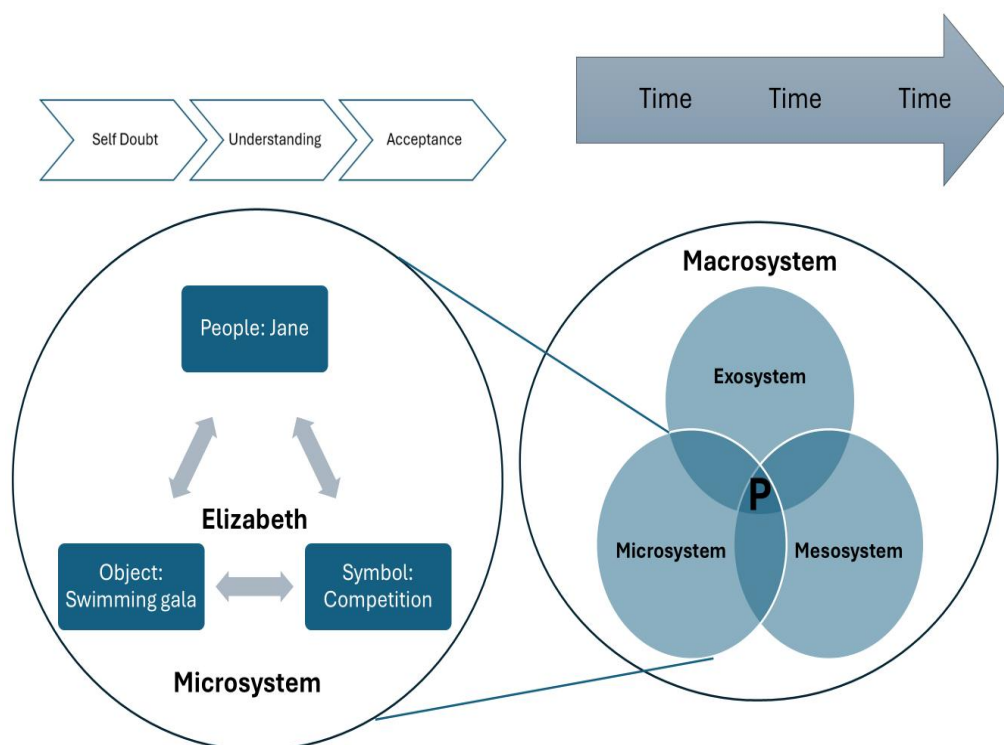
*you're proud that they got it*". In contrast, the literature has a more mixed picture of competition between twins. For instance, one of the more positive patterns of twinship identified by Schave and Ciriello (1983:82) is called Competitive Twins. Their understanding of competition between twins is that it encourages each twin to seek attainments as an individual, thus enabling easier individuation and separation in adult life. This is a very adult-centric perspective, as described by Qvortrup (2009), where the actions of children are viewed solely through the lens of what impact they will have on their future adult selves. Returning to the perspective of the participants; competition is not viewed as something which helps them develop a sense of themselves as individuals, because they see themselves as individuals already.

From a bioecological perspective, competition with one's twin could be considered as a type of proximal process, whereby children make sense of their world through interaction with the objects, symbols and people in their external environment. (Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 1998). When Jane's twin Elizabeth 2a was not chosen for the swimming gala she described her thought processes as follows:

*"At first was like, Oh, no, like, I'm not good enough. And then I thought about it. And I was like, Well, that's just gonna happen. Because if not quick enough for you know, there's something that you didn't do right. Or something like that. Now it's fine to me really, I didn't really mind"*.

The proximal process for Elizabeth 2a here involves an interaction between the symbol of the competition, the object of the swimming gala and the person of her twin, Jane 2b. This is accompanied by the following thought process: self-doubt is followed quickly by understanding and then acceptance and the microsystem of

twinsip is not disrupted; on the contrary there is no animosity between Elizabeth 2a and her twin, and both learned that this new situation does not negatively impact her, further outlining that twins, whilst they share some microsystems, have separate microsystems that reflect their own life choices. Figure 6.2 adapts Tudge's (2008) representation of the bioecological model (Bronfenbrenner 1979; 1993) as shown in Figure 3.2 in Chapter Three, to convey Elizabeth 2a's proximal processes in diagrammatic form. This is to demonstrate what Elizabeth is interacting with in her external environment and the cognitive processes taking place during these interactions, thus illustrating how Elizabeth learns to deal with competitive situations without experiencing lowered self-esteem or negativity towards her twin:



*Figure 6.2 Mapping the Proximal Processes of Competing in a Swimming Gala Using Tudge's (2008) Adaptation of the bioecological model (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; 1993)*

This research uncovers how twins feel about competing against each other as an ongoing cognitive process. In both Elizabeth's 2a and Luna 7b quotes they conceptualise competition in terms of a process of self-development as they learn about their own abilities and limitations, while also considering what this means for their relationship with their twin. For the twin who is on the 'winning' side of a competitive situation, an alternative perspective is shared, for example by Luna 7b, who roots succeeding in something in her admiration for her twin.

*"It's a joy because I consider Bea a very intelligent and the most, like, amazing person in the world. So when I have done something better than her is like a great joy because I can be as good as her".*

As Luna thinks so positively of Bea, outperforming Bea becomes something entirely positive, thus the positive and admiring context of the microsystemic relationship with her twin is used to generate and rationalise her feelings. This is a significant contrast to adult perspectives. Ainslie (1997) discusses an avoidance of competition, Greenwood (2018) states that twins felt coerced into competition, while Schave and Ciriello (1983) conceptualised competitiveness as a type of twin relationship. As competitiveness is viewed without negativity from participants in this research, it is surprising to see such divergence in findings, compared to the congruence between the literature and these research findings in other areas of the twin relationship, as discussed in Section 6.3.1.

With regard to such developmental processes, Bronfenbrenner and Morris (1998) also consider the role of the personal characteristics, compartmentalising them as developmentally generative or developmentally disruptive. It is possible that participants' individual views of competition fall within the former category, making it difficult to define whether these findings are the result of the individual or their social milieu. This means that there may be multiple factors influencing twins' perceptions of competition, particularly as participants could be selective about in which mesosystemic settings competitions occurred. In this research, twins chose their areas of competition. School was never mentioned in a competitive manner and indeed as Section 6.4.1 will indicate, participants rejected any elements of academic comparison or competition.

The findings of this research indicate that this ability to selectively decide when to be competitive, including to reject competition entirely, is developed in childhood or early adolescence and this decision-making is often influenced by the mesosystemic settings, such as the interaction between the twinship microsystem and individual sporting activities' microsystem, or the between the school microsystem and the twinship microsystem. Furthermore, how the cognitive processes underlining this ability are developed is uncovered in these findings, in terms of the dual processes of self-development and management of their feelings towards their twin. The narratives of participants when discussing competition, ended with a positive tone of acceptance. Differences of outcomes in competitive scenarios were generally accepted, viewed as personally beneficial, generating feelings of pride towards their twin, illustrating how competition is normalised to become not just something that is unthreatening to the twinship, but a standard experience within twinship. This rejection of competition was also found in Spudich's (2014:124) research of young

adult twins attending the same college course, which features a twin stating she is not at college with her twin to compete with her. This statement contains a contextual claim. While the twins may be in the same educational setting and therefore striving towards a similar goal, they could control their attitudes towards competing and hence chose to reject it.

### 6.3.3 Roles of reliance and independence

*Roles of Reliance and Independence* explore what roles twins may have within their twinship, providing another perspective on processes occurring in their microsystem and an insight into the power relations between twins. In the findings of this study, for participants who experienced role differences, it formed a central part of their narratives and their experiences of being a twin. These variances in roles were expressed as one twin being more reliant while the other is able to operate more independently of the twinship. Six participants in three pairs of twins spoke in detail about the variance in roles between them during both shared and individual interviews. For instance, Jane 2b, describes her twin as:

*“It's always been like, Elizabeth's been a bit of a baby. I know it sounds bad to say it, but it's like, Elizabeth has always been like younger, not technically, like younger in her mind.”*

This makes it difficult to draw any broader conclusions on role differences between twins in adolescence, however, current discussion of role differences is necessary as whereas Bacon (2005), Davis (2014), Ncube (2018), Rosambeau (1987) and Sipes and Sipes (1998) have delineated role differences in twinships, any consideration of roles within the twinship is absent in Greenwood (2018), while Klein (2017) rejects

the objective classification of the twin relationship into dominant and non-dominant as deductive and misleading.

This insight into roles between twins provides another perspective on processes occurring in the microsystem of twinship. Outlines of these new roles and the impact they may have on the microsystemic twinship were present in this research, with Pingu 5b in particular, envisaging a future where she was less dependent on her sister, indicating that this dependency ultimately was not a desirable state for her and something that she wished to change within the microsystem of her twinship. This contrasts with literature such as Rosambeau (1987), who discusses dependent twins, but focuses more on the impact dependent twins have on their twin sibling.

As discussed in Chapter 5, Section 5.7.2, birth order appeared to play little relevance in role allocation, with participants generally allocating it trivial importance. With Jane 2b and Elizabeth 2a, and Beau 5a and Pingu 5b, the differences were in terms of reliance and independence, with both parties showing a similar awareness and understanding of these differences. Pingu hoped to become less reliant on her sister in future,

*“But when I’m older [...] I do hope that I will have a lot more independence and won’t have to rely on Beau as much as I do now”,*

While Jane and Elizabeth being in separate classes at school, enabled Jane to be less burdened by supporting her sister, and Elizabeth to gain some independence:

*“...now that the responsibilities kind of divided among us. It’s more well, it just, I don’t know how to describe it. It’s like a weight lift. A small weight lifted off my shoulders.”*

That Jane, as the more capable twin, finds her role difficult, seems contrary to existing perceptions about dominance in twins, but is echoed by Davis (2014) in her own reflections on her twinship. This idea of the more dependent twin holding a greater balance of power in the relationship is also an alternative perspective to Bacon’s (2005:222) “Instigators and followers” concept of roles, where the twin who desires less independence is cast into the role of follower. Arguably, by requiring more support, Elizabeth was actually more dominant and controlling of their relationship and activities. This suggests that the typical classification of twins into roles of dominance or dependence as described by Rosambeau (1987) and Ncube (2018), does not fully convey the impact of those roles upon twins and the twin relationship.

Nonetheless, the most striking element of the discussion of roles in these findings was the self-awareness each twin demonstrated. The participants within this study who felt that there were set roles within their twinship were able to clearly articulate exactly what impact these roles had and more importantly, expressed a desire for decreased dependency in the future, even if they initially may find this difficult to deal with. As Pingu 5b, explains:

*But when I’m older, I want to become more confident. And so I do hope that I will have a lot more independence and won’t have to rely on Beau as much as I do now. Because I knew, at the moment, I rely on Beau a lot more like, I’ll ask her, oh, can*

*you do this for me? Or can you do that for me? Can we go do this?...I want to do that on my own”.*

Pingu’s awareness of her own levels of dependence and the desire to change them is in contrast to the depiction of twin behaviour in reference books aimed at parents, such as those authored by Friedman (2008) and Lovitz (2018). Despite containing excerpts from interviews with all categories of twins, both often discuss role differences in a manner indicating that children and adolescents are oblivious to the processes of role-making and role-taking (Friedman, 2008; Lovitz, 2018). The findings in this research do not just contrast with literature aimed at parents (Friedman, 2008; Lovitz, 2018), but also with Hay and Preedy’s (2006) research conducted in British and Australian schools which often assumes that twins will veer towards codependency unless adults, whether in the home or school, intervene.

However, this research also found roles within twinship that could not be defined simply as dependence and independence. Bea 7a and Luna 7b had a difference not so much in practical roles, but in the perception of their emotional roles. This coheres with Bacon’s (2005) findings that role differences in adolescence can be generated by a twin still wishing to hold on to their closer relationship with their twin.

Furthermore, unlike the pairs with practical role differences, where there was concordance about both roles and events, this was not the case for Bea and Luna, with Bea convinced that she valued being a twin more than Luna, for example, pointing out that she was the instigator of late-night chats, not Luna, both of which Luna seemed to be completely unaware.

The findings therefore indicate that emotional role differences may be more complex than practical role differences and whereas practical roles could be naturally influenced by changes such as leaving home, emotional imbalances may be more persistent. Unlike participants who discussed wanting to be less dependent on their twin, Bea did not wish to alter her emotional role, stating:

*“I think I pander to her.[...] I just, I love sort of being like a mother to her. Even though she might not like it”.*

Although Ainslie (1997) considered these differences not so much a matter of emotional roles, but a difference in emotional investment in the twinship, which may derive from a differing parental relationship, such a connection between parental input and differing emotional roles within a twinship was not possible to delineate in this research. This suggests that emotional role differences may have more complex factors of causation.

It was possible to discern from the narratives, the parental influences that may have generated or influenced practical role differences, such as Lily 3a declaring that Milly 3b is left in charge when they are at home alone. However, it was unclear from other interviews, such as with Bea or Luna, what influences external to their twinship may have caused this divergence in emotional role, or indeed what other causal factors may be present. Further complicating differing emotional investment in the twinship is that one twin may have a far more acute awareness of this issue. Allen et al. (2020:51) discuss the different levels of “Twintimacy” between twins, with higher levels of twintimacy being generated by increased presence. Allen et al. (2020) do include a twin pair where one twin wishes to be closer to the other, the other member

of the twin dyad, dismisses this as a societal expectation that twins should be close, whereas in this research, Luna 7b considers Bea as “*the most, like, amazing person in the world*”, so clearly sees herself as experiencing high levels of twintimacy. Likewise, Klein’s (2017) discussions of twin loneliness do not map to Bea and Luna’s relationship, where both twins clearly hold each other and their relationship in very high regard. Returning to Bacon’s (2005) argument that there may be differences in desired levels of closeness in the twin relationship, it may be that while Luna has no concerns or expectations about their relationship changing, Bea still fears that Luna values their twinship less than she does. “*I definitely think I need her a lot, lot more than she needs me*”. Potentially it is this feeling of being needed less that generates the emotional imbalance.

The findings illustrate the emotional burden such role differences produce and that the existence of conflicting narratives between twins can occur prior to adulthood or any prolonged periods of separation. From a bioecological viewpoint (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; 1993), this difference in narratives can be perceived as a chronosystemic variance, as Tudge et al. (2009:201) states, “*developmental processes are likely to vary according to the specific historical events that are occurring as the developing individuals are at one age or another*”. Thus, even if twins experience the same event due to their shared microsystem, if twins have different memories of each event, this will in turn generate differing proximal processes and therefore differing development. Thus, shared experiences among twins can still generate divergent perspectives and those perspectives can influence the twin relationship. This use of the bioecological model adds an alternative developmental perspective to why disharmony within the twin relationship occurs,

compared to the psychoanalytic concepts of Klein (2017; 2021) and Hart (2021), which focus on parenting and the subsequent impact on the pattern of the twin relationship.

#### 6.3.4 Summarising the experiences of identical female twins in England

In this section, the previous three themes of *Permanence and Prominence*, *Companionable Competition* and *Roles of Reliance and Independence* are drawn together, compared against the literature, and theoretical concepts applied, to make sense of the findings to answer Research Question One. The experiences of twins encompass several microsystems of the twinship itself, the family and classmates, with the twin bond proving central to the sociality dimension of participants' narratives. The centrality of the twinship relationship for the participants in this research aligns with Klein's (2017) argument that the twinship relationship is a primary attachment. Using Bronfenbrenner's theory (1979; 1993) to map the presence of the twin sibling in home, school and social settings in this research as illustrated in Figure 6.1, provides a new method of analysing twin relationships and demonstrates that for twins, their twinship is the most prominent microsystem in their lives, and from this microsystem, they experience a supportive relationship, centred on the presence and permanence of their twin. Despite the all-encompassing nature of the twinship microsystem mapped in Figure 6.1, participants experienced no issues seeing themselves as individuals. For them, the main aspect of being a twin, was having a twin sister. Thus, despite adolescence being a time of identity formation for twins (Ainslie, 1997) their twin identity was not a merged self, but a sister with a same-aged sibling and the subsequent presence of that sibling, throughout multiple microsystems, shaping their relationship. It is also within the

microsystem that the proximal processes of development occur (Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 1998). This is particularly explored with the study's findings on competition which uncovers the cognitive work participants undertake, deciding to either accept or reject competition and manage their feelings towards their twin, contributing to the literature a more nuanced insight into how twins manage competition.

The self-awareness demonstrated by participants, particularly when discussing their relationship with their twinship, with insight into both the positive aspects, but also those they wish to change, demonstrates the value of this research and adds the voices of adolescents to a body of literature which is generally dominated by adults.

The microsystem is not just a place of relations, but also a place of shared narratives, where experiences are formed into stories. These stories are not just past memories, but a site of "narrative ecologies" (Fivush and Merrill 2016:307), where the constructed narratives are a key part of identity development in adolescence.

These narratives of identity assertion within this research will be examined in more detail in Section 6.5. The systems of Bronfenbrenner (1979; 1993) are not impermeable layers, their nested nature means that they interact and influence each other (Watling Neal and Neal, 2013). While this section has primarily focused on twin relationships at a microsystemic level, also relevant to the developmental experiences of adolescents is the macrosystem, where cultural beliefs and stereotypes are situated (Bronfenbrenner 1977, 1993). The role of the macrosystem will be considered in the next section when addressing Research Question Two.

## 6.4 RQ2: What is the role of twinness in the life course of identical female twins?

Within this section, the themes of *Facing Others' Perception of Twins and Twinship* and *Contending with Comparisons* examine twins' experiences as a minority group, stereotyped by society. Participants were aware of the tension between themselves as individuals and the roles they may find themselves enacting. Twins in this research saw themselves as individuals in a twinship as featured in Section 6.3.1. Yet the singleton gaze as defined by Shackle (2016) and Hart (2021) seeks to make sense of twins' similarities, or twinness, in a manner often experienced negatively by the participants who faced either being treated as a singular unit or facing persistent comparisons. Examining perceptions of twinness in a macrosystemic context, as discussed in Chapter 5, Section 5.6.2, is a form of analysis which has not previously appeared in twin and twinship studies and requires a consideration of roles and labels, both those assigned within the twinship and those imposed by others.

### 6.4.1 Facing others' perceptions of twins and twinships

This section engages with twins' perceptions of stereotypes of twins held by people they encounter. Twins within this research were clear on the need to be viewed as individuals, rather than as a unit with their twin, even though they viewed having a twin as something beneficial to themselves. As Elizabeth 2a says, having a twin sister is more important than being seen as a twin:

*“Oh, you're a twin that's so cool”. Yeah, it's cool. But like, I don't really care that much. I just like the fact that I actually have a twin and that I have like a sister. But I don't really like care as much that other people like know that and stuff.”*

While worded in a rather nonchalant manner, Elizabeth reports that to her, being a twin means having a twin sister, twice stating that she does not care about being a twin or being known as a twin. The valuing of being perceived as an individual as opposed to being viewed as a twin is reflected in a novel finding of this research: the rejection of the existence of the prima donna complex. As explored in Chapter 2, Section 2.5.5, the prima donna complex was defined by Koch (1966) as female twins, particularly identical female twins, enjoying the attention they receive for being twins. Participants were asked how they felt about receiving attention due to being a twin. With the exception of one participant who felt the attention she received for being a twin was special, the remaining participants repudiated the idea of a prima donna complex, stating that they would prefer not to receive this attention. The feeling that attention received for being a twin is challenging to being perceived as an individual, is further expressed by Pingu's 5a response:

*“Just I'd rather just be known as Pingu, then Beau's twin identical twin sister or rather be myself rather than an identical twin. But I still want to be an identical twin. Just known as myself”.*

Note that it is not being a twin that threatens Pingu, as she says, she still wants to be an identical twin, but it is the perception of others that she is not an individual.

The clear rejection of the concept of the prima donna complex by the participants is a significant finding and shows how these participants prize being viewed and treated as an individual over any perceived 'star power' (Pogrebin 2009:150) that they may otherwise obtain via their twin status. This finding also calls into question why the concept of prima donna complex has persisted within the discourse, both in

parental literature such as Baglivi Tinglof (2007) and in research by Beauchamp and Brooks (2003), Hay (1999) and Sawicki and Rogucka (1998). Thus, indicating the impact and veracity of this label does not appear to have been discussed with twins.

Yet while the twins in this research may feel comfortable with their sense of individuality, the perceptions others had of twins and twinness were clearly influential upon the participants in this research and their interactions with others. This tension between the participants' internal beliefs and external social contexts was uncovered in Chapter 5 when the narrative dimension of sociality was analysed. For example, from Marie 8b *"The questions are annoying and so's like the expectations"*. This experience of twinship coheres with what Lagerspetz (2023:516) defined as the *"social reality"* of living under scrutiny, which also aligns with Shackle (2016) and Hart's (2021) concept of the singleton gaze and Bacon's (2005:279) identification of a *"spectator's gaze"* under which twins are observed and objectified. Nonetheless, Bacon (2005) felt that the power relations between onlooker and looked upon could vary, with twins even in childhood, adolescence and young adulthood having some element of control over how they were perceived. However, in this research, despite seeking to display their individuality as detailed in Section 6.5.1, participants felt that how others perceived them and their twinship was very much beyond their influence.

While twins move through microsystems in different realms, they are subjected to the scrutiny of singletons. Thus, although in the microsystem of twinship, a positive perception of twinship was shared by participants, this is challenged by the preconceived ideas that twins may encounter at the mesosystemic level, where microsystems interact, particularly with peers and at school. Participants did not

state that anyone had expressed concerns about their relationship, but they did feel that their relationship was subject to greater scrutiny than the relationship with their siblings, which coheres with Allen et al.'s (2020) contrast between the fixation within academic and guidance literature on twin enmeshment with the absence of these concerns within research on sibling relationships.

Contrary to normalised ideas of individuality, Hart (2021) argues identical twins are stereotyped as a singular unit, and those within the current study were subjected to this and denied their individuality. When discussing this stereotype with participants, words such as “*frustrating*” or “*annoying*” were frequently used, as Alison elaborates:

*“I just think it's like a stereotype. Because it's like, just what they expect. So, two twin girls that look the same, dressed the same? Just like frustrated some of the time because people don't like always see what it is like (...) because they don't understand what it's like.*”

Though these interactions occur on a microsystemic level, usually with peers or teachers, the stereotypes that the participants are faced with are generated in the macrosystem, which contains the “*overarching patterns of stability, at the level of the subculture or the culture as a whole, in forms of social organization and associated belief systems and lifestyles*” (Bronfenbrenner, 2005:47), and is therefore where stereotypes are located. While the macrosystem is devised by Bronfenbrenner (1979) as a nested setting external to the exosystem, the beliefs held within the macrosystem power the proximal processes that occur within microsystems (Rogers et al., 2021), hence producing the stereotyped questioning treatment that the participants face. No participants in my study expressed any form of unit or merged identity, yet this was still how peers and teachers viewed them. The mechanism of

imposing this unit identity could be described as merging behaviours and this stereotyping was further demonstrated when twins' peers failed to recognise their individuality and instead viewed them as interchangeable, such as when Luna got a boyfriend whilst her sister, Bea, remained single:

*"People find it weird that like, why did he choose me, not Bea because we're the same".*

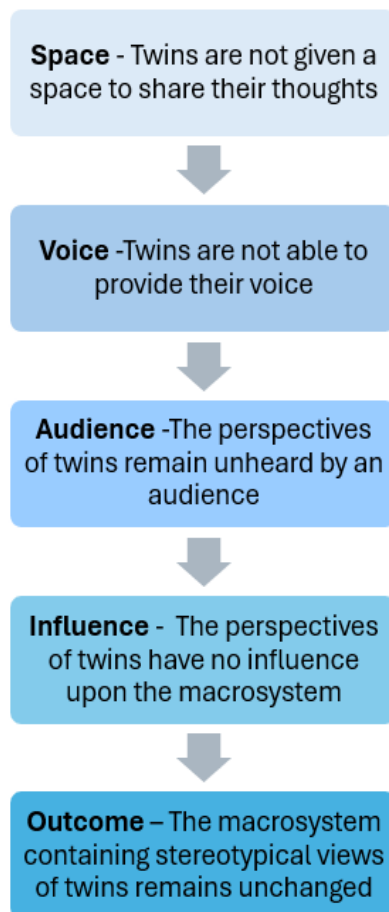
Perceived as inexcusable by the participants in this study, denying their individuality led to upsetting reactions and questioning from their classmates, further reinforcing that macrosystemic prejudices outweigh microsystemic experiences. Indeed, this enforced imposing of a unit identity, with the identity of an individual being disregarded is a common source of dismay expressed by twins in this study and also in the literature with Greenwood (2018) and Ncube's (2018) studies with adult identical twins in the United States and the United Kingdom respectively. A prominent theme in Pietila et al.'s (2013:342) work with elderly twins in Sweden was *"A likeness imposed by others"*, where twins would be referred to as "The twins" or a portmanteau of their names. These are both experiences which were also detailed by participants in 5.8.1, where, while most participants spoke positively of school, teachers engaging in merging behaviours such as mixing up names or, in one case, forming a portmanteau of names was also reported, which again generated feelings of annoyance and frustration. Participants in both Kozlak (1978) and Spudich's (2014) studies found being treated as a singular unit the most vexatious aspect of being a twin, a sentiment also expressed by Alison 4a in this research *"They talk to both of you like you're one person"*. It is now clear these experiences of twinness appear contemporaneous as opposed to being separated by several decades. Twins

are clearly impacted by the beliefs contained in the macrosystem, but they are unable to impact the macrosystem itself. This indicates that twins have little power to overturn such stereotypes and control how they are perceived by society.

Lundy's model of participation (2007) is a useful lens to further examine why twins are not able to alter stereotypes about twinship. While the participants in my research clearly have a Voice, as mentioned in Section 5.6.2, it is not clear where participants are provided the Space to discuss their lives and experiences as twins, as Alison 4a explains:

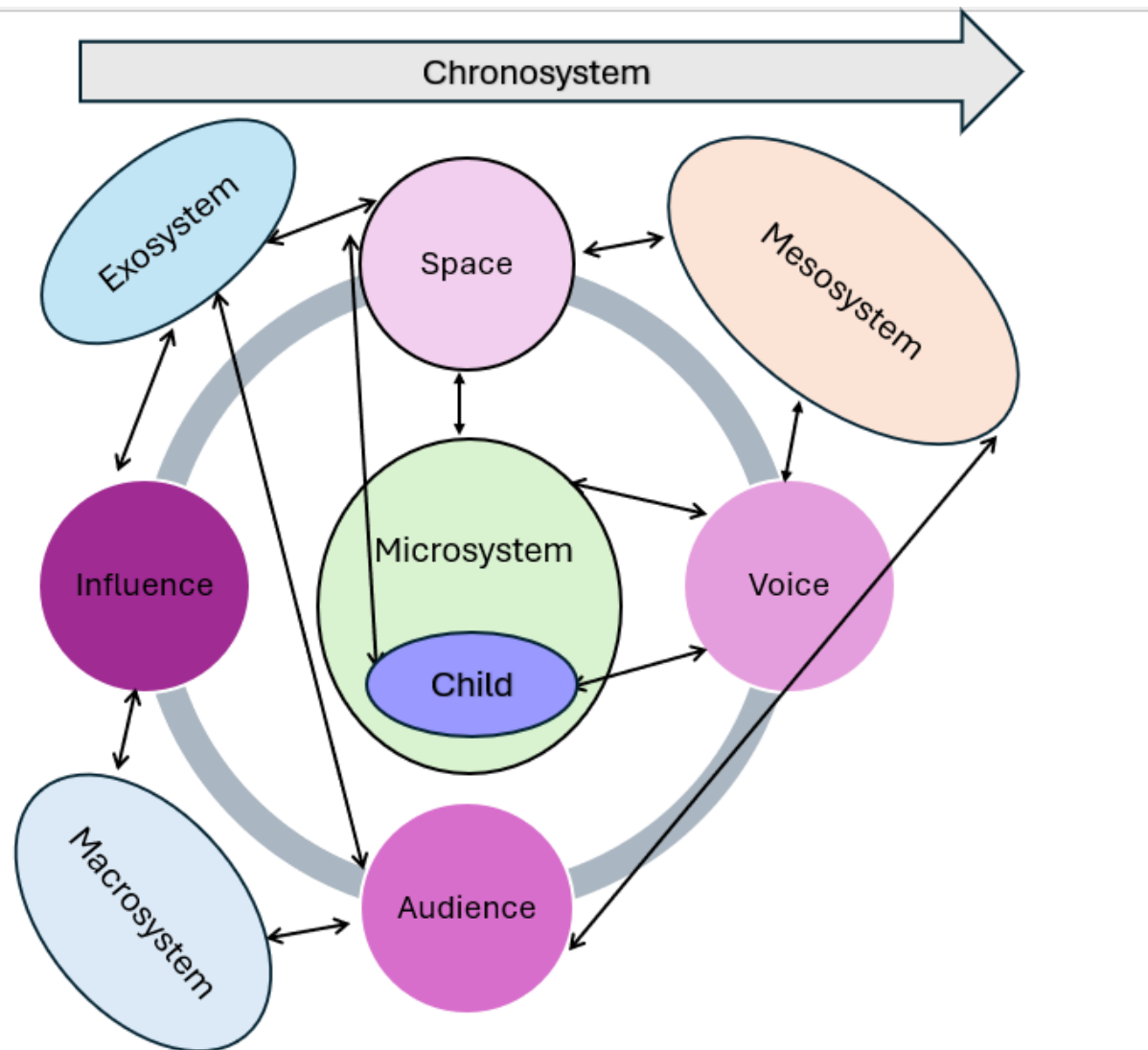
*“Because they don't understand what it's like. So, then you can't really explain it to them because they've already got their mind set”.*

As illustrated in Figure 6.3, this lack of Space, means that there is limited opportunity for an Audience to hear the voice of twins, whether at a microsystemic level in personal interactions, or at an exosystemic level via the media (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; 1993). These failures in two of the four elements, mean it is therefore difficult for twins to have any broader Influence upon society to overturn these stereotypes.



*Figure 6.3 Adapting Lundy's Model of Child Participation (2007) to illustrate why twins cannot overturn societal prejudices about twins and twinship.*

Considering the participants' experiences of stereotyping led to reviewing the connection between the micro and macrosystems. Rejecting the idea that cultural beliefs needed to be moved into the microsystem, instead Lundy's (2007) model of participation as a lens of analysis and was able to delineate why stereotypes of twins and twinship have remained so persistent. However, merging the bioecological model (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; 1993) and Lundy's model of participation (2007) as shown in Figure 6.4 illustrates the interplay between the bioecological contexts of the participants' lives and their voice and influence.



*Figure 6.4 Adaptation of Bronfenbrenner's (1979; 1993) bioecological model and Lundy's (2007) model of participation*

Within this adaptation, the child is at the centre of the model, located within the microsystem. In accordance with the participant narratives, they are able to choose when to use their Voice and in which Space, as will be explored Section 6.5.1 and 6.5.2. This discussion provides examples of them asserting their individuality and working to negotiate individual time away from their twin. However, the Audience and Influence of their Voice are beyond their control and are instead influenced by those

within mesosystemic, exosystemic and macrosystemic settings. While Figure 6.3 could outline why the voices of twins were not currently impacting the macrosystem, Figure 6.4 maps where the individuals of influence are located, which is an important step when considering strategies to empower children and young people. Therefore, this adaption of Bronfenbrenner's (1979; 1993) bioecological model and Lundy's (2007) model of participation has utility beyond this research and can be applied to broader scenarios with children, young people and other marginalised groups.

The societal presence of stereotypes also impacts twins' own perceptions of themselves. Despite the positive views participants have of their twinship, in Chapter Five, Section 5.6.2 Marie 8b states, "*You just want to be this normal, like human person*" which indicates that being seen as a twin, is therefore being seen as not normal, implying some perception of twinship as a possibly abnormal or stigmatised identity (Goffman, 1963), which is a concept that has been theorised by Stewart (2000), yet not previously vocalised by twins during adolescence prior to this research. This connects to another strand of prejudice that twins may face, which is that they are "*abnormally different*" (Hart, 2021:225). While Hart (2021) states that the categorisation of twins as a minority group who face prejudice is useful to help twins articulate the difficulties of living in a society designed for singletons, it is the perspective of my research that the negative perceptions twins face should be categorised as anti-twin prejudice. This prejudice needs to now be acknowledged as a macrosystemic issue. Thus, this research builds on Hart's (2021) perspective, arguing that viewing twins from the standpoint of a minority group receiving prejudicial treatment also provides access to an alternative vocabulary to describe and potentially counter the negative treatment they receive from others.

Being viewed negatively compared to the dominant group (singletons) as participants in this research stated, could certainly be considered as what Hoctor (2019) regarded as a form of pathologising. A potentially useful term is microaggression, which originated in the 1970s and was popularised by Sue et al. (2007) to categorise the everyday intentional and unintentional racial insults experienced by people of colour but has since been utilised to describe prejudice against other minority or marginalised groups. One of the examples of a microaggression is the pathologising of the minority group compared to the majority (Sue et al., 2007). Labelling ignorant or offensive questions about twins as microaggressions provides recognition that these questions are harmful, even if they are not intended as such and may enable microsystemic settings such as schools to recognise them and educate against them.

As this research aimed to explore the experiences of adolescent identical female twins, participants were asked if they felt there were any differences in the perception or treatment of twin girls compared to twin boys. Here the findings were much less emphatic. A few participants stated that identical twin girls might be more noticeable than boys. One participant wondered if twin girls were perceived as having a closer relationship, while another believed this to be the case. While there is no discussion in the literature about female twins being more noticed or noticeable, the idea that they share a closer relationship and are more able to vocalise this closeness does have some support in the literature. Kozlak (1978) found a difference in the way they viewed their relationship, with males seemingly less emotionally involved in their twinship. Kozlak (1978) speculated that this may be due to females feeling freer to verbalise their emotions. Bacon (2005) agreed, finding

that the female twins she interviewed were more vocal about the closeness of their relationship, though this contrasts with findings elsewhere in the literature such as in studies by Spudich (2014), Greenwood (2018), Formosa (2020) and Fichtmüller (2021), who all found that males and females expressed similar levels of closeness. Certainly, in this research, as Section 6.3.1 demonstrates, participants were very comfortable discussing their emotions towards their twin, however it is difficult to draw any substantial conclusions from the findings about any further perceived gender differences between male and female twins.

While many twins included in this study view their twinship positively and receive envious remarks from others who wish they had a twin, preconceived ideas about twins and twinship at the macrosystemic level mean they feel their twinship is frequently misunderstood, a finding shared by the adult identical twins in Ncube's (2018) study. This generates a negative impact upon them, varying from frequent annoyance at repetitive questions, as Alison 4a says "*Just keep having to explain and explain*" to genuine hurt at not being viewed as an individual. These are findings present elsewhere in the literature, including Davis (2014) and Ncube's (2018) research with adult identical twins, but the findings of this research show that this frustration with the singleton world's perceptions of twins develops prior to adulthood and also shows a much greater level of irritation with the stereotypes compared to the participants in Bacon's (2005) study. To summarise, twins live in a world where they are frequently viewed as an anomaly, and their relationship is often placed under scrutiny while their identities as individuals are overlooked.

## 6.4.2 Contending with Comparisons

How individuals experience and adjust to being compared with their twin is examined in this theme. Being a twin in society entails coping with the dual challenges of external comparison and internal competition, the latter of which has already been discussed in Section 6.3.2. Participants experienced comparison from peers, teachers and other adults in positions of authority, though not parents.

It is notable that teachers were the adult figures most featured in participant narratives and were generally mentioned negatively. For example, Milly 3a and Lilly 3b were very unhappy to receive a joint Christmas card from their class teacher, as all the other students received an individual card, while Robyn 4b discovered that a teacher had been discussing her marks in her sister's class:

*“Why has she been telling you this?... why are you sharing my scores with other people?”*

This is significantly different to Bacon's (2005) findings, where despite featuring British twins aged 8 - 36 years and therefore encompassing the educational system, teachers were rarely mentioned, nor were perspectives on academic comparisons. This again underlines what this research participation provided in terms of a creating a Space, drawing on Lundy's (2007) framework, to encourage participants to voice opinions they may not otherwise be able to share and what influence this had upon the co-creation of narratives (Clandinin, 2016).

Participants' narratives had a significant amount of criticism for teachers and peers for stereotypical attitudes and treatment towards them. In contrast to competition, the

research participants experience comparison as a negative and unnecessary observation. As Robyn 4b states,

*“But I think just people say more things because if we were sisters, they wouldn't be saying that. Because we're twins they might like, say anything”*

with Luna 7a agreeing

*“We're constantly asked who's the smart one? Or who's like the most sporty one...Because people don't ask like just normal siblings”.*

Therefore, this implies that these comparisons happen to twins because twins are not seen as 'normal' compared to different-aged siblings. Being compared means not being viewed as an individual, which as stated in Section 6.4.1, twins find painful and unpleasant. As Bea 7a explains,

*“Well, it's always difficult because we're very different... [It's] really kind of like awkward and it sort of hurts because we're very different”.*

That the participants find comparison to be an overwhelmingly negative experience is mirrored by the literature. Greenwood (2018:85) lists “*Constant Comparisons*” as the primary challenge of being an identical twin, stating that while outsiders may wish to try to look for points of distinction between identical twins, twins experience this scrutiny and the inevitable positive/negative labelling as one of the greatest “costs” of twinning (Greenwood, 2018:87). Whereas Ncube (2018) defines comparisons as another way in which twins are misunderstood, and Hart (2021) considers

comparisons as a significant way in which twins are treated differently by singletons, however, he views this as behaviour mainly enacted by parents, an observation which differs greatly from the findings of this research, where no mention is made of parental comparisons. Klein (2017:49) described comparisons as both “*inevitable and stressful*” albeit with the caveat that while comparisons are frequently harmful, there are occasions where comparisons made by teachers can be useful for parents. From the perspective of children and young people, there is little mention of experiences of comparison in Bacon’s (2005) study. However, the avoidance of comparison through asserting physical differences and space away from their twin could be perceived to be an important motivating factor for participants in Bacon’s (2005) research. Therefore, my research adds the adolescent experience of comparison to the literature, emphasising that it is more than a minor annoyance. Robyn 4b explains:

*“But it’s not funny... it just makes you compare each other more? So it’s like, oh, how can I be like better? Like, what can I do to become better? More better than Alison, then?”*

As Robyn asks three times what she needs to do to be the “better” twin, in this quote is the understanding that while comparison may be an act of trivial amusement for singletons, the impact is one of feeling scrutinised yet powerless.

Academic performance was a common area of comparison in this research, occurring in the mesosystem where the microsystems of the twin and the classroom meet. Events like being placed in different sets can make comparisons starker.

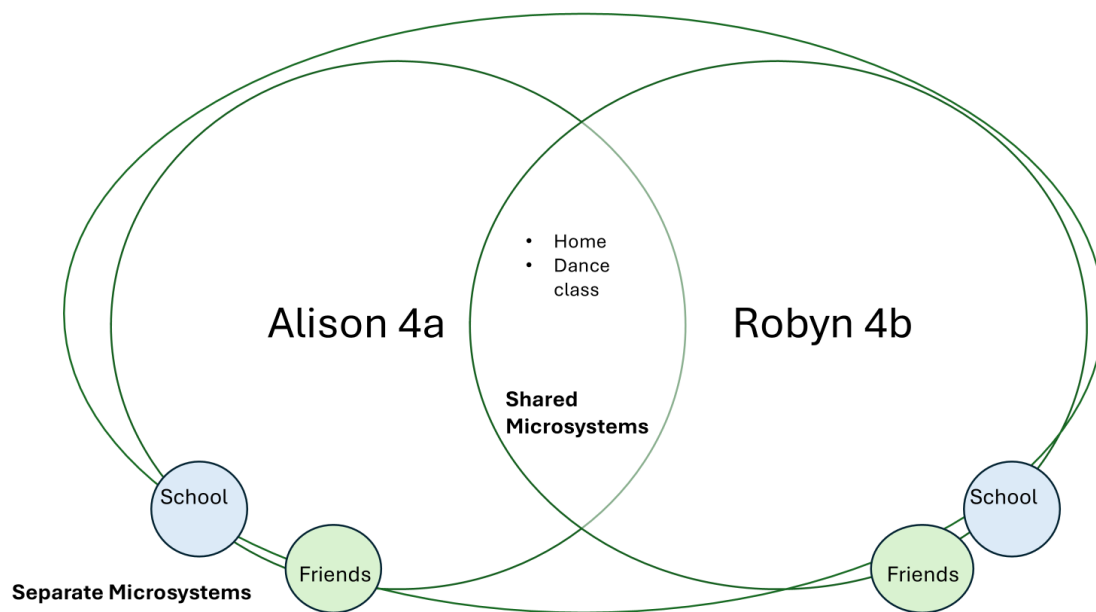
Comparisons can be unpleasant experiences for both twins. The twin in the lower set who must hear being told her twin is “better” than her, as Robyn 4b was, while in the case of Bea and Luna 7b, Bea’s great upset left Luna feeling that moving her twin to a lower set had not been handled correctly by the teachers. That both twins are negatively impacted by comparisons also features within the literature, with Ainslie (1997) stating that being compared is a lose-lose situation for twins. As Rosambeau (1987) elaborates, while the twin being negatively compared feels second best, the twin receiving the positive comparison finds the praise difficult to appreciate because of the pain felt for the twin receiving the negative remarks, which echoes the experiences of Bea 7a and Luna 7b. Noble (2014) states twins may view any failings of their twin sibling as a reflection upon them, and that instead of them achieving more, it is actually their twin that is failing. However, participants in this research instead felt sympathy and pity towards their twin and any feeling that their twin is failing was absent from the findings.

As participants were so often in a microsystem with their twin in various settings, comparisons can feel an inescapable part of twin life, heightening their negative impact, as twins. Bea 7a explains:

*“You always feel worse than the other one. You always feel like, you're always put against each other”.*

Robyn 4b’s feelings that people felt emboldened to say things about twins that they may not say about sisters, builds on the findings of Ncube’s (2018) research, where participants felt that comparisons being made between them were akin to being studied without their consent, as twins neither wished to be compared nor be informed about the opinions of other about these comparisons.

Therefore, twins may seek to develop new microsystems to escape these comparisons, as depicted by the example of Alison and Robyn in Figure 6.5. Sections 6.5.1 and 6.5.2 will explore the direct actions participants take to escape comparison. Again, macrosystemic perceptions mean that twins felt they are treated in a different manner to singletons, thus openly comparing twins is another way of dehumanising them. From the narratives shared by participants, the making of comparisons appears to be a behaviour experienced throughout the chronosystems of twin lives, with participants sharing Conlon's (2009) experiences of being compared from a very early age onwards.



*Figure 6.5 Alison and Robyn avoiding comparisons by constructing new microsystems.*

While the participants found comparisons to their twin either unnecessary or hurtful, they did not express that they have impacted their relationship with their twin. The

pain of comparison was always discussed by participants in terms of their feelings and of the impact it had upon them as an individual. For instance, Bob 6a discusses being compared to her twin as:

*“You just try to be more like better and a bit more like Billie. But then you're just exactly the same as her. And then it's annoying when you're the exact same as well”.*

Like Robyn 4b and Bea 7a, there is no mention of any altered feelings towards her twin. There has been no research to date which explores these experiences of comparison with children or adolescents. However, Greenwood (2018) found that only one-third of her adult twin participants felt that constant comparisons had not impacted their relationship. Therefore, it may not be possible to state that the comparisons experienced by participants in this research would not have any future impact on their twin relationship.

However, it was clear that twins had to perform emotional and cognitive labour to remove the pain that comparisons can cause, which the findings were able to illustrate. For Robyn 4b that was accepting that she had a different learning style to Alison 4a, a rationalisation also found in Rosambeau's (1987) study, whereas Bea 7a found comparisons between herself and a twin she views as so different from herself was more perplexing and harder to comprehend. The literature generally consists of accounts of adult twins featuring reflections on the impact of childhood comparisons to their twin, regardless of research method, such as the written surveys by Rosambeau (1987) and Case (1996), or the face-to-face interviews by Greenwood (2018) and Ncube (2018). There is also an unchanging picture across

time, with a 30-year span of research between Rosambeau (1987) and Greenwood (2018) and Ncube (2018) producing a consistent account of the experience and impact of comparison. Nonetheless, despite this seemingly invariable state of affairs, detailed narratives from adolescents are a necessary addition to the current gaps in the existing literature. This is because comparisons made during childhood and adolescence can feel particularly intense due to the overlapping mesosystems as depicted in Figure 6.1 which many twins experience.

No participant in this research stated that they had felt labelled. Yet in the literature, labelling is identified as the endpoint of persistent comparison, where twins can form a split identity pattern of twinship with the scenario of a good or bad twin, which is one of the patterns of twinship identified by Schave and Ciriello (1983). Case (1996) and Greenwood (2018) found that labelling can have lifelong negative impacts on both the twins as individuals and their relationship. The absence of labelling in the narratives may be a possible reason why despite being subject to comparisons, participants have not yet experienced comparison as a cause of disharmony in their twinship.

This research provides an important insight into how twins may feel while these comparisons are being made and how twins work to reject the labels of others while learning about themselves and their abilities during adolescence. While there is congruence between the findings of this research and the literature in terms of the negative toll of being compared to their twin, this research provides an adolescent perspective, which is previously absent from the evidence base.

### 6.4.3 Summarising the role of twinness in the life course of identical female twins

The themes of *Facing others' perceptions of twins and twinships* and *Contending with Comparisons* demonstrated that participants are faced with widely-held ideas of what twinness should be in terms of appearance and behaviour, with twins viewed as a single unit and impacted by stereotypical views of twins and twinship. The narrative analysis of participants' sociality in Chapter 5 uncovered the contrast between twins' own perceptions of themselves and their individuality and how they are perceived by others. While they do not compare themselves against their twin, their social contexts are a place where such comparisons are a continual feature. This study identified that unlike other social attitudes, there has been limited adjustments of societal views of twins and twinship, using Lundy's (2007) model of participation to explore why this is so. Defining negative stereotypes of twins as prejudice due to their status as a minority group is not a prevalent stance within the twinship literature (Hart, 2021), yet the persistence of the stereotypes and negative attitudes remains harmful to twins. Therefore, this study positions twins as a minority group, but identifying this is insufficient, instead, twins require the tools for countering prejudice. Labelling the negative questions and stereotyped treatment, such as enforcing a unit identity that participants receive as microaggressions, is key to recognising their experiences and challenging unthinking stereotypes of twins.

The gendered nature of being a female identical twin was something participants were able to articulate limited insight into. However, the near unanimous repudiation of the concept of the prima donna complex by participants is an important contribution to existing literature. Furthermore, it highlights the value of seeking the views of children and young people as opposed to accepting pre-existing labels from

adults, which is especially important for a minority group such as twins, who are subject to stereotyping and stigma. Compared to adulthood, adolescent twins spend extended amounts of time with their twin, often in settings such as the home, schools and socialising with friends. This exposes twins to comparison by others, which both the research findings and literature (Rosambeau 1987; Ainslie 1997; Greenwood 2018; Ncube 2018) indicate twins find this a negative aspect of twinness.

The findings revealed the emotional and cognitive labour undertaken by twins to manage the distress that comparisons may cause, while also contributing an adolescent perspective to what is currently known. This is particularly important as parental guides for adolescent twins often focus on the inter-twin relationship, overlooking interactions with peers and in settings outside of the home (Heinonen et al., 2016). While Bronfenbrenner (1979; 1993) locates cultural beliefs within the macrosystem, this has been criticised as distancing the impact of culture from processes of proximal development (Lin, 2017; Vélez-Agosto et al., 2017).

Combining Bronfenbrenner's (1979; 1993) bioecological model with Lundy's (2007) model demonstrates the interplay between the child's voice, their social context and the limits of their influence. Hence, these findings contend that the external placing of the macrosystems reflects that while twins can be affected by the views within the macrosystem, they are currently unable to influence them.

## 6.5 RQ3: What is the evolving nature of twinship over their life course?

To answer Research Question Three, this section reveals the participants as a social agent (James and Prout, 1997), using the resources available to them in terms of space and props to assert their individuality and make new microsystems, while also

maintaining their relationship with their twin. Though the twinship microsystem is viewed as a constant, themes of *Amplifying Individuality*, *Seeking Space*, and *Plans for Separation and Symbiosis* illustrate the chronosystem each twin moves through.

### 6.5.1 Amplifying individuality

The central theme of individuality continues to gain prominence in this thesis, drawing on individual perspectives of how twins see themselves. This research featured participants aged 10–16 years of age and therefore were across the spectrum of adolescence. Adolescence has been documented by twins in the literature as a time of great turmoil for them (Case 1992; Rosambeau 1987), where they may feel the need to ‘fight’ for their own identity (Greenwood, 2018:90). This turmoil and conflict were absent from participant narratives, as they instead seemed self-assured in their feelings of individuality. However, present as a dimension of temporality in participant narratives, was an evolving sense of not only being distinct from their twin but wanting to be seen as increasingly different from their twin by others they encountered in microsystems such as school. While these differences were partially ascribed to physical development, there had also been purposeful actions taken to assert their individuality and these actions had themselves evolved from choosing different clothes, to decisions which required a greater deal of bodily autonomy such as haircuts and hair colour. These actions were of significant importance as despite viewing themselves as distinct individuals, the research participants were fully aware of how they may appear indistinguishable to others, as Davis (2014:107) explains, being physically identical is integral to the experience of twinship, it is not a “superficial fact”. Thus, participants’ use of props such as hair and clothing to purposely assert individuality was often mentioned in interviews. Clothing as a ‘resource’ was also displayed by Bacon’s (2005) participants, particularly as

they entered adolescence. The use of props to present a particular identity, in this case of being a separate individual, distinct from their twin, is considered a type of 'front' or public performance from the dramaturgical perspective of Goffman (1969:32). It could be argued that Goffman (1969) proposes a very one-dimensional view of human behaviour, focused entirely on performances for observers and lacking any sense of the interiority of self (Gegan, 2015). However, turning to Bronfenbrenner's (1979; 1993) bioecological model and the concept of development due to proximal processes, provides a more holistic perspective. Proximal processes involve interaction between the person and "*objects, and symbols in its immediate environment*" (Bronfenbrenner and Morris (1998:997). One can consider that rather than merely being a show for others, participants' use of props is actually a developmental process taking place in the chronosystem, while they not only learn how to use the objects available to them, such as clothing, but also what their use of such objects may symbolise to themselves and others as they enter a key transitional period of identity formation during adolescence.

Except for the youngest twins, Milly 3a and Lilly 3b, none of the other participants dressed alike and could talk in depth about their differing tastes in clothes and styling. While some participants had always been dressed differently, for others this was something that had been very purposely discarded. As Billie explains:

*"Me and Bob always used to buy one outfit the same(...) But then we kind of stopped doing that. Because people might get mixed up. We don't like it if people will get us more mixed up. And like some people make jokes about it (...)even if they know that I'm Billie, they'll purposely call me Bob and it just gets really annoying."*

For Billie, the cost of not being seen as an individual outweighed any pleasure that might be obtained by wearing a matching outfit. This contrasts with Rosambeau (1987) and Stewart (2000) who state that twins stop dressing alike because it is viewed as immature and Allen and Allen (2021:295) who stated that being overly similar is viewed as “creepy”. Instead for participants, being viewed as an individual remained the primary concern.

However, being viewed as an authentic individual was not always straightforward, which Alison 4a alluded to, when she complained about not being her actions not being viewed as authentically derived from individual preferences, but instead as a marker of difference or similarity from her twin:

*“So, then they think, ‘Oh, you’re just trying to be the same’. Or ‘you’re trying to be different by like, putting your hair up or down or dressing differently’”.*

This perception of inauthenticity was especially frustrating as unlike in Bacon’s (2005) research where differences had to be worked at, in this study, participants, regardless of age, all felt that they naturally had different preferences in clothing and hairstyles. For participants, this individuality was a result of their personal choices, not just to be viewed as distinct from their twin by others, thus rejecting the concept of twinship as a performance.

This study found that in addition to the individual tastes which led them to choose different clothes and hairstyles, participants also saw themselves as possessing naturally occurring differences, which may contribute to the strong sense of individuality expressed by all participants. For instance, Marie 8b posits,

*“You want to look really unique but she looks really much like me. Then you realise after that, yeah, that you look pretty different anyway”.*

Elizabeth 2a talks of her and her sister not looking alike anymore, another form of development occurring in the chronosystem, and with the individuality of clothes and hair choices, it is easy to see why this might be the case, particularly as participants discussed choosing to dress differently. Yet Bea 7a had an intriguing perspective on the development of differences,

*“My mum always says we do different things with our face that make us look different. And we're really different that it's, it's quite easy [to tell us apart]”.*

Here Bea's mother appears to be helping them to feel secure in their innate individuality; that they are visibly different even without props such as clothing or hairstyles which Bea finds reassuring. Whereas the parents in Bacon's study (2005) very much considered encouraging individuality to develop as a key task of a parent of twins, Bea viewed her mother's comments as recognising her and her sister's already existing inherent individuality.

This insight into how twins view each other explains the sense of frustration when others cannot see them in the same way. As Amy 8a stated when interviewed with Marie 8a,

*“At school...we're going into the third year of them knowing us they still can't tell the difference”,*

with Marie then adding,

*“Or they just don't try at all, they can't be bothered to try”.*

The people they are discussing are long-term classmates, their relationship has therefore passed through the chronosystem, and they should know them well enough to be able to distinguish their individual identities, yet Amy and Marie are not being seen beyond being twins and nor do their classmates view it as important to do so. In terms of seeing differences, a participant in Kozlak's (1978:120) study provides a vivid perspective as to how twins see each other, stating that due to their close knowledge of each other, they do not view each other just physically, hence when they look at their twin, they see someone completely different to themselves. Notably, Kozlak's (1978) participant was in the pre-digital age and is referring to viewing her twin physically, however twins in this study who generally owned mobile phones and accessed social media, would be regularly viewing themselves in a photographic format to a much greater extent than was possible in the 1970s. This difference in seeing each other and being seen by others recalls Berger and Luckman's (1966) work on objective versus subjective reality when considering the twin versus what Shackle (2016) termed the singleton gaze.

The above findings suggest that twins view themselves as objectively, visibly, different to their identical twin. Drawing on Bronfenbrenner (1979; 1993) to understand the microsystemic settings such as the classroom, these objective differences are outweighed by others' subjective vision of them as twins. Therefore, they are instead perceived as interchangeable beings of whom it does not matter if you are not able to tell them apart, for they have distinctly absorbed the macrosystemic message that it is neither important nor necessary to try. These

findings are therefore another empirical example of what Hart (2021) theorised as typical anti-twin prejudice and again suggesting that twins' own self-perceptions and self-presentation cannot outweigh the wider prejudices and stereotypes within the macrosystem. The actions twins take to escape their twinship being viewed with such prejudice is further discussed in the next section.

### 6.5.2 Seeking space

How twins sought spaces apart from their twin in the home settings and in other environments is explored in this theme alongside the evolution of both the opportunities for seeking space and twins' decision-making processes. In participant narratives concerning the commonplace dimensions of place, place was often a physical location where twins could be apart. One of the first spaces sought by participants was a separate bedroom with twelve of the sixteen participants having a separate room. Except for Alison 4a and Robyn 4b, who were moved into separate bedrooms at 18 months old, none mentioned their parents suggesting separate bedrooms, instead portraying themselves as having led the decision jointly, as Bob 6a explains:

*“It was a joint decision between me and Billie. We both wanted to have separate bedrooms.”*

The findings revealed that sometimes, this space emerged as a side effect of other changes, such as a house move, so it was difficult to connect this change to any particular age of development. While most participants asserted that the decision has been a jointly decided move, only Elizabeth 2a admitted that she disagreed with her sister Jane about wanting a separate room,

*“I used to not want to do it like at all but now I'm just, I'm alright with it”.*

Whatever the reasoning behind this move, it was welcomed as a space that belonged to them alone. As Marie 8a states,

*“You have your own space and you get to put your things wherever you like, not worry about where she's going to put it”*

which coheres with Bacon (2005) stating that while the desire for space is a normative part of adolescence, it has additional significance for twins who use this space to assert their identity as well as spend time apart from their twin. Even though most participants in Bacon's (2005) study living with their parents still shared a bedroom, they still sought to carve out individual areas within that shared space. Places, or environmental contexts, are a key part of Bronfenbrenner's (1979; 1993) bioecological model, for these greatly influence the proximal processes and their impact upon child development. From a chronosystemic perspective, the main evolutions of context were participants seeking a space apart from their twin, which could be considered another form of amplifying individuality.

However, the bedroom also served a dual role in twin relationships for example

*“Sometimes if we felt like I haven't spent as much time with Beau maybe. Or sometimes if we're just going to have a movie night or something. I'll just stay in here. – Pingu 5b*

While the separate bedroom exists as an acknowledgement of a twin's need for independence from their twin and can be visibly seen by other microsystems like friendship groups operating as such, it can also be utilised as a space where twins spend time together away from others. In this study, the bedroom was a place to go

after having a nightmare, or more usually, a place to socialise together, particularly if they felt they had not spent enough time together. Participants did not speak about this behaviour as something they felt embarrassed about. This contrasted with Bacon (2005: 192, 290) who listed activities such as sharing a bed as actions which might be viewed as “*weird*” or “*childish*” by peers. Bacon (2005) further argued that such intimacy was still clearly a backstage to the front, or more detached behaviour that twins discussing that twins may portray outside of the home, particularly in school (Goffman, 1969), which Bacon (2005) linked to Goffman’s (1969) conceptualisations of front stage backstage performances. The dualism of the bedroom is also clear from a bioecological stance (Bronfenbrenner 1979; 1993), as it is a place where the twin first has space on their own, but also a private area for the twinship microsystem.

The decision-making around bedrooms echoes participants’ discussions of decision-making concerning clothes, and choosing to be apart at school, all of which were described in interviews as choices the twins had jointly made with no mention of input from adults, including parents. Deciding about class placement when transitioning from primary school to high school was an important decision to participants, particularly as they would have limited other decision-making opportunities in school until selecting their GCSE choices.

*“We both wanted to go in different ones [classes]. So, then we could like, argue less”*

– Robyn 4b

Thus, in contrast to the powerlessness to change perceptions that participants expressed in 6.4.1, in making these decisions, participants were using their Voice, Space and Audience to generate Influence (Lundy, 2007). Ainslie (1997) argues that

such behaviour is largely due to adolescent desires for individuation, but within the interviews for this research, it seemed instead that the participants were emphasising the control they could enact over their own lives. As opposed to having undergone a psychological process of individuation as described by Ainslie (1997), participants instead appeared as social actors making a logical choice about their surroundings (James and Prout 1997).

When choosing to be separated in school, the benefits of that choice were particularly obvious to the participants, as being seen apart from their twin meant a greater possibility of being seen as an individual as opposed to the stereotype of a twin. For instance, Alison 4a found,

*“The teachers get to know you not as a twin, but as yourself. Not with like, one extra person with you”.*

As discussed in Chapter 5, Section 5.6.4, this use of the third person to describe their twin and emphasise their separateness was utilised by three participants in this research when interviewed individually, in an intriguing contrast to the ‘we’ pronoun often used by participants when describing life with their twin as noted in other research by Bacon (2005) and Davis (2014). The use of the third person to distinguish themselves from their twin underlines the strong sense of individuality expressed by participants in this research as opposed to the more fraught depiction of identity during adolescence featured in research of adult twins by Case (1996), Greenwood (2018), and Rosambeau (1987). Thus, this emphasises the consistency with which participants in this research viewed themselves as individuals.

Another area where space was sought was the establishment of other microsystems in the form of friendship groups. Unlike Formosa (2020), the study findings did not convey the sense that the twins were restricting or limiting each other in their choice of friendships. Instead, twins development of friendships was often a natural consequence of spending time apart at school and therefore establishing new friendship groups as also found by Bacon (2005), but it could also be a conscious choice to provide further space as individuals which was the case for Alison 4a and Robyn 4b and also found in Pietila et al. (2013) life story work with elderly twins. The impact of this is shown in terms of space and generating new microsystems is shown in Figure 6.4. However, they were the exception within this research, with all other participants having the same friendship group, albeit with differing levels of friendship, so again seeking degrees of space as required. This is ability to seek space is an insight into the ways that with greater confidence through the chronosystem, twins could maintain microsystems alongside their twin or choose to develop new ones, showing that participants were, as Bronfenbrenner and Morris (2006:797) stated 'agents of their own development'

### 6.5.3 Plans for separation and symbiosis

Participants seemed to view the future with clarity, wanting to combine achieving their own goals with maintaining a close relationship. As Jane 2b describes, *"I want to have our separate lives where we get on with our own thing. But I also want us to be close in a way that we'd have like, for example, family dinners on a certain night or like a regular get-together, for like, schedules, like lunches and stuff"*. Each participant was asked what they would like to do as a future career, and it was clear that their ambitions were an individual goal. This clear desire for individual futures is a contrast to parental guides to raising twins, such as those authored by Friedman

(2008), and Lovitz (2018), where the future is frequently painted as an area of concern. However, geographic proximity was also important example, for some participants, there was the concern of not being too far apart so that they could still see each other, as Marie 8b states:

*“Different towns, but like, not too far that you'd have to travel to the other side of the country or a completely different country to go see them”*

Similar considerations were present in Greenwood's (2018) work, though unsurprisingly, considering the American context of geographical distance was also viewed as a challenging experience for twins, but one that they felt able to adjust to and in some cases even found beneficial for their twinship. Also, Greenwood's (2018) work involved adult twins, who presumably had greater experience of the practical elements of geographical separation. Therefore, participant narratives within this study contained an element of wanting to balance their individual lives, while maintaining their twinship.

For instance Marie 8b weighed up the positives and negatives of living close enough to see each other easily and far away enough to be viewed as an individual by others.

*“I think maybe people are gonna get confused when they see my twin. And wouldn't it be easier if you didn't have a twin? Then there wouldn't be boring people who are gonna get mixed up when they meet your twin”.*

This felt like a definite move to stop micro and mesosystems from overlapping. How these separate microsystems may appear for Amy 8a and Marie 8b is mapped in

Figure 6.6, which shows the evolving number of separate microsystems throughout the life course



*Figure 6.6 The possible future microsystems of Amy and Marie*

Thus, while the nature of their relationship within the microsystem was not a concern for participants, where this microsystem was located was the main topic of discussion. Whereas Greenwood's (2018) participants were adults, for the adolescent participants in this research, seeing their individual futures seemed to be easier to visualise than what their microsystem may look like once both twins are no longer living at home. In the home setting, as discussed in Section 6.5.2, twins were able to arrange time together or apart on a daily basis. Living outside the family home, that type of flexibility may be no longer possible, hence twins are having to consider what would be the comfortable levels of proximity and distance, both in terms of geography and frequency.

For twins with a more dependent relationship with their twin, there were additional concerns. In Pingu 5b and Bea 7a, narratives, there was a strong desire to take the next step with their twin, either by attending the same university or sharing a flat, yet this desire was countered by their twin, who each responded by setting limits as to the extent in which their future lives would overlap. For instance, when Pingu and Beau discussed their futures, Beau conceded some points but was firm about others, *“Yeah living together I can do but it would have to be set [separate] things, set jobs and everything”*.

For the other participants, talking about their futures, laying out where they wanted their paths to diverge and converge seemed a natural process. As Elizabeth 2a stated in Section 5.7.3, she wanted to *“live my own life”* but still remain close to her sister. Only Marie 8a and Bea 7a mentioned any difficulties in regard to any future separation, with Marie wondering that it might be easier to live an independent life without a twin, not because she felt having a twin was a restriction, but because of *“boring people who are gonna get mixed up when they meet your twin”*, again viewing the macrosystemically influenced perceptions of others as negative. This setting of boundaries within the chronosystem and future microsystems was featured in participant discussions. Whereas the young adult twins in Spudich (2014) all jointly sought autonomy, in this research, there is a mixed picture, where some twins both seek autonomy, for others, there is a negotiation of dependence and independence between twins. This underlines the influence roles within the twinship can have, not only in twins' current lives, but also their future plans.

Aside from Bea 7a, no other participants expressed concerns about loneliness due to separation within this research. This is a significant divergence from the literature, where separation anxiety is a very real concern of twins in the literature, with some twins in Ainslie (1997), Kozlak (1978), and Klein's (2021) studies expressing profound feelings of loneliness on separating from their twin. While it is possible to identify moments of separation within the narratives of the participants, as they firmly articulate themselves as individuals regardless of whether they are with their twin, delineating moments of individuation in their past, present and future accounts, is more opaque. However, as expressed by Beau 5a, individual aims were generally a primary concern:

*“Now, I'd say because if I wanted to go to America, and Pingu wanted to stay here, I know, my parents wouldn't like it, because obviously, we're quite far apart[...] What would I want? I'd want to do what I want. If I wanted to go to America, I'd go to America. If I want to stay here, I'd stay here.”*

This lack of concern with being separated contrasts with the literature as when Davis (2014:211) originally asked her participants about separation, they referred to this event as the 'split', a critical transition point in their relationship with their twin. Nonetheless, Ainslie (1997) and Greenwood (2018) found most twins pass through this point of separation and often physical distance has little bearing on emotional closeness. This means that a more nuanced view of what successful adult twin relationships look like in all their variety is probably more useful not just for twins and their families at a micro and meso-systemic level, but for wider society in general within the macrosystem, a statement which is in agreement with Allen et al.'s (2020)

concern at the lack of realistic models of twinship within the literature. In contrast to a foreboding picture painted by Klein (2021), the future was something all participants seemed very sanguine about, with all able to define their own ambitions and career plans. The findings of this research add a new perspective of twins looking forward to adulthood, outlining a vision of a twinship which provided the amount of emotional support they wanted while also allowing them to live as individuals.

#### 6.5.4 Summarising the evolving nature of twinship over their life course: RQ3 Conclusion

The themes of *Amplifying Individuality*, *Seeking Space* and *Plans for separation and symbiosis* demonstrated how twinship evolves through the chronosystem as twins seek to assert their distinctive identity by amplifying their individual differences, seeking time and space apart from their twin and also considering a future with their own goals and ongoing relationship with their twin.

The narratives generated by participants showed that their experiences are constantly in transition (Clandinin, 2013). The ability to generate new microsystems evolved through the chronosystem, with life changes such as moving to high school providing opportunities to choose different classes and thus new microsystems. Participants who chose to form new microsystems viewed this as a positive development, both for themselves and their relationship with their twin. Further along the chronosystem, the future relationship with their twin was generally viewed with an acceptance that there would be some degree of separation, due to differing individual goals, while also envisaging a continuing emotional closeness with their twin. The geographical location of the microsystem was debated by participants, with some wanting particular boundaries, while some wanted to ensure that they would

be sufficiently close. Despite these divergences of opinions, participants seemed very relaxed about their future relationship, which is a very different perspective from the separation anxiety experienced by adults (Ainslie, 1997; Davis, 2014; Klein, 2021; Kozlak, 1978). This could be because of the participants' strong perceptions of themselves as individuals, or perhaps because they have not experienced this level of separation yet to identify how that might feel. The adolescent perspective provided by this research therefore adds the perceptions of separation before it occurs, in contrast to the retrospective accounts in the current literature (Davis, 2014; Greenwood, 2018; Klein, 2021; Rosambeau, 1987).

As time is an ever-present variable, the chronosystem is frequently interwoven throughout the other systems (Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 2006), hence the inclusion of the chronosystem throughout this chapter. The processes of asserting an individual identity and separation are clearly linked to a chronosystemic perspective. The chronosystem provided a setting to examine the changing nature of the twinship and which processes had influenced these changes (Bronfenbrenner, 1993). Building on the temporality commonplace explored in Chapter five, the analysis of the chronosystem enabled connections to be drawn between the experiences of twins and the evolution of the twinship across the life course, and illustrated the discordance between participants' views of their future and that portrayed in the literature (Rosambeau, 1987; Davis, 2014; Greenwood, 2018; Klein, 2021). However, obtaining a future vision of the twinship also provided valuable insight into an adolescent perspective of successful adult twin relationships and how twin identity and development may have changed over time, which has very limited space within current research.

## 6.7 Conclusion

This chapter began by restating the study aims and research questions. The positionality of this research was outlined and then Bronfenbrenner's (1977; 1993) bioecological model was used as a lens of analysis, with Lundy's (2007) model of participation, synthesising this study's findings with the existing literature in the contexts of the microsystem, mesosystem, macrosystem and chronosystem. This doctoral research is unique in featuring only adolescent identical female twins as participants. As a group with voices only minimally present in previous research, a purposeful stance was taken with the use of participant quotes to enable their voices to be prominent throughout the thesis, which was also in line the narrative inquiry method (Lainson, 2020) and with the theoretical framework of the socially active child (Prout and James, 1997).

Despite this originality, there were several areas where the research was congruent with the existing literature. For example, the benefits of twinship as expressed by Greenwood's (2018) adult participants had a significant amount of overlap with the findings in terms of viewing twinship as a bond between two people, and the permanence and closeness of the twin relationship in the twinship microsystem. Likewise, the challenges twins face to be seen as individuals and avoid comparisons have been widely discussed (Bacon, 2005; Davis, 2014; Ncube, 2018). However, adolescence is a particularly intense time of comparison compared to adulthood and what this research was able to uncover was exactly what labour twins perform to adjust with comparisons and how they combine that labour with their own self-development.

This research discussed the placing stereotypes of twins within the macrosystem and then used Lundy's (2007) model of participation to examine why these stereotypes are so persistent, which was a novel analysis of twins' voices and their influence or the lack thereof in society. From this, the research was able to build on Hart's (2021) concept of anti-twin prejudice by asserting that the enactment of these stereotypes should be categorised as microaggressions. This categorisation would better illustrate the impact of the attitudes upon twins and provide a vocabulary to begin to counter them.

Adolescence is a time of flux; twins may face changes in their twinship as a result (Case, 1992; Greenwood, 2018; Rosambeau, 1987). Within this research, these changes were the seeking of space and the development of differences in appearance and activities. Yet while these acts of separation were desired by participants, there was no envisaged need to be less emotionally close either in the present or the future, though two participants did seek to be less dependent upon their twin.

However, there were some areas where the findings further highlighted existing gaps in knowledge. While participants rejected the prima donna complex theory originated by Koch (1966), they were not able to articulate in what way being a female identical twin may differ from being a male identical twin, which as participants generally had limited interaction with male identical twins, may not have been entirely unexpected. In addition to this, the general absence of parents from participant interviews meant that the role of parents in twins' lives and twinships during childhood and adolescence from the perspective of adolescents is not fully known but was instead glimpsed on the peripheries of narratives. This may have been an outcome of

questions which asked about the experiences of participants as opposed to directly inquiring about parents.

In the next chapter, these findings will be placed into the exosystem of children's services and consider recommendations for practice that will counter some of the harmful treatment twins may experience and generate services that understand the specific needs of twins.

# Chapter 7: Implications, recommendations and conclusions

## 7.1 Introduction

This chapter considers the implications of the research findings and contribution to knowledge and applies this to the research questions. It then completes the twin version of the bioecological model (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; 1993) by discussing the recommendations for practice within the contexts of the exosystem. The choice of research design and methodology are reflected upon and there is an extended reflection on the co-creation of narratives to consider what insight can be gleaned for future use of this research design and methodology. Finally, the limitations, dissemination, contributions and future possibilities of this research are discussed.

## 7.2 Research questions

The research questions were derived from a search of existing literature which although identifying identical twin girls as having differing outcomes compared to the other categories of twins (Akerman and Suurvee 2003; Fischbein, Hallencreutz and Wiklund 1990 and Penninkilampi-Kerola 2006) identified a lack of female identical twin voices within the research literature. This absence of voices was compounded by the lack of adolescent twin voices, despite the significance of adolescence as a time of development for twins (Ainslie, 1997; Smith, 2007; Zhou, 2015).

1. What are the experiences of identical female twins in England?
2. What is the role of twinness in the life course of identical female twins?
3. What is the evolving nature of twinship over their life course?

Central to the experience of twins is the twinship relationship, which participants described in emphatically positive terms. When Bronfenbrenner's theory (1979; 1993) was used to map the microsystem of twins, it was clear that the presence of their twin, meant that the twinship was the most prominent microsystem.

Bronfenbrenner's theory (1979; 1993) was further used to illustrate the proximal processes that twins perform to navigate the potential pains caused by competitive situations with their twin or others failing to view them as individuals. The latter behaviour was especially troubling for participants, as all viewed themselves as individuals, with obvious and extensive differences between themselves and their twin.

Nonetheless, while twins in this research may have portrayed themselves as able to contend with the ill-informed perspectives of others, this thesis did not view this finding as an endpoint. Instead, it firstly theorised why stereotypes of twins and twinships are so pernicious, using Lundy's (2007) Model of participation as an analytical lens. The interaction between the child's voice, space, audience and subsequently influence demonstrated that children have a limited impact on the macrosystem where stereotypes are located (Bronfenbrenner's 1979; 1993). While twins have been categorised as a minority group in the existing literature (Hart, 2021; Lagerspetz, 2023), this thesis argues that this categorisation is inadequate to generate change in the life of twins as it provides twins with no apparatus to counter prejudice. Rather, these negative questions and stereotyped treatment should now

be viewed as microaggressions and an unacceptable display of harmful preconceived ideas.

Finally, the chronosystem provided a social context to explore the evolution of the twinship, and which processes had influenced these changes (Bronfenbrenner, 1993). The views of the participants and the existing literature were clearly incongruent, with the former accepting that adult life may involve them experiencing greater physical distance and whereas in the existing literature, separation anxiety is painted as an inevitable aspect of twinning (Rosambeau, 1987; Davis, 2014; Greenwood, 2018; Klein, 2021). This is possibly due to the participants not having experienced significant amounts of time apart from their twin. Alternatively, the secure feeling of individuality expressed by participants could indicate that they are less anxious about any future separation. From these answers to the research questions, implication for various stakeholders will now be discussed in the following section.

### 7.3 Implications

To consider what messages emerge from this research and who those messages relate to are necessary steps prior to outlining recommendations for practice. A key implication of this research is that there seems to be a clear disconnect between the positive feelings participants associated with twinship - the state of having a twin sibling - and the negative experiences of being perceived as a twin by wider society. To identify who these messages relate to, a stakeholder approach as adopted by Everitt (2018) is a fruitful way of considering the influential parties in the various social settings that twins encounter.

### 7.3.1 Twins

This research has several implications for twins themselves. Firstly, the views produced of twins and twinship were positive, in particular, that participants had no issue viewing themselves as individuals, nor were there any difficulties with viewing themselves as individuals articulated. Furthermore, the tools and opportunities that participants used to assert their individuality are clearly detailed and this may resonate with their own experiences.

Secondly, the language twins use to describe their lives is informative. This research has found that twins seek a space apart *“to not be on top of each other 24/7”* (Beau 5a), and that they seek this space for themselves as an individual need as opposed to engaging in dialogues of separation. On the contrary, they felt that time apart benefitted their twinship. Nor did future separation generate anxiety for participants.

Finally, the research makes clear the difficulties that twins face in terms of preconceptions and stereotypes from peers and adults alike. Childhood and adolescence under the singleton gaze (Shackle, 2016) are detailed and the feelings of feeling misunderstood are strongly conveyed. The subsequent claim from this research is that this treatment could be accurately described as a form of prejudice. This underlines that it is not twins who need to change, but the attitudes about twins held by others.

### 7.3.2 Teachers

Perhaps unexpectedly considering the focus on parents in other studies (Ainslie, 1997; Case, 1996; Ncube, 2018; Rosambeau, 1987; Schave and Ciriello, 1993), teachers were the most prominent adults to feature in the research findings. The

findings revolved around the teachers not viewing the participants as individuals, with merging behaviours where twins are treated as a single unit as opposed to two individuals. Examples of merging behaviour included calling an individual twin by a portmanteau of both twins' names or sending them a joint Christmas card. Another less obvious form of merging behaviour is the discussion of one twin's academic results with the other twin. While this behaviour involves interactions with an individual twin about her sibling, it carries with it the message that twins do not deserve the same levels of privacy as other pupils. These actions are particularly challenging for twins to deal with, as due to the power imbalance between pupil and teacher, the twin affected feels unable to speak up. Merging behaviour from teachers is, therefore, a form of microaggression (Sue et al. 2007) and should be recognised as contrary to broader concepts of diversity and inclusion. Furthermore, while the Early years statutory framework (Department for Education, 2025:7) is aimed at younger children, its guiding principle of “*Every child is a unique child*” is one that should be reflected throughout a child’s educational environment, including in the treatment of twins.

### 7.3.3 Peers

This research found that peers also engaged in merging behaviour, such as treating twins as one interchangeable unit or not seeing them as two different people. Peers were also the group identified in this research who were the most likely to ask intrusive questions, and these questions may have been asked regardless of how familiar they were with twins. For example, merging behaviour continued throughout senior school and was a frequent source of annoyance for participants. Nonetheless, in terms of friendship groups, participants were generally able to balance sharing

friends with their twin, with only one dyad choosing entirely separate friendship groups, indicating that it was possible for peers to interact closely with both twins and still treat them as individuals. It is feasible to envisage how awareness of the importance of treating twins as individuals can be incorporated into diversity training for teachers. However, to include this message in materials aimed at pupils, may instead draw attention to twins and their twinness, which is something that participants said they felt uncomfortable with (see Chapter 6, Section 6.4.1). Instead, it may be more productive to ensure that the adults in twins' lives, such as parents and teachers are aware of the peer behaviour, particularly as it is currently absent from guidance materials such as those produced by Heinonen et al., (2016) and Preedy (2024).

#### 7.3.4 Parents

While parents were not featured prominently in these research findings, there were indications that they can be an important factor in the development of an individual identity. Usually, when discussing adolescents, literature aimed at parents makes significant mention of peers, whereas literature for parents of twins may focus on the inter-twin relationship instead of issues twins may face in society (Ainslie, 1997). As an example, the ICOMBO guidance (Heinonen et al., 2016) for parents of adolescent twins makes no mention of peers whatsoever. However, this research indicates that peers are an important part of twins' feelings about themselves and their twinship. Parents, therefore, need to have a greater awareness of issues their children may face in terms of societal perceptions of twins and twinships and the frustration that stereotypes and preconceived ideas of twins may cause, both from peers but also from adults such as teachers. This awareness also needs to be shared by parents of

singleton children so that they are able to educate their children to behave respectfully towards twins.

Finally, in terms of the twinship, participants have indicated having great insight into the defined roles that each twin may play in the twinship, which is again, in contrast to much of the parenting literature which tends to portray twins as oblivious to these facts (Baglivi Tinglof, 2007; Friedman, 2008; Pearlman and Ganon, 2011; Vaziri Flais, 2015). Therefore, parents need to consider what impact they have on the formation of these roles within the twinship and what support that they can provide for their children if they are unhappy with these roles. The next section discusses which changes are required as a result of these implications in the form of recommendations for practice.

## 7.4 Recommendations for policy and practice

In terms of which area of practice these recommendations are required, as school is the place most featured within the research, educational settings will be the focal point of these recommendations. However, other settings such as sports/dance clubs and healthcare settings should also utilise these recommendations. In contrast to the narratives of participants which featured their microsystems, mesosystems, macrosystems and chronosystems, the mechanisms required to enact these recommendations will need to occur within the exosystem, the setting where the child is not present yet is still affected by events which occur here (Bronfenbrenner, 1979;1993). The recommendations for practice from this research are listed below and then discussed in greater depth.

- Supporting space without pathologising togetherness

- Not knowing a twin's name or using portmanteaus is unacceptable
- Navigate academic differences sensitively and maintain confidentiality
- To understand that twins experience prejudice

#### 7.4.1 Supporting space without pathologising togetherness

Research discussing twins refer to separation and individuation (Ainslie 1997; Klein 2017), but these are terms derived from psychology which are often not easily applicable concepts for everyday life. Especially when guides aimed at lay people such as parents then begin to dispute what actual separation is and instead claim that twins may be participating in an “illusion” of separateness (Friedman, 2008:172) hence generating further confusion and anxiety for parents concerning what type of separation is required and when.

Thus, instead of considering separation, parents and schools should instead adopt a bioecological approach (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; 1993) and consider space and what contexts those spaces are located within. This requires considering what spaces do twins share and if they have any opportunities or desire to seek spaces apart from one another. Furthermore, if their opinions in terms of space are heard by the adults in their lives. As this research demonstrates, twins could often be the prime movers in seeking space and determining why that space was required. From a bioecological perspective, in each space a twin participates in, proximal processes are taking place, influencing child development (Bronfenbrenner and Ceci, 1993), regardless of what original intentions existed. Likewise, being in a space apart from their twin also provides the opportunity to develop new microsystems, both with peers and with other adults, such as teachers.

That terminology of space apart as opposed to separation should therefore be adopted by adults in the twins' lives, whether at home, school or elsewhere and regular opportunities to access that space should be provided. Space from their twin, whether in the home, school or social settings was generally something participants planned for and sought to create as socially competent children (Prout and James, 1997). Alternatively, in cases where the space had been enforced by other factors such as school settings or house moves, twins were able to adapt and thrive with these changes. Participants in this research talked not so much about being separated from their twin, as from their perspective, they would still be living with them and seeing them every day, but as having space apart from them. Parents should view this space as a normal part of child development and not as something that will negatively impact the twinship. On the contrary, space apart was generally viewed very positively by participants who had experienced it, with twins who had asked for space at school and denied it feeling very negatively about that experience.

A pragmatic approach to twins being apart should also be adopted when considering twins who wish to be together. Participants in this research were able to articulate and differentiate between wanting to be together for social reasons, preferring to work together or for reasons of dependency or being depended upon. All of those reasons are valid and could also be shared by children who prefer to share a classroom with a particular friend. Yet instead, twins may find such preferences cause themselves and their twinship to be scrutinised and negatively labelled (Hay and Preedy, 1999), which in turn has a negative impact both upon each twin's feelings of self-esteem, but also upon the twinship (Allen et al., 2020; Davis, 2014). Despite the negativity which may be found in the psychological literature (Schave

and Ciriello, 1983;), most twins have successful adult lives (Davis, 2014; Greenwood, 2018; Pietilä et al., 2013; Spudich, 2014) and this should be at the forefront of both parents and educators during any decision-making about the placement of twins in school or early years settings.

#### 7.4.2 Not knowing a twin's name or using portmanteaus is unacceptable

The *My Name, My Identity* campaign was established in the US education system in 2016, while in the UK, the #MyNames campaign was established more broadly across workplaces (Race Equality Matters, 2021) to highlight the impact of people, particularly those from ethnic minority backgrounds having their names pronounced incorrectly. In research conducted in the US (Kohli and Solórzano, 2012) and the UK (Race Equality Matters, 2021), feelings of not being valued or disrespected due to the mispronunciation or omission of their name were widely reported.

Those findings correlate with this research, where the failure to use twins' names but instead use terms like "the twins", using twins' names interchangeably or using a portmanteau were common behaviours by teaching staff and pupils, who often reportedly found this amusing. Yet participants felt belittled and furthermore, that this behaviour, when done by teachers, was unprofessional. Both campaigns highlight the centrality of someone's name to their sense of identity (My Name My Identity, 2016; Race Equality Matters, 2021). As the participants report that not being treated as an individual is the most negative aspect of being a twin, it makes sense that the correct use of their name is significant, and this should be emphasised at an exosystemic level in settings where twins are present so that all professionals working with twins are able to address them appropriately. Furthermore, being addressed correctly is the right of every child in accordance with Article 8 of the

UNCRC (1989), which states that all children have the right to an identity.

Respecting a child's correct name is therefore more than a mere social nicety but is instead integral to viewing the child as a rights-bearing individual.

### 7.4.3 Navigate academic differences sensitively and maintain confidentiality

While many guides for parents deem school separation to be beneficial for twins (Baglivi Tinglof, 2007; Friedman, 2008; Pearlman and Ganon, 2011; Vaziri Flais, 2015), this research indicated a type of separation that can potentially be distressing for twins if not conducted sensitively: being moved into separate classes due to academic ability. While the participants who experienced this all agreed it had been necessary, none of them felt that it had been handled correctly by the school.

The first issue is one of confidentiality, with one participant relaying that her teacher openly discussed her marks with her sister, which is a clear breach of confidentiality. However, other more subtle breaches in confidentiality were also discussed by the participants who discussed teachers making frequent comparisons between them and their twin siblings. Participants noted that such comparisons would not be made by teachers between other children and so it seemed unfair that being a twin meant that your confidentiality was not upheld.

Educators must therefore avoid such breaches of confidentiality, however minor and be aware of the generally corrosive effect of inter-twin comparisons, as discussed in Chapter 6, Section 6.4.2, even if meant positively. As a lack of preparation for moving sets was highlighted as an issue in Chapter 5, Section 5.6.3, junctures at which children may be moved between academic sets should be flagged in advance.

Ideally, this could be in the form of a discussion at three-way parent-teacher-student meetings so that parents can discuss this with their children and reassure them and that the child can discuss this with both their parents and the teacher.

#### 7.4.4 To understand that twins experience prejudice

In Chapter 6, Section 6.4.1, the work of Bacon (2005) and Hart (2021) in considering the stereotypes and perceptions twins face, was further developed to determine that some of the prejudicial attitudes towards the twins who participated in this research take the form of microaggressions. Both families of twins and professionals who work with twins need to understand that some of the hurtful and frustrating comments that twins receive should not be dismissed merely as ignorance or curiosity but as a member of a minority group being treated unfavourably by a majority group (Hart, 2021; Shackle, 2016).

Part of this understanding needs to involve an awareness of the myths concerning twins and twinship, particularly as this research shows that twins' initial interactions with others may involve the work of dispelling such myths. This can include negative ideas such as twins having a unit or binary identity, or that a strong twin bond is inherently unhealthy (Hart, 2021). Likewise, twin romanticisation is also unhelpful. Twins do not have mystical abilities and the relationship and closeness between twins can be very variable (Allen et al., 2020). All the above are various forms of prejudice and stereotypes that twins face, therefore it is important for them to be challenged as opposed to their impact being minimised.

Thinking more broadly, while participants did not seem to require increased or improved twin representation in the media, families of twins and professionals who

work with twins should consider what portrayals of twins are in the media they share. Do they show twins as individuals, or are the portrayals reductive and negatively stereotyped? Having deeper consideration for societal perspectives of twinning and twinship and the impact they have upon twins, as opposed to viewing being a twin solely as a physical reality, will enable adults in the lives of twin children and young people to better support them.

## 7.5 Methodological Recommendations for Research with Twins

During this research, all participants except for Bea and Luna (7a and 7b), were interviewed first together and then separately. Bea and Luna were interviewed separately twice. In the literature, twins have generally been interviewed separately (Allen et al., 2020; Greenwood, 2018; Lovitz, 2008; Kozlak, 1978; Pietilä et al., 2012; Määttä et al., 2016) or asked to complete individual questionnaires (Case, 1996; Rosambeau, 1987). This has been justified to avoid individual perspectives being influenced by the presence of a co-twin (Lovitz, 2008; Pietilä et al., 2012), because only one twin had participated in the study (Määttä et al., 2016), or to avoid excluding twins who do not have a close relationship with their co-twin (Allen et al., 2020).

Davis (2014) and Ncube (2018) interviewed twins together. The reasoning for doing this is not stated, but both researchers had a noted interest in the interactions between twins, or as Ncube (2018:60) describes, the “front” presented by twins when being asked about their twinship. Unlike in the aforementioned studies, Prainsack and Spector (2006) interviewed twins separately but found that twins were less willing to be critical of the twinship when interviewed alone and provided more

insights when interviewed together and so ensured that all but one pair were interviewed together.

As I was interested in twins' experiences both from an individual perspective and as a part of a twinship it was therefore logical that I interviewed twins together and separately. This was the method used by Ainslie (1997), Bacon (2005) and Spudich (2014), with Bacon's work being influential on my own research as the only researcher who had mainly interviewed child twins. Bacon (2005) chose to interview children together first as it was felt that they would be more confident together, a technique which is recommended in other guides for conducting research with children (Brady and Graham, 2018). The idea that twins may be more confident talking as a pair was also shared by Ainslie (1997), who asked general questions about being a twin in a joint interview, before following up with more specific questions in an individual interview.

Spudich (2014:73) interviewed young adult twins and also conducted joint interviews first, influenced partly by Ainslie's (1997) research but also believing that conducting joint interviews first would reduce "dyadic tensions" with twins who otherwise might be unsure how much was revealed by their co-twin if they had been interviewed separately first. However, Bacon (2005), subsequently saw interviewing twins together first as potentially disadvantageous, as being exposed to the researcher jointly first allowed a joint version of the twinship narrative to be constructed, meaning that individual interviews differed little from those given jointly. This observation is a thought-provoking one as Bea 7a and Luna 7b undoubtedly had the most divergent views on their twinship. Yet there were certainly plenty of other examples in individual interviews of participants saying things that they might not

want their co-twin to know, or joint narratives shared only by one member of the twinship, for example, Billie 6b shared her story of standing in for her sister at school, Bob 6a did not. Therefore, I did not feel that anything was lost by interviewing the participants together first. Also, considering the gap of several months between the Stage one and Stage two interviews it may have been that having those initial interviews as a triad between the twin pair and I built a better rapport between myself and the participants.

Being child-centred and respecting children as social agents is a key theoretical underpinning of this research, as stated in Chapter 4, Section 4.4.3. Therefore, I sought to respect Bea and Luna's decision to be interviewed separately and did not wish to problematise it, especially as their Stage two interview contained some particularly insightful narratives around classmates' reactions to Luna having a boyfriend. Nonetheless, a joint interview would have provided another perspective on their twinship, especially as their individual accounts contained such differences. Ultimately, like Ainslie (1997) and Spudich (2014), I recommend interviewing twins together and then separately, as it is unlikely that I would have obtained some of the insights from participants if they did not already feel comfortable talking to me.

## 7.6 Review of the theoretical frameworks

This section reviews the use of the socially active child (Prout and James, 1997) and the bioecological model (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; 1993) with this research. The theoretical fit of each framework is analysed with consideration of where the research flowed outside of the scaffolding of the theory and what adaptations were required.

### 7.6.1 Socially active child

The concept of the socially active child was a theoretical underpinning of this research, whereby instead of being viewed as entirely dependent on adults, therefore as a subject of study, children are active participants in their lives and impact their surroundings. This theoretical approach influenced the choice of research methodology, in terms of narrative inquiry which will be reviewed in Section 7.7, but it also guided the choice of research method, with the Stage two interview using photo-elicitation which enabled participants to choose their own photos to discuss and drive the conversation.

However, considering the roles of children also necessitates reviewing the actions and involvement of adults and how the two interact (Groundwater-Smith et al., 2015). Thus, a pressing issue when reviewing this research design is to consider what role was played by the presence of mothers, who were present to varying extents in 12 of the Stage one interviews. The literature debating parental presence in research interviews with CYP was previously discussed in Chapter 4, Section 4.11.2, so these arguments will not be restated here, instead, the broader perspectives of child participation in research will be considered.

Throughout this thesis, the children and young people who took part in this research have been referred to as participants. Traditional models of child participation such as Hart (1992), viewed child participation as hierarchical, with participation with the least amount of adult input being at the top of the model. This was critiqued by Treseder (1997), who felt that this failed to recognise what children themselves may want in terms of levels of participation may vary and hence created a non-hierarchical model of child participation called Degrees of Participation. However,

this model still just divides stakeholders in participation into child or adult groups, which does not reflect the nuances of the different adult relationships in the lives of children, nor within this research. Lundy's (2007) model of participation as set out in Chapter 3, Section 3.3.1, does consider the impact of adults as an audience, but also in terms of them listening to the child and hearing their views, it does not quite encapsulate the dynamics of parental presence within research interviews, where parents may be very attentive listeners, yet hinder the child expressing themselves in more subtle ways.

More helpfully, Viviers and Lombard (2012:15) created an ethical framework for child participation with 13 principles. The seventh principle incorporated the role of parents into the framework in the following manner:

*“The seventh principle is safety and protection from harm... This includes obtaining consent for children’s participation from their parents or legal guardians... Adults must also be adequately prepared to facilitate and support children’s participation.”,*

Thus, recognising the positive role parents can play in child participation, instead of the one-size-fits-all viewpoint of adults as a negative and restrictive presence. This is congruent with my research experiences, where I found the participants' mothers to be a supportive presence for participants. This support coheres with the child-centred nature of my research and one that was likely to be expected in an online setting, particularly as I was a party previously unknown to the families and we could not meet face to face due to geographical distance and the COVID-19 restrictions. Building that relationship with the parents in the Stage one interviews meant that by the Stage two interviews, the parental presence had greatly reduced, with a parent

being present for only four of those interviews. This research took place during the COVID-19 pandemic which means that MS Teams had become a tool of school and hence could feel burdensome to participants (Children's Commissioner for England, 2021) therefore it was important to ensure participants felt comfortable in the online interview space as the more onerous the research, the more likely it was that participants would feel discouraged from participating and not feel at ease during interviews.

Nonetheless, it must be acknowledged that parental presence may have impacted this research, yet it would be impossible to determine to what degree this was the case. Instead, as Mellor (2001:474) states:

*“To assert that the admission of uncertainty becomes a source of authority...uncertainty render(s) the text more believable, not less; insofar as believability is a measure of authority, they lend authority.”*

Indeed, fluidity in terms of who is present in an interview may be considered as part of the “messiness” of researching with children, particularly in their home environment, (Bacon, 2005:47). However, the term messy does not seem an entirely apt description for two reasons. Firstly, the behaviour of the parents and children in terms of interview presence was logical and predictable, both that the parents would want to have some level of supervision when their children were interacting with a stranger online and that the children were likely to prefer the presence of a supportive adult when interacting with an adult who was unknown to them. Secondly, this research has generated significant findings concerning the stigmatising use of words as labels, therefore the word messy cannot be used uncritically. Messy is

considered a pejorative term in everyday speech (Oxford English Dictionary, 2023) and while researchers may find it a useful descriptor for their research with children (Eldén, 2012; Ingulfsvann et al., 2020) and other disempowered groups (Cook, 2021), there seems to be no evidence that participants in those research articles are aware of their participation or research being conducted with them, being labelled in this manner. Therefore, the use of descriptors which may be considered in any way disparaging is contrary to the theoretical ethos of this research. In particular, it would counter the openness with my participants that I have strived for throughout the timeline of the research. This transparency, from their assent to the research process to receiving their transcripts as part of the member checking process has ensured that the concept of the socially active child is embodied, not just within the analysis within this research, but the conduct of the research itself

#### 7.6.2 Bronfenbrenner's bioecological model (1979; 1993)

The first strength of Bronfenbrenner's (1979; 1993) bioecological model is that it dovetailed well with the choice of methodology which was narrative inquiry, more specifically Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) concept of narratives. In particular, the framework of the three commonplaces of sociality, temporality and place could easily be connected to the nested systems of micro and mesosystems and chronosystems. The influences on sociality and place could be linked to the exosystem and macrosystem. A bioecological perspective also provided theoretical clarity to consider the relationships that twins have as individuals and as twinships and the contexts in which these relationships occur.

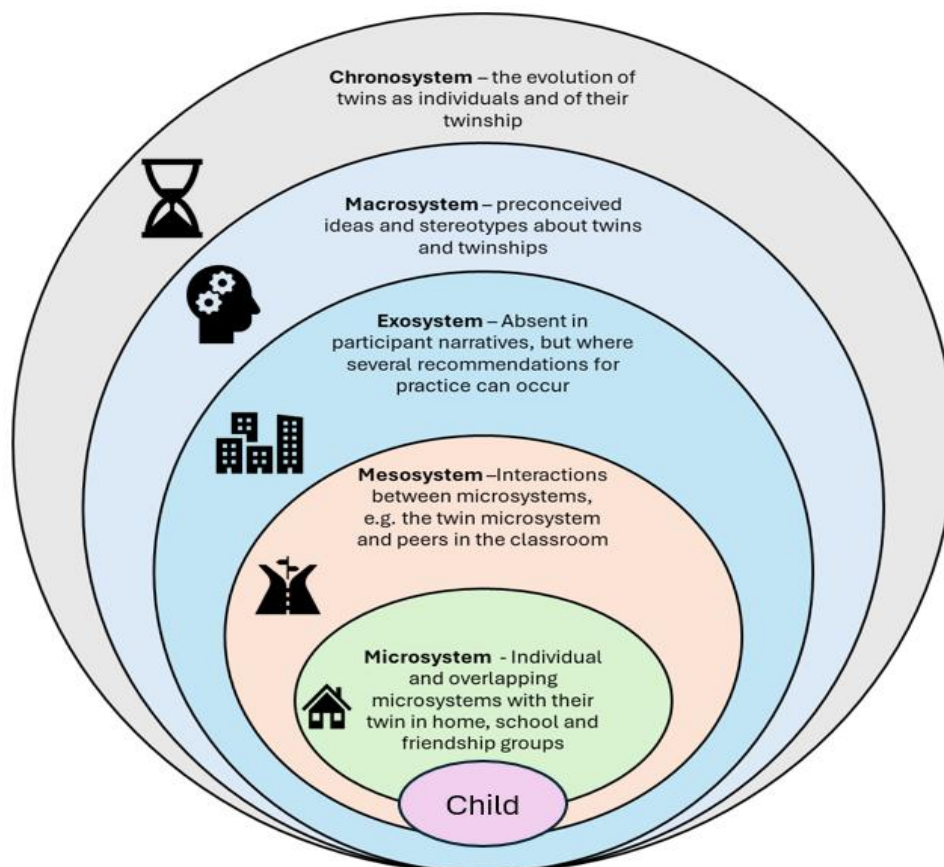
The Bronfenbrenner (1979; 1993) bioecological model could also be used to explore what is occurring for my participants in different settings. School was a place that

frequently featured in participant narratives. Using Bronfenbrenner (1979; 1993) bioecological model as a framework meant it was possible to uncover a place where a myriad of proximal processes occurs for twins, from learning to assert physical individuality despite the confines of a school uniform, to dealing with comparisons with their twin by others and negotiating space with and without their twin. It also meant that emerging data concerning the stereotypes of twins and twinships that participants dealt with could be placed in the context of a macrosystem, as opposed to just interactions between peers, therefore allowing a broader consideration of where these stereotypes emerge from and how they are enacted in various microsystems that twins may encounter.

Although there is criticism of the bioecological model for having culture within the macrosystem and seemingly at a remove from the lives of children (Lin, 2017; Vélez-Agosto et al., 2017), the location of culture and ideas within the macrosystem made sense as a method of conceptualising the stereotypes and prejudice that twins face, which seemed all-pervading, yet difficult to locate what element produced these ideas and beliefs. Furthermore, through the use of Bronfenbrenner (1979; 1993) bioecological model, this research was able to locate which contexts twins were and were not able to influence. At a microsystemic level, twins could utilise their environment to assert their individuality and to seek space both apart from and with their twin. However, at a macrosystemic level, twins as a minority group have been unable to alter stereotypes that they find untrue and insulting.

While the micro, meso, macro and chrono systems were all present in participants' narratives, the exosystem was absent and this was instructive as an illustration of the contexts that were visible versus those that were unseen in the lives of twins

within the research. However, when considering the recommendations for practice, particularly those which involve settings where professionals are present, many of the recommended changes need to occur within the exosystem, for example at a school governance level. This means that the mapping of participants' narratives can now be completed as shown in Figure 7.1, allowing for a complete diagrammatic view of the bioecological model of twins' lives.



*Figure 7.1 The Narratives of Adolescent Identical Female Twins and Recommendations for Practice Visualised through Bronfenbrenner's bioecological model (1979;1993)*

## 7.7 Reflecting on co-creating narratives

Part of conducting a narrative inquiry study is to recognise that all narratives are co-created between the researcher and the participant (Clandinin et al., 2013).

Therefore, my own reflections are an integral part of this research process (Creswell and Poth, 2019). Keeping a reflective diary has been an important part of my journey through the research process, a document of factual events as well as evolving feelings. On 12th April 2019, amid a literature review, where so much had been written about twins, but so few studies seem to have spoken directly to them, I wrote *“There seems to be so little on twins’ lives during adolescence, that I am tempted to focus my PhD entirely on that”*.

According to Clandinin (2016:42), *“Each narrative inquiry is composed about a particular wonder”* and it is this wonder that has very much driven this research from conception, through conducting the field work and now at this point of near completion. Once that decision was made, I was able to immerse myself in the methodological planning to ensure that this research did indeed centre the voices and narratives of participants. (See Chapter 4, Section 4.6).

However, external factors greatly shifted the conduct of my research. Data collection methods used in this research underwent a significant amount of evolution. Since beginning to plan this research, the social distancing measures required by the COVID-19 pandemic meant that conducting research face to face was no longer feasible (Jowett, 2020). A willingness to be flexible, whilst holding firmly to the underpinning ethos of the research, meant that the data was obtained successfully, but this was not without some tensions in terms of the limitations of interviewing via MS Teams and the feasibility of child-centred interview methods.

An additional source of anxiety was that recruitment to the research was also challenging. Many organisations and groups were contacted, but only one generated any participants (Appendix 17). The term “Hard to reach”, is usually used in relation to marginalised or socially excluded communities (Wilson, 2019). It would therefore not be accurate to categorise twins with this term. Instead, they could be considered a population subject to gatekeeping on two grounds. Firstly, research involving children and young people may involve a degree of gatekeeping due to the requirement for parental consent (Groundwater-Smith, et al. 2015). Secondly, it may be that certain populations experience an additional degree of gatekeeping because it is felt that they are over-researched (Brady and Graham, 2019). With the ongoing wide usage of twin studies' in psychology and medicine, a desire for twins and their families to not subject themselves to additional scrutiny is understandable.

Nonetheless, the difficulties with recruitment meant that the quality of the research fieldwork felt very vulnerable if participants decided to disengage from the research process. Fortunately, this was a concern which did not come to fruition.

In addition to this, the technical logistics of conducting research interviews via the internet posed several challenges. The original plan for interviews was to combine asking questions alongside the use of flashcards to develop a 'river of life' of chronological life events to generate a participatory approach to data production (Punch, 2002). This was originally envisaged to take place over two interviews. As stated by Clandinin (2016), narrative inquiry takes place within the lives of both participants and researchers, and the arena and spaces in which stories are shared need to be negotiated. An example of this negotiation was that due to technical issues, such as intermittent internet connectivity and particularly the use of small screens such as mobile phones to conduct some interviews, this was not possible,

and the interview shifted to a semi-structured format. Considering the participatory intentions of this research, this could not be categorised as an entirely acceptable adaptation.

Therefore, I decided to use photo elicitation for the Stage two interviews, asking participants to choose two photos that were important to them, one from the past, and one taken recently. Thus, the use of photo elicitation generated a more participatory approach to the Stage two Interviews. This was because compared to asking questions, a photograph possesses different types of “affordances” which influenced both what is discussed and how it is discussed (Hatten et al., 2013:p.1). Dunne et al. (2017) consider that photographs can generate different types of data, particularly more emotional responses. By allowing the participants to select their own photos could minimise the imbalance of power; the participant is choosing what to show me and could therefore provide a greater context about their lives (Wells et al., 2012). For example, discussing where the photo was displayed and why.

Planning these interviews and obtaining ethical approval, meant that there was a significant gap between Stage one and Stage two. Again, I was concerned if all participants would still wish to participate in the research. Thankfully, this was the case. Returning to Clandinin’s (2016) thoughts on narrative inquiry occurring within lives, it was quickly apparent that, for the participants it had been a time of significant change as they had experienced several altered contexts such as moving schools, school years, classes and other events. While from my perspective as a researcher, time to reflect upon the transcripts from the first interview added different facets to the original “wonder” at the start of my research (Clandinin, 2016:42). In the Stage one interviews, while I received plenty of data about their lives as identical twins, there was less provided about their experiences as female identical twins, and these

second interviews provided the opportunity to explore this aspect of their lives in more depth. Hence, an unplanned alteration to the research yielded rich benefits and demonstrated how research conducted with children and young people can differ from that conducted with adults.

Much has been written about how adult researchers should interact with children, from Mandell's conceptualising of the Least-Adult Role (1988) or avoiding being seen as an adult with authority (Montgomery, 2014). As I already was concerned that, despite being discussed during the consent and/or assent process, the purpose of doctoral research might seem opaque to participants, I did not wish to adopt any form of unnatural persona. Particularly because unlike Bacon (2005) and Clandinin et al., (2016), I did not have extended periods of time to habituate the participants to my presence. To avoid the research time being overly burdensome, the research interviews were conducted immediately after consent was taken.

Thus far in this thesis, my words during these interviews have not been shared, to fully centre the participants' voices at the forefront. However, to reflect upon my role in the co-construction of narratives requires making these words visible.

*“Do you want to share it with me? Again, you can always tell me to mind my own business”*

LA Quote from Stage two Vickie 1a interview

While I did not use a persona, the above quote epitomises my approach during interviews, one of being curious but cautious, asking the participant to share 'it', a

story, while also using a slightly informal register to make clear that they could choose to not share and express that choice as bluntly as they wish.

Another example of that emphasising that participants could choose what to share was used during my second interview with Bea 7a

*“You can tell me if you don't want to talk about something. Don't feel you have to, you can tell me “Look, change the subject”. If you want me to change a subject, that's absolutely fine. But it's interesting to know what particular comments cross a line for you?”*

The same balance of curiosity and caution is displayed here. Asking while attaching a tacit acknowledgement that this question is a personal one and that it is acceptable for the information to be withheld. However, the interaction with participants is just one aspect of co-constructing a narrative. Reviewing transcripts, I noted several occasions where a narrative could have been explored in greater depth instead of moving to a different topic. Barley et al. (2025) discusses the use of icebreakers to ensure participants feel comfortable during online interviews, but although I presented a calm exterior, the critical importance of these interviews to my research combined with the threat of technical issues, meant that anxiety was a frequent emotion during the interview process. From a retrospective stance, this anxiety feels misplaced. I was able to conduct interviews with 16 participants, and all participants assented to participate in two stages of interviews six months apart and most importantly, those narrative interviews would produce very rich data. In hindsight, it is possible to say that strategies such as seeking supervisory debriefs could have been put in place to allay some of those negative emotions. Nevertheless, narrative inquiry is a process which *“no one leaves unchanged”* (Clandinin, 2013:201). This research

has acted as a crucible, clarifying that which is important to me. My doctoral studies began by wanting to hear the voices of twins and it is in hearing and sharing those stories that I have gained the greatest satisfaction.

## 7.8 Review of research methodology - narrative inquiry

An important part of the new sociology of childhood is for researchers to examine their preconceptions about the capability of children and consider research methods which enable children to be research partners as opposed to research subjects (Alderson and Morrow, 2011). Many twin studies are genetic-environmental studies featuring identical twins (Segal, 2017) as opposed to being concerned with the experiences of twins (Noble, 2014). Adopting a qualitative approach and incorporating a participatory research methodology means that adolescent twins are able to be viewed through this sociological perspective of children and childhood, as opposed to passive research subjects. Narrative inquiry is seen as an empowering research methodology because of its focus on story, experience and voice, *“particularly the stories of those who might have been marginalized or alienated from the mainstream, and those whose valuable insights and reflections would not otherwise come to light”* (Kim, 2015:166). Therefore, narrative inquiry functioned well as a methodology which ensured that this research not only conveyed the voices of participants to the fullest extent, but also their stories. A life course interview approach uncovered the impacts of experiences upon twins and their twinships and explored the context these experiences occurred within (Cresswell and Poth, 2018). As Chapter Five and Six demonstrate, participants were able to produce rich, vivid accounts of events and emotions, displaying their experiences throughout the life course

A challenge with conducting narrative interviews, is that some discussions of conducting this type of interview, have a rather adult-centric perspective stating that open-ended questions will generate “*longer turns at talk.*” (Riessman, 2008:24), but this was not the case during many interviews with my participants. Instead, as Mischler (1986), indicated, I had to participate as opposed to merely facilitating the interview and therefore balance stimulating the conversation without overshadowing what my participants had to say. In terms of rigour, when analysing and sharing the data, Creswell and Poth’s (2019:270) *Guiding Aspects for a “Good” Narrative Study* provided touchstones with which to connect my work and ensure its quality. These touchstones and their contribution to robustness, and trustworthiness were also of great importance and therefore will be described in detail in the next section.

## 7.9 Review of the quality of this narrative inquiry

According to Creswell and Poth (2019:270), a good narrative study should have the following:

### **1. A clear focus on individuals**

This research aimed to explore the experiences of adolescent identical female twins. Although understanding the twin relationship, or twinship was an integral part of those experiences, due to the ways the individuality of twins is often denied or discarded, it was especially important that each participant felt that they were treated as an individual. Ways in which the individuality of participants were respected were ensuring that every participant was consented/assented individually and each participant was interviewed individually on at least one occasion.

Prior to data analysis, interviews were transcribed verbatim, and interview transcripts were sent to participants so that they could correct any errors and verify that the

transcripts cohere with their recollection of the conversation (Braun and Clarke, 2016), thus boosting trustworthiness (Lally, 2014). This checking of the data can also be considered to fulfil one of Clandinin (2013:212) “relationship touchstones”, demonstrating the ongoing care from the researcher towards the research participants.

## **2. Collect stories about a significant issue**

Significance was viewed from the perspective of both researcher and research participants during the fieldwork. The Stage one interviews used a life course approach as inspired by Pietilä et al. (2013) and therefore looked as narratives of significant milestones in childhood and adolescence. In the Stage two Interviews, participants were asked to select two photographs which were important to them, therefore ensuring their perspective of what was significant to them was included. Another way in which significance was observed, was in the data source triangulation (Carter et al., 2014) achieved by conducting the Stage one and Stage two interviews with a six-month gap between them. This meant that it was possible to gauge consistencies within individual narratives while also observing altered or emerging perspectives.

## **3. Arrange the stories in a chronology**

Restorying the data is an integral process within narrative inquiry as it preserves the intactness of the narratives (Riessman, 2008). Using a life course approach with the Stage one interviews and asking for participants to select past and present photographs for the Stage two interviews meant that there was already a sense of chronology to the emerging narratives. However, as the narratives for each individual emerged from the data analysis, it was possible to see other stories emerging, such

as Elizabeth 2a's gradual lessening of dependence upon Jane 2b over the time period between the Stage one and Stage two Interviews.

#### **4. Provide a wider context to the story in terms of the tone or themes of the narrative**

The theoretical lenses provided by Bronfenbrenner (1979; 1993) and Lundy (2007) enabled the stories to be viewed in a wider context. The examination of the impact of different systems or contexts upon child development via the lens of Bronfenbrenner (1979; 1993) provided added depth to participant narratives, in particular the exploration of the proximal processes (Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 1998) that twins undergo within their various microsystems. Lundy (2007) was used to build upon the analysis of the impact of stereotypes from the macrosystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; 1993) and consider why twins had been unable to alter these stereotypes, by considering the interplay between twins' voices and the contexts in which they may or not be heard. The interplay between the theoretical lenses used in this research adds coherence to the findings, adding to the quality of the research, with the assessing of coherence being an important method of evaluating research according to Riessman (2008). Further to this coherence, Riessman proposes that the account of the researcher should be persuasive. Sharing my research findings in several conferences (Appendix 18) has enabled me to refine my findings and state clearly the contribution of this research.

#### **5. As narratives are co-created between the storyteller and listening, the reflexivity of the researcher must be embedded into the research.**

As reflexivity is "*a set of continuous, collaborative, and multifaceted practices*" (Olmos-Vega et al., 2022:242), there were several methods used to embed

reflexivity into the research. Firstly, a reflective journal was maintained throughout the research which tracked the conduct of the research from the planning stage, through to fieldwork and finally data analysis and producing the written findings. This journal provides not only a document of the decisions taken within the research, but the underlying reasoning for those decisions. However, reflexivity is not just of the conduct of research processes, but also, the researcher themselves. Chapter Four, Section 4.10.1 contains a discussion of my positionality, where I consider the impact of being an outsider researcher, while also considering my previous professional experiences of working with children. Finally, in order to fully examine how my subjectivity may have influenced the conduct of this research (Olmos-Vega et al., 2022), I have incorporated a piece of reflection within this chapter, where I can consider the voice and role of the researcher to unpick the co-creation of narratives, with a particular focus on the power issues as an adult interviewing adolescents and how that impacted my words.

## 7.10 Contribution to knowledge

My doctoral research generated the following contributions to knowledge:

Twins see themselves as individuals with a twin sister. To them, the most important feature of being a twin was having a twin sibling as opposed to the identity of being an identical twin. The twinship relationship was articulated as very close, with the particular features of this relationship being feelings of proximity and permanence.

As all participants expressed that they saw themselves as individuals, the closeness of this relationship did not seem to generate any issues with developing an individual sense of identity.

Twins face prejudice which is frequently expressed in the form of microaggressions. Due to preconceived ideas about twins and twinship and anti-twin prejudice, twins are either viewed as indistinguishable from one another, merged together into a singular unit, or face intrusive questions about being a twin and their relationship with their twin. This prejudice is a persistent experience for twins (Hart, 2021; Kozlak, 1978; Ncube, 2018; Spudich, 2014).

Using Bronfenbrenner (1979, 1993) and the socially active child (Prout and James, 1997) as dual theoretical frameworks uncovered the dynamics perpetuating the negative stereotypes that twins face and why, these stereotypes have not abated over time, despite the increase in the twin population (Human Embryology and Fertilisation Authority, 2018). Using proximal processes (Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 1998) means that the cognitive work twins undertake to maintain their own emotions and maintain their relationship with their twin during social situations which often seek to generate disharmony. In Figure 6.4 a new adaptation of Bronfenbrenner's bioecological model (1979; 1993) and Lundy's model of participation (2007) was devised, which can be used as a new tool for assessing barriers for the perspectives of children and young people being heard and acted upon.

## 7.11 Dissemination

The dissemination of research findings could be considered to be an ethical obligation for the researcher (Kara, 2015). This is particularly relevant to my research as it features narratives that are largely absent from the existing literature concerning twins and twinship. Yet as Groundwater-Smith et al. (2015:160) argue, "who may speak and to whom" is a central question when considering the dissemination of

research involving children and young people. However, while it is important that the findings are shared with those who participated in the research and other children and young people, in terms of impact, the implications in Section 7.2 would indicate that there also needs to be dissemination aimed at an adult audience, notably professionals working within schools.

As the participants were all recruited via the social media page of a twins' charity, sharing the research findings via this platform would be fairly straightforward. A suitable medium might be an infographic poster, which sets out how the research was conducted and then outlines the main findings. A more participatory form of dissemination is knowledge exchange (Kara, 2015), where I could meet with either the research participants, or other children and young people who are twins and discuss the research with them and what they feel needs to happen next in terms of sharing the findings and maximising the impact of the research. Although this research was originally planned to cover the United Kingdom, the participating twins were all based in England. This does not necessarily indicate that this thesis is not of relevance in the other three UK nations. However, health, education and social care are all devolved policy issues (Maisuria et al., 2025) and therefore forums to share my work and influence policies may vary in each nation, requiring a more nuanced strategy.

## 7.12 Limitations

Generally, discussions of limitations may focus on the size and scope of the study. Despite my efforts to recruit from a variety of settings, all participants came via one source (Appendix 17). However, as a piece of narrative inquiry, this research was always envisaged to be small in scale (Clandinin, 2013). Instead, the major

limitations of the research, centre upon myself as a fairly novice researcher. As discussed during my reflection, it was not always easy to speak as a researcher as opposed to a nurse during interviews. This will have influenced the co-creation of narratives and there were certainly times during reviewing and analysing the interview data that I felt that I could have explored an answer further. Furthermore, this research was originally intended to be conducted face to face, yet due to the Covid-19 pandemic, this was no longer possible. It is not possible to say if face to face data collection would have yielded richer data, but considering the technical issues related to Wi-Fi connection that occurred in several interviews, it is hard not to assume that it may have generated a more relaxed research experience for myself and the participants.

### 7.13 Future research

As the participants in this research were aged 10 – 16, an apt continuation of this research would be to conduct a similar two stage narrative inquiry, but with older adolescents aged 17–19. In addition to providing an adolescent voice which was not present during my research, it would also explore times of greater separation and possibly provide greater insight into the role of parents. This is of particular relevance as this perspective of older adolescent twins is also largely absent from current research.

While participants were asked for their perspectives on identical male twins, they were not able to generate any clear insight into how the experiences of identical male and female twins may differ. This would therefore be a ripe area for further research exploration.

## 7.14 Conclusion

This chapter has built upon the findings from Chapter 5 and the discussion in Chapter 6 to consider firstly the implications of those findings and then consider what messages for practice they convey. This research has then been reviewed from several aspects, theoretically, methodologically and reflexively. The contributions made by this knowledge have been outlined alongside its limitations and future possibilities. This is a piece of research that sought to explore the experiences of adolescent identical female twins, and this has been achieved in great depth.

From that exploration, I can conclude:

1. The twin bond is central to the experience of twinship. For twins in this research, their twinship is the most prominent microsystem in their lives. Within this microsystem they experience their twin as being “always someone there”. Despite this close relationship, they considered themselves as separate individuals, with no merged identity. This is a significant contrast to existing literature on twin adolescence which contains a more troubled depiction of adolescence as a time of fraught identity assertion (Case, 1992; Greenwood, 2018; Rosambeau 1987), where they may feel the need to ‘fight’ for their own identity.
2. Twins are greatly impacted by stereotypical views of twins and twinship and experience many expectations of what twinness should be in terms of appearance and behaviour. These expectations mean that twins are

either viewed as a single unit or compared against each other, with twins having to undertake significant cognitive work to manage the distress that comparisons may cause. Placing these findings in the context of previous research (Kozlak, 1979; Spudich, 2014) indicates that as a minority group (Hart, 2021; Lagerspetz, 2023), twins have been unable to successfully counter stereotypes of twins and twinness.

3. Twins interact with their environment as 'agents of their own development' (Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 2006:797) to amplify their individuality and to seek spaces apart from their twin. However, the seeking time apart from their twin was seen as beneficial for their twinship. When asked about the future, participants were able to envisage both achieving their individual goals, while also maintaining a close relationship with their twin.

This study has provided a multi-faceted insight into the experiences of adolescent identical female twins, providing a necessary addition to adult accounts of twinship and a new utilisation of Bronfenbrenner's (1979; 1993) bioecological model and Lundy's (2007) model of participation to understand the lives of twins. To conclude this thesis, I turn to the words of the research participants for one final time. At the end of the Stage one interviews, each participant was asked, "If you could tell people one thing about being a twin, what would it be?" Alison 4a said, "*We're two different people. We don't live the same lives*". To which Robyn 4b added, "*We see the world differently*". My greatest hope for this research is that it will contribute towards twins being seen differently, as the unique individuals they undoubtedly are.

## References

- Adelman, M.B. and Siemon, M. (1986). Communicating the Relational Shift: Separation among Adult Twins. *American Journal of Psychotherapy*, 40(1), pp.96–109. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1176/appi.psychotherapy.1986.40.1.96>.
- Ainslie, R.C. (1985). *The psychology of twinship*. Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.
- Ainslie, R.C. (1997). *The psychology of twinship*. Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.
- Åkerman, B.A. and Suurvee, E. (2003). The Cognitive and Identity Development of Twins at 16 Years of Age: A Follow-up Study of 32 Twin Pairs. *Twin Research*, 6(4), pp.328–333. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1375/136905203322296719>.
- Alderson, V. and Morrow, P. (2011). *Ethics of Research with Children and Young People: a practical handbook*. S.L.: Sage Publications.
- Allen, J., Allen, N. and Moore, J. (2020). Articulating Twintimacy as a Communicative and Cultural Perspective on Twinships. *Journal of Family Communication*, 20(1), pp.51–65. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1080/15267431.2019.1659272>.
- Allen, J.A. and Allen, N.T. (2021). Twintimacy and Twinships. In: *Inside Relationships*. Routledge, pp.292–300.
- Allens, N.T., Allen, J. and Munz, S.M. (2022). Inheriting Scientific Racism with a Convenient Jingle: Nature versus Nurture as a Scientific- Political Topos. *Journal for the History of Rhetoric*, 25(1), pp.56–82. doi:<https://doi.org/10.5325/jhistrhetoric.25.1.0056>.
- Als, H. (2000). *We Two Made One*. [online] The New Yorker. Available at: <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2000/12/04/we-two-made-one> [Accessed 7 Aug. 2025].

Andrews, M., Squire, C. and Tamboukou, M. (2008). From experienced-centred to socioculturally-orientated approaches to narrative. In: M. Andrews, C. Squire and M. Tamboukou, eds., *Doing Narrative Research*. London: SAGE Publications.

Apseloff, R.J. (2013). *Knowledge and Attitudes About Twins*. DCPsych Thesis. Xavier University.

Arnett, J.J. (2006). Emerging adulthood: Understanding the new way of coming of age. In: J.J. Arnett and J.L. Tanner, eds., *Emerging Adults in America: Coming of Age in the 21st Century*. American Psychological Association.

Asbury, K., Almeida, D., Hibel, J., Harlaar, N. and Plomin, R. (2008). Clones in the Classroom: A Daily Diary Study of the Nonshared Environmental Relationship Between Monozygotic Twin Differences in School Experience and Achievement. *Twin Research and Human Genetics*, 11(06), pp.586–595.  
doi:<https://doi.org/10.1375/twin.11.6.586>.

Aveyard, H., Payne, S. and Preston, N. (2021). *A postgraduate's guide to doing a literature review in health and social care*. London: Open University Press.

Bacon, K. (2002). Double trouble: ethical considerations for research with child twins. *Anthropology in action*, 9, pp.31–33.

Bacon, K. (2005). *Moving through life as a twin : the negotiation of twin identity across the life course*. Ph.D Thesis.

Bacon, K. (2012). 'Beings in their own right'? Exploring children and young people's sibling and twin relationships in the Minority World. *Children's Geographies*, 10(3), pp.307–319. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1080/14733285.2012.693380>.

Bacon, K. (2019). 5 Concepts of Twinship: Discourses and Generation. Translated by S. McNamee. In: S. Frankel, ed., *Contextualising Childhoods*. Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan.

Baglivi Tinglof, C. (2007). *Parenting school-age twins and multiples*. New York: Mcgraw-Hill.

Bahjat, M. (2017). 'The History of Twins, As a Criterion of the Relative Powers of Nature and Nurture' (1875), by Francis Galton | *The Embryo Project Encyclopedia*. [online] embryo.asu.edu. Available at: <https://embryo.asu.edu/pages/history-twins-criterion-relative-powers-nature-and-nurture-1875-francis-galton>.

Baker, S.E. and Edwards, R. (2012). How many qualitative interviews is enough.

Barbour, R.S. (2009). Undertaking Sensitive Research in the Health and Social Sciences: Managing boundaries, emotions and risks- by Dickson-Swift, V., James, E.L. and Liamputtong, P. *Sociology of Health & Illness*, 31(4), pp.623–624. doi:[https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9566.2009.1168\\_7.x](https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9566.2009.1168_7.x).

Barley, R., Carter, C. and Omar, A. (2025). Researching children's COVID-19 friendship experiences online: Methodological and ethical opportunities and challenges. *Qualitative Research*. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1177/14687941251317710>.

Bates, M.J. (1989). *The Design of Browsing and Berrypicking Techniques*. [online] Ucla.edu. Available at: <https://pages.gseis.ucla.edu/faculty/bates/berrypicking.html> [Accessed 6 Aug. 2025].

Baxter, J. and Diaz, J. (2012). *Diversity and Practice Considerations with Twin Siblings*. Master of Social Work. Doctoral Dissertation. Sacramento: California State University.

Bradley-Engen, M.S. (2011). Stigma and the Deviant Identity. In: *The Routledge handbook of deviant behavior*. London: Routledge, pp.190–194.

Braund, J. and Sutton, D.G. (2007). The Case of Heinrich Wilhelm Poll (1877–1939): A German-Jewish Geneticist, Eugenicist, Twin Researcher, and Victim of the Nazis. *Journal of the History of Biology*, 41(1), pp.1–35. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10739-007-9122-z>.

Beauchamp, H.M. and Brooks, L.J. (2003). The perceptions, policy, and practice of educating twins: A review. *Psychology in the Schools*, 40(4), pp.429–438. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1002/pits.10097>.

Bekkhuis, M., Staton, S., Borge, A.I.H. and Thorpe, K. (2011). Conflict, Closeness and Comfort: The Inter-Twin Relationship as a Risk Factor for Behavioral Difficulties. *Twin Research and Human Genetics*, 14(5), pp.444–451.  
doi:<https://doi.org/10.1375/twin.14.5.444>.

Bellan, R. (2020). The Top Social Media Apps Of 2020, According To Apptopia. *Forbes*. [online] 4 Dec. Available at:  
<https://www.forbes.com/sites/rebeccabellan/2020/12/03/the-top-social-media-apps-of-2020/?sh=5a9221e1d4ed> [Accessed 29 Apr. 2024].

Berger, P.L. and Luckmann, T. (1966). *The Social Construction of Reality*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books.

Birmingham City University (2020). *Research Data Management while working from home*. [online] BCU. Available at: <https://icity.bcu.ac.uk/Research-Community/Research-integrity> [Accessed 9 Aug. 2025].

Birmingham City University (2022). *General Guidelines & Resources : Birmingham City University*. [online] Bcu.ac.uk. Available at: <https://icity.bcu.ac.uk/Research-Community/Research-Ethics/General-Guidelines-and-Resources> [Accessed 9 Aug. 2025].

Birt, L., Scott, S., Cavers, D., Campbell, C. and Walter, F. (2016). Member Checking. *Qualitative Health Research*, [online] 26(13), pp.1802–1811.  
doi:<https://doi.org/10.1177/1049732316654870>.

Boomsma, D., Busjahn, A. and Peltonen, L. (2002). Classical twin studies and beyond. *Nature Reviews Genetics*, [online] 3(11), pp.872–882.  
doi:<https://doi.org/10.1038/nrg932>.

Bourke, B. (2014). Positionality: Reflecting on the research process. *The qualitative report*, 19(33), pp.1–9.

Bowlby, J. (1969). *Attachment and loss*. London: Pimlico.

Bradley-Engen, M.S. (2011). Stigma and the Deviant Identity. In: *The Routledge handbook of deviant behavior*. London: Routledge, pp.190–194.

Brady, L.-M. and Graham, B. (2018). *Social research with children and young people : a practical guide*. Bristol: Policy Press.

Braun, V. and Clarke, V. (2014). What Can 'Thematic Analysis' Offer Health and Wellbeing researchers?. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies on Health and Well-being*, [online] 9(1). doi:<https://doi.org/10.3402/qhw.v9.26152>.

Bree, R.T. and Gallagher, G. (2016). Using Microsoft Excel to code and thematically analyse qualitative data: a simple, costeffective approach. *All Ireland Journal of Higher Education*, 8(2).

Brendtro, L.K. (2006). The vision of Urie Bronfenbrenner: Adults who are crazy about kids. *Reclaiming children and youth*, 15(3), p.162.

British Educational Research Association (2024). *Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research, fifth edition (2024)*. [online] British Educational Research Association. Available at: <https://www.bera.ac.uk/publication/ethical-guidelines-for-educational-research-fifth-edition-2024-online> [Accessed 24 May 2025].

British Psychological Society (2021). *BPS Code of Human Research Ethics | BPS*. [online] BPS. Available at: <https://www.bps.org.uk/guideline/bps-code-human-research-ethics> [Accessed 9 Aug. 2025].

British Sociological Association (2017). *Statement of Ethical Practice*. [online] *British Sociological Association*, British Sociological Association, pp.1–10. Available at: [https://www.britisoc.co.uk/media/24310/bsa\\_statement\\_of\\_ethical\\_practice.pdf](https://www.britisoc.co.uk/media/24310/bsa_statement_of_ethical_practice.pdf).

Bronfenbrenner, U. (1970). *Two worlds of childhood: US and USSR*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

Bronfenbrenner, U. (1977). Toward an experimental ecology of human development. *American Psychologist*, 32(7), pp.513–531. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1037//0003-066x.32.7.513>.

Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979). *The Ecology of Human Development: Experiments by nature and design*. Cambridge - Mass. & London: Harvard University Press.

Bronfenbrenner, U. (1986). Ecology of the family as a context for human development: Research perspectives. *Developmental Psychology*, 22(6), pp.723–742. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1037//0012-1649.22.6.723>.

Bronfenbrenner, U. (1993). The ecology of cognitive development: Research models and fugitive findings. In: R.H. Wozniak and K.W. Fischer, eds., *Development in context: Acting and thinking in specific environments*. Hillsdale, NJ, US: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc, pp.3–44.

Bronfenbrenner, U. (2005). *Making Human Beings Human: Bioecological Perspectives on Human Development*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, pp.106–173.

Bronfenbrenner, U. and Ceci, S.J. (1994). Nature nurture reconceptualized in developmental perspective: A bioecological model. *Psychological review*, 101(4), p.568.

Bronfenbrenner, U. and Morris, P.A. (1998). The ecology of developmental processes. In: *Handbook of Child Psychology: Theoretical Models of Human Development*. John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

Bronfenbrenner, U. and Morris, P.A. (2006). *The bioecological model of human development*. *Handbook of child psychology*, New York: Wiley Online Library, pp.793–828.

Bruner, J. (1991). The narrative construction of reality. *Critical inquiry*, 18(1), pp.1–21.

Buchwald, D. (2011). Ethical Dilemmas in Conducting Research with Children. *International Journal of Human Caring*, 15(2), pp.28–34. doi:<https://doi.org/10.20467/1091-5710.15.2.28>.

Burlingham, D.T. (1945). The Fantasy of Having a Twin. *The Psychoanalytic Study of the Child*, [online] 1(1), pp.205–210. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1080/00797308.1945.11823133>.

Burlingham, D.T. (1952). *Twins*. London: Imago Publishing Company Limited.

Burlingham, M., Maguire, L., Hibberd, L., Turville, N., Cowdell, F. and Bailey, E. (2023). The needs of multiple birth families during the first 1001 critical days: A rapid review with a systematic literature search and narrative synthesis. *Public Health Nursing*, [online] 41(1), pp.112–126. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1111/phn.13259>.

Burr, V. (1995). *An introduction to social constructionism*. London ; New York: Routledge.

Carter, N., Bryant-Lukosius, D., DiCenso, A., Blythe, J. and Neville, A. (2014). The Use of Triangulation in Qualitative Research. *Oncology Nursing Forum*, 41(5), pp.545–547. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1188/14.ONF.545-547>.

Case, B.J. (1996). *Exploring Twin Relationships*. Portland, Oregon: Tibbutt Publishing.

Çetin, F.Ç., Akdemir, D. and Akgül, S. (2012). Differential Experiences and Separation-Individuation in Adolescent Twins. *Adolescent psychiatry*, 2(1), pp.52–60. doi:<https://doi.org/10.2174/2210677411202010052>.

Chalmers, D.J. (1996). *The Conscious Mind: In Search of a Fundamental Theory*. [online] Oxford: Oxford University Press. Available at: [https://personal.lse.ac.uk/ROBERT49/teaching/ph103/pdf/Chalmers\\_The\\_Conscious\\_Mind.pdf](https://personal.lse.ac.uk/ROBERT49/teaching/ph103/pdf/Chalmers_The_Conscious_Mind.pdf).

Chamarette, R.M. (2025). *Rethinking Psychology gone wrong*. [online] BPS. Available at: <https://www.bps.org.uk/psychologist/rethinking-psychology-gone-wrong>.

Children's Commissioner for England. (2021). *The Big Ask: The Big Answer | Children's Commissioner for England*. [online] Available at: <https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/resource/the-big-ask-the-big-answer/> [Accessed 21 Jan. 2025].

Christensen, P. and Prout, A. (2005). Anthropological and Sociological Perspectives on The Study of Children. In: S. Greene and D. Horgan, eds., *Researching Children's Experience*. London: Sage Publications, pp.42–60.

- Clandinin, D.J. (2006). Narrative Inquiry: A Methodology for Studying Lived Experience. *Research Studies in Music Education*, 27(1), pp.44–54.  
doi:<https://doi.org/10.1177/1321103x060270010301>.
- Clandinin, D.J. (2016). *Engaging in narrative inquiry*. London ; New York Routledge, Taylor Et Francis Group.
- Clandinin, D.J., Caine, V., Lessard, S. and Huber, J. (2016). *Engaging in narrative inquiries with children and youth*. Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press, Inc.
- Clandinin, D.J., Cave, M.T. and Berendonk, C. (2016). Narrative inquiry: a relational research methodology for medical education. *Medical Education*, 51(1), pp.89–96.  
doi:<https://doi.org/10.1111/medu.13136>.
- Clandinin, D.J. and Connelly, F.M. (2000). *Narrative inquiry : experience and story in qualitative research*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- Clandinin, D.J. and Murphy, M.S. (2009). *Comments on Coulter and Smith: Relational Ontological Commitments in Narrative Research*. *Educational Researcher*, 38(8), pp.598–602. doi:<https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189x09353940>.
- Clandinin, D.J., Pushor, D. and Orr, A.M. (2007). Navigating Sites for Narrative Inquiry. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 58(1), pp.21–35.  
doi:<https://doi.org/10.1177/0022487106296218>.
- Clandinin, J.D. and Rosiek, J. (2019). Mapping a landscape of narrative inquiry: Borderland spaces and tensions. In: *Journeys in narrative inquiry*. Routledge, pp.228–264.
- Clark, A., Flewitt, R., Hammersley, M. and Robb, M. (2014). *Understanding research with children and young people*. London: Sage.
- Clifford, L. (2025). *Parent's experiences of parenting preterm multiples: Exploring the impact of preterm multiple birth on parents' experiences, their transition to parenthood and their couple, parental and family relationships during the first year*. PhD Thesis.

Cohen, L., Manion, L. and Morrison, K. (2017). *Research Methods in Education*. 8th ed. New York: Routledge.

Connelly, M.F. and Clandinin, J.D. (2012). Narrative inquiry. In: *Handbook of complementary methods in education research*. Routledge, pp.477–487.

Cook, T. (2021). Participatory Research: Its Meaning and Messiness. *Beleidsonderzoek Online*, 0(3).

doi:<https://doi.org/10.5553/bo/221335502021000003001>.

Cooper, C. (2011). *Twins & Multiple Births*. Random House.

Cooper, V., Payler, J. and Bennett, S. (2019). Beyond talk: Learning from children and young people experiencing a family health crisis. *Critical practice with children and young people*, pp.143–160.

Cooper, V., Payler, J. and Bennett, S. (2025). Silent voices: listening to children of criminalised individuals. *Families, Relationships and Societies*, pp.1–19.

doi:<https://doi.org/10.1332/20467435y2025d000000070>.

Coyne, I. (2006). Consultation with children in hospital: children, parents' and nurses' perspectives. *Journal of Clinical Nursing*, [online] 15(1), pp.61–71.

doi:<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1365-2702.2005.01247.x>.

Creswell, J. (2013). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*. 4th ed. London: Sage Publications Ltd.

Creswell, J. and Poth, C. (2018). *Qualitative inquiry & research design: Choosing among five approaches*. 4th ed. Los Angeles: SAGE Publications.

Cunningham, M. (2001). Parental Influences on the Gendered Division of Housework. *American Sociological Review*, 66(2), p.184.

doi:<https://doi.org/10.2307/2657414>.

Davidson, E. (2017). Saying It Like It Is? Power, Participation and Research Involving Young People. *Social Inclusion*, 5(3), p.228.  
doi:<https://doi.org/10.17645/si.v5i3.967>.

Davis, D.L. (2014). *Twins talk : what twins tell us about person, self, and society*. Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press.

de Bres, H. (2023). *How to Be Multiple*. Bloomsbury Publishing.

Degner, A.J. (2006). The definition of adolescence: One term fails to adequately define this diverse time period. *CHARIS A J. Lutheran Scholarsh. Thought Opin.*, 5.  
doi:<https://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/document?repid=rep1&type=pdf&doi=1650e7b067eb70361e1683043d903636765e9943>.

Dehne, K.L. and Riedner, G. (2001). Adolescence — a dynamic concept. *Reproductive Health Matters*, 9(17), pp.11–15. doi:[https://doi.org/10.1016/s0968-8080\(01\)90003-5](https://doi.org/10.1016/s0968-8080(01)90003-5).

Department for Education (2024). *Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework for Group and school-based Providers Setting the Standards for learning, Development and Care for Children from Birth to Five*. [online] GOV.UK. Available at:  
[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/670fa42a30536cb92748328f/EYFS\\_statutory\\_framework\\_for\\_group\\_and\\_school\\_-\\_based\\_providers.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/670fa42a30536cb92748328f/EYFS_statutory_framework_for_group_and_school_-_based_providers.pdf).

Department for Education (2025). *Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework for Group and school-based Providers Setting the Standards for learning, Development and Care for Children from Birth to Five*. [online] GOV.UK. Available at:  
[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/687105a381dd8f70f5de3ea9/EYFS\\_framework\\_for\\_group\\_and\\_school\\_based\\_providers\\_.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/687105a381dd8f70f5de3ea9/EYFS_framework_for_group_and_school_based_providers_.pdf).

Dewart, G., Kubota, H., Berendonk, C., Clandinin, J. and Caine, V. (2019). Lugones's Metaphor of 'World Travelling' in Narrative Inquiry. *Qualitative Inquiry*, p.107780041983856. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1177/1077800419838567>.

- Dewey, J. (1938). *Experience and Education*. [online] New York: Touchstone. Available at: <https://www.schoolofeducators.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/12/EXPERIENCE-EDUCATION-JOHN-DEWEY.pdf>.
- DiLalla, L.F. (2006). Social Development of Twins. *Twin Research and Human Genetics*, 9(1), pp.95–102. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1375/twin.9.1.95>.
- Donaldson, M. (1978). *Children's Minds*. London: Fontana Press.
- Durkheim, É., Lukes, S. and Halls, W.D. (1895). *The Rules of Sociological Method*. New York: Free Press, pp.50–59.
- Economic and Social Research Council (2022). *Framework for research ethics*. [online] [www.ukri.org](http://www.ukri.org). Available at: <https://www.ukri.org/councils/esrc/guidance-for-applicants/research-ethics-guidance/framework-for-research-ethics/>.
- Eldén, S. (2012). Inviting the messy: Drawing methods and 'children's voices'. *Childhood*, 20(1), pp.66–81. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1177/0907568212447243>.
- Elder, G.H. (1985). *Life Course Dynamics*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Elder, G.H. (1998). The Life Course as Developmental Theory. *Child Development*, [online] 69(1), pp.1–12. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8624.1998.tb06128.x>.
- Engel, S. (2005). Narrative Analysis of Children's Experiences. In: S. Greene and D. Hogan, eds., *Researching Children's Experience*. London: Sage Publications, pp.199–216.
- Everitt, J. (2018). *External agents in schools: roles and responsibilities for children and young people's learning and wellbeing*. EdD Thesis.
- Facca, D., Gladstone, B. and Teachman, G. (2020). Working the Limits of 'Giving Voice' to Children: A Critical Conceptual Review. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 19, p.160940692093339. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406920933391>.
- Falk, G. (2001). *Stigma : how we treat outsiders*. Amherst, N.Y.: Prometheus Books.
- Farre, A., Wood, V., Rapley, T., Parr, J.R., Reape, D. and McDonagh, J.E. (2014). Developmentally appropriate healthcare for young people: a scoping study. *Archives*

*of Disease in Childhood*, [online] 100(2), pp.144–151.  
doi:<https://doi.org/10.1136/archdischild-2014-306749>.

Feldstein, V.A. and Filly, R.A. (2003). Complications of monozygotic twins.  
*Radiologic Clinics of North America*, [online] 41(4), pp.709–727.  
doi:[https://doi.org/10.1016/s0033-8389\(03\)00046-0](https://doi.org/10.1016/s0033-8389(03)00046-0).

Fichtmüller, M. (2021). How do adult twins experience and view their identity?  
*Consciousness, Spirituality & Transpersonal Psychology*, 2, pp.16–30.  
doi:<https://doi.org/10.53074/cstp.2021.24>.

Fischbein, S., Hallencreutz, I. and Wiklund, I. (1990). What Is It Like to Be a Parent of Twins? *Acta geneticae medicae et gemellologiae: twin research*, [online] 39(2), pp.271–276. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1017/s0001566000005493>.

Fivush, R. and Merrill, N. (2016). An ecological systems approach to family narratives. *Memory Studies*, 9(3), pp.305–314.  
doi:<https://doi.org/10.1177/1750698016645264>.

Flewitt, R. (2014). Interviews. In: *Understanding Research with Children and Young People*. [online] 55 City Road, London: SAGE Publications, Inc.  
doi:<https://doi.org/10.4135/9781526435637.n9>.

Formosa, M.R. (2020). *A Study on How Adolescent Twins Develop Friendships*. [BA Hons Youth and Community Studies Dissertation] *L-Universita ta' Malta*.  
doi:<https://www.um.edu.mt/library/oar/handle/123456789/102973>.

Forrási, B. (2023). Competition and comparison: the source of conflicts for twins.  
*Twin studies in social science*, p.19.

Fraser, S. (2004). Situating empirical research. In: V. Lewis, S. Ding, M. Kellet and C. Robinson, eds., *Doing research with children and young people*. Sage London, pp.15–26.

Friedman, J. (2008). *Emotionally Healthy Twins*. Da Capo Press.

Friedman, J.A. (2018). *Twins in Session*. Rocky Pines Press.

Fritz, H. and Lysack, C. (2014). 'I see it now': Using photo elicitation to understand chronic illness self-management. *Canadian Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 81(4), pp.247–255. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1177/0008417414540517>.

Fuller, B. and García Coll, C. (2010). Learning from Latinos: Contexts, families, and child development in motion. *Developmental Psychology*, 46(3), pp.559–565. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1037/a0019412>.

Fülöp, E.A. (2023). Twins as reflected in their environment. *Twin studies in social science*, p.33.

Gal, T. (2016). From Social Exclusion to Child Inclusive Policies: Toward an Ecological Model of Child Participation. In: *International Perspectives and Empirical Findings on Child Participation: From Social Exclusion to Child Inclusive Policies*.

Garcia Coll, C., Lamberty, G., Jenkins, R., McAdoo, H.P., Crnic, K., Wasik, B.H. and Garcia, H.V. (1996). An Integrative Model for the Study of Developmental Competencies in Minority Children. *Child Development*, 67(5), p.1891. doi:<https://doi.org/10.2307/1131600>.

Garro, M., Salerno, A. and Federica Cirami (2016). Twins. Similarities, differences and individuality. *Garro, M., Salerno, The International Journal of Humanities and Cultural Studies*, 2(2), pp.257–269.

Gelinas, L., Pierce, R., Winkler, S., I. Glenn Cohen, Holly Fernandez Lynch and Bierer, B.E. (2017). Using Social Media as a Research Recruitment Tool: Ethical Issues and Recommendations. *American journal of bioethics*, [online] 17(3), pp.3–14. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1080/15265161.2016.1276644>.

Gergen, K.J. (2015). *An Invitation to Social Construction*. 2nd ed. SAGE.

Gleeson, C., Hay, D.A., Johnston, C.J. and Theobald, T.M. (1990). 'Twins in School' — An Australia-wide Program. *Acta geneticae medicae et gemellologiae: twin research*, 39(2), pp.231–244. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1017/s0001566000005468>.

Goffman, E. (1959). *The presentation of self in everyday life*. London: Penguin.

Goffman, E. (1963). *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity*. New York: Touchstone.

Gonggrijp, B.M.A., Weijer, S.G.A. van de, Bijleveld, C.C.J.H., Dongen, J. van and Boomsma, D.I. (2023). The Co-Twin Control Design: Implementation and Methodological Considerations. *Twin Research and Human Genetics*, [online] (26), pp.1–8. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1017/thg.2023.35>.

Graham, A.P., Powell, M.A., Anderson, D., Fitzgerald, R. and Taylor, N. (2013). *Ethical research involving children*. UNICEF Office of Research Innocenti.

Greenbank, P. (2003). The role of values in educational research: the case for reflexivity. *British Educational Research Journal*, 29(6), pp.791–801. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1080/0141192032000137303>.

Greene, S. and Hill, M. (2005). Researching Children's Experiences: Methods and Methodological Issues. In: S. Greene and D. Hogan, eds., *Researching Children's Experience*. London: Sage Publications, pp.1–19.

Greenwood, J.L. (2018). *Identical twins : adult reflections on the twinship experience*. Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books.

Groundwater-Smith, S., Dockett, S. and Bottrell, D. (2015). *Participatory research with children and young people*. Los Angeles ; London ; New Dehli ; Singapore ; Washington Dc Sage.

Guba, E.G. and Lincoln, Y.S. (1994). Competing paradigms in qualitative research. In: *Handbook of qualitative research*. Thousand Oaks, CA, US: Sage Publications, Inc, pp.105–117.

Hacking, I. (1999). *The social construction of what?* Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press.

Harper, D. (2002). Talking about pictures: A case for photo elicitation. *Visual Studies*, [online] 17(1), pp.13–26. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1080/14725860220137345>.

Hart, R. (1992). Children's participation: From tokenism to citizenship. Innocenti Essay, No. 4. International Child Development Centre.

- Hart, S.A. (2021). 'In the Hall of Mirrors': Twins Living in the Non-Twin World. In: *New Understandings of Twin Relationships*. New York: Routledge, pp.222–257.
- Harvey, M. and Howard-Hunt, B. (2021). *Achieving Your Doctorate While Working in Higher Education*. London. SAGE.
- Hay, D.A. (1999). Adolescent twins and secondary schooling. In: A. Sandbank, ed., *Twin and triplet psychology: A professional guide to working with multiples*. Routledge London, pp.119–142.
- Hay, D.A. and Preedy, P. (2006). Meeting the educational needs of multiple birth children. *Early human development*, [online] 82(6), pp.397–403.  
doi:<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.earlhumdev.2006.03.010>.
- Heinonen, K., Hermanson, E., Kumpula, U., Moilanen, I. and Penninkilampi-Kerola, V. (2016). *Multiple Birth Siblings as Adolescents*. Translated by L. Rawstorne. Translated by T. Tina Vikström. and Translated by I. Moilanen. ICOMBO.
- Herrnstein, R. and Murray, C. (1994). *The Bell Curve*. New York: New York Free Press.
- Hill, M. (2005). Ethical Considerations in Researching Children's Experiences. In: S. Greene and D. Horgan, eds., *Researching Children's Experience*. London: Sage Publications, pp.61–86.
- Hockey, J.L. and James, A. (2002). *Social Identities across the Life Course*. New York, Ny: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Hocrot, J.W. (2019). *The phenomenology of twinship: An investigation into the exceptional intersubjective capacities found in twin-twin social interactions*. University of Kent (England).
- Holmes, A. (2014). Researcher positionality: A consideration of its influence and place in research. ResearchGate, 129.
- Huberman, A. (2004). *The experience of growing up in tandem with another and its implications for parenting and educating: An inquiry into the stories of twins and*

*other multiples*. [Doctor of Education Thesis] Available at:

[https://tspace.library.utoronto.ca/bitstream/1807/120686/1/nq94287\\_ocr.pdf](https://tspace.library.utoronto.ca/bitstream/1807/120686/1/nq94287_ocr.pdf).

Human Fertilisation & Embryology Authority (2018). *Joint statement on the NGA multiple pregnancy report | HFEA*. [online] [www.hfea.gov.uk](http://www.hfea.gov.uk). Available at:

<https://www.hfea.gov.uk/about-us/news-and-press-releases/2018/joint-statement-on-the-nga-multiple-pregnancy-report/>.

ICO (2023). *Children and the UK GDPR*. [online] [ico.org.uk](http://ico.org.uk). Available at:

<https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/uk-gdpr-guidance-and-resources/childrens-information/children-and-the-uk-gdpr/>.

Ingulfsvann, L.S., Moe, V.F. and Engelsrud, G. (2020). The Messiness of Children's Voices: An Affect Theory Perspective. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, [online] 19. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406920958601>.

James, A. (2007). Giving Voice to Children's Voices: Practices and Problems, Pitfalls and Potentials. *American Anthropologist*, 109(2), pp.261–272.

doi:<https://doi.org/10.1525/aa.2007.109.2.261>.

Janghorban, R., Roudsari, R.L. and Taghipour, A. (2014). Skype interviewing: The new generation of online synchronous interview in qualitative research. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies on Health and Well-being*, 9(1), p.24152.

Jaworska, N. and MacQueen, G. (2015). Adolescence as a Unique Developmental Period. *Journal of Psychiatry & Neuroscience*, [online] 40(6), pp.386–386.

doi:<https://doi.org/10.1503/jpn.150268>.

Joseph, J. and Richardson, K. (2024). The bell curve at 30: A closer look at the withinand between group IQ genetic evidence. *The Heredity Hoax*, pp.433–476.

Joseph, J. and Wetzel, N.A. (2012). Ernst Rüdin: Hitler's Racial Hygiene Mastermind. *Journal of the History of Biology*, 46(1), pp.1–30.

doi:<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10739-012-9344-6>.

Jowett, A. (2020). *Carrying out qualitative research under lockdown – Practical and ethical considerations - Impact of Social Sciences*. [online] Impact of Social Sciences

- Maximizing the impact of academic research. Available at:  
<https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/impactofsocialsciences/2020/04/20/carrying-out-qualitative-research-under-lockdown-practical-and-ethical-considerations> [Accessed 12 Aug. 2025].

Kara, H. (2015). *Creative research methods in the social sciences : a practical guide*. Bristol: Policy Press.

Kennan, D., Brady, B. and Forkan, C. (2018). Space, Voice, Audience and Influence: the Lundy Model of Participation (2007) in Child Welfare Practice. *Practice*, [online] 31(3), pp.205–218. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1080/09503153.2018.1483494>.

Kilby, M.D. and Bricker, L. (2016). Management of monochorionic twin pregnancy. *BJOG*, 124, pp.1–45.

Kilby, M.D. and Bricker, L. (2025). Management of Monochorionic Twin Pregnancy Green-Top Guideline No. 51 (2024 Partial Update). *BJOG An International Journal of Obstetrics & Gynaecology*. [online] doi:<https://doi.org/10.1111/1471-0528.18055>.

Kim, J.-H. (2015). *Understanding Narrative Inquiry*. SAGE Publications. London

Klein, B. (2010). *Alone in the mirror : twins in therapy*. New York: Routledge.

Klein, B. (2017). *Twin Dilemmas*. London: Routledge.

Klein, B. (2021). Myth, Fantasy and Reality: The Challenges Twins Face Sharing Their Early Lives and Growing Apart. In: *New Understandings of Twin Relationships*. New York: Routledge, pp.9–40.

Knafo-Noam, A. and Segal, H. (2018). *Twin rivalry in childhood Gene-environment correlations (and parenting) View project The development of values in childhood View project*. Nova Science Publishers.

Koch, H.L. (1966). *Twins and Twin Relations, By Helen L. Koch*. Chicago, University Of Chicago Press (C.

Kohli, R. and Solórzano, D.G. (2012). Teachers, please learn our names!: racial microaggressions and the K-12 classroom. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, [online] 15(4), pp.441–462. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1080/13613324.2012.674026>.

Komulainen, S. (2007). The Ambiguity of the Child's 'Voice' in Social Research. *Childhood*, 14(1), pp.11–28. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1177/0907568207068561>.

Kozlak, J. (1978). Identical Twins: Perceptions of the Effects of Twinship. *Journal of Social Relations*, [online] 5(2), pp.105–130. Available at: [https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/23261538.pdf?casa\\_token=2Cr3jbNyypgAAAAA:D2gAzM-mv0Xz9oQiNB05BPtldGsZESbB34R60GWAjUthnRkpsnC5m35BEbXaT3MmpbkGJDVknIA3d5O94reTwjsvacp9NfGSxDCjauNZpsXr8A0NzuY](https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/23261538.pdf?casa_token=2Cr3jbNyypgAAAAA:D2gAzM-mv0Xz9oQiNB05BPtldGsZESbB34R60GWAjUthnRkpsnC5m35BEbXaT3MmpbkGJDVknIA3d5O94reTwjsvacp9NfGSxDCjauNZpsXr8A0NzuY) [Accessed 18 Mar. 2024].

Kumpunen, S., Shipway, L., Taylor, R.M., Aldiss, S. and Gibson, F. (2012). Practical approaches to seeking assent from children. *Nurse Researcher*, 19(2), pp.23–27. doi:<https://doi.org/10.7748/nr2012.01.19.2.23.c8905>.

Lagerspetz, M. (2023). Twins as a Minority: A Minority Building Perspective. *Society*, 60. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1007/s12115-023-00852-x>.

Lainson, K. (2020). *Enduring anorexia: A multi-storied counter document of living*. [Unpublished Thesis] Available at: <chrome-extension://oemmnadbldboiebfnladdacbdm/adm/https://rest.neptune-prod.its.unimelb.edu.au/server/api/core/bitstreams/855a25d3-af48-5d63-a01b-115ab6fecdb1/content> [Accessed 5 Sep. 2023].

Lainson, K., Braun, V. and Clarke, V. (2019). Being both narrative practitioner and academic researcher: A reflection on what thematic analysis has to offer narratively informed research. *International Journal of Narrative Therapy and Community Work*, [online] (4), pp.86–98. Available at: <https://search.informit.org/doi/full/10.3316/informit.846799716151082> [Accessed 5 Sep. 2023].

Lally, E. (2014). *Symbiotic relationships in patients' engagements with practice nurses*. Open Access Te Herenga Waka Victoria University of Wellington.

Lansdown, G. (2018). Conceptual framework for measuring outcomes of adolescent participation. *UNICEF: New York, NY, USA*.

Lawler, S. (2008). Stories and the social world. In: M. Pickering, ed., *Research methods for cultural studies*. Edinburgh University Press Edinburgh.

Le Gallais, T. (2008). Wherever I go there I am: reflections on reflexivity and the research stance. *Reflective Practice*, 9(2), pp.145–155.

doi:<https://doi.org/10.1080/14623940802005475>.

Leach, B. and Gunasekara, J. (2023). *Broadmoor: Silent twin on being locked up with Ronnie Kray*. [online] BBC News. Available at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-67716241> [Accessed 17 Nov. 2024].

Leslie, R., Brown, A., Larsen, E. and Fanshawe, M. (2023). Reflecting on rapport: strategies for online interviews about sensitive or distressing topics with vulnerable children. *International Journal of Research & Method in Education*, pp.1–14.

doi:<https://doi.org/10.1080/1743727x.2023.2294781>.

Lewin, K. (1935). *A dynamic theory of personality: Selected papers*. New York: Mcgraw-Hill.

Lewin, V. (2018). *The Twin Enigma*. London: Routledge.

Lin, K.-L. (2017). *Exploring Children's Lived Experience of Resilience in Public Preschools in Taiwan: The Lens of Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory*. PhD Thesis.

Lincoln, Y.S. and Guba, E.G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. sage.

Loh, J. (2013). Inquiry into issues of trustworthiness and quality in narrative studies: A perspective. *Qualitative Report*, 18(33).

Long, H., Wang, Y., Fan, J., Liao, L., Yang, X. and Lai, W. (2016). Current advances in orthodontic pain. *International Journal of Oral Science*, [online] 8(2), pp.67–75.

doi:<https://doi.org/10.1038/ijos.2016.24>.

Loureiro, F., Figueiredo, M.H. and Charepe, Z. (2019). Nursing care satisfaction from school-aged children's perspective: An integrative review. *International Journal of Nursing Practice*, [online] 25(6). doi:<https://doi.org/10.1111/ijn.12764>.

Lovitz, D. (2018). *Twinsight*. Familius.

Lundström, A. (2007a). An investigation of 202 pairs of twins regarding fundamental factors in the aetiology of malocclusion. *European Journal of Orthodontics*, [online] 29(Supplement 1), pp.i51–i57. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1093/ejo/cjl098>.

Lundström, A. (2007b). An investigation of 202 pairs of twins regarding fundamental factors in the aetiology of malocclusion. *European Journal of Orthodontics*, [online] 29(Supplement 1), pp.i51–i57. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1093/ejo/cjl098>.

Lundy, L. (2007). 'Voice' Is Not enough: Conceptualising Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. *British Educational Research Journal*, 33(6), pp.927–942. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1080/01411920701657033>.

Lundy, L. (2018). In Defence of tokenism? Implementing Children's Right to Participate in Collective decision-making. *Childhood*, [online] 25(3), pp.340–354. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1177/0907568218777292>.

Lundy, L. and McEvoy, L. (2011). Children's rights and research processes: Assisting children to (in)formed views. *Childhood*, [online] 19(1), pp.129–144. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1177/0907568211409078>.

Määttä, K., Päiveröinen, H., Määttä, R. and Uusiautti, S. (2016). How Did I Become Me?—Identical Female Twins Describe the Development of Their Individuality. *Journal of Educational and Developmental Psychology*, 6(2), p.37. doi:<https://doi.org/10.5539/jedp.v6n2p37>.

Maguire, L.E. (2021). *Displaying Multiple Birth Family: an exploration of how first time parents negotiate the realities of multiple birth family during the first five years*. PhD Thesis.

Maisuria, A., Foster, D., Roberts, N., Brione, P. and Long, R. (2025). *Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill 2024-25*. [online] House of Commons Library. Available at: <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-10165/>.

Malterud, K. (2001). Qualitative research: standards, challenges, and Guidelines. *The Lancet*, [online] 358(9280), pp.483–488. doi:[https://doi.org/10.1016/s0140-6736\(01\)05627-6](https://doi.org/10.1016/s0140-6736(01)05627-6).

Mandell, N. (1988). The Least-Adult Role in Studying Children. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, 16(4), pp.433–467. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1177/0891241688164002>.

Martinez, J. (2021). The Study of Twin Experience as Twins: A Phenomenological Approach. In: *New Understandings of Twin Relationships*. London: Routledge, pp.41–60.

Mascazine, J.R. (2004). *Understanding Multiple-birth Children and how They Learn*. Author House.

Mavioğlu, R.N., Boomsma, D.I. and Bartels, M. (2015). Causes of individual differences in adolescent optimism: a study in Dutch twins and their siblings. *European Child & Adolescent Psychiatry*, 24(11), pp.1381–1388. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1007/s00787-015-0680-x>.

Mayes, E. (2019). The mis/uses of 'voice' in (post)qualitative research with children and young people: Histories, politics and ethics. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 32(10), pp.1191–1209. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1080/09518398.2019.1659438>.

McDonagh, J.E., Ambresin, A., Boisen, K.A., Fonseca, H., Kruse, J., Meynard, A., Stronski, S., Michaud, P. and Takeuchi, Y.L. (2018). The age of adolescence...and young adulthood. *The Lancet Child & Adolescent Health*, [online] 2(4), p.e6. doi:[https://doi.org/10.1016/S23524642\(18\)300798](https://doi.org/10.1016/S23524642(18)300798).

Mellor, N. (2001). Messy method: the unfolding story. *Educational Action Research*, 9(3), pp.465–484. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1080/09650790100200166>.

Mercieca, D. and Mercieca, D.P. (2026). The impossible possibility of listening to (young) children’s voices. *Global Studies of Childhood*. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1177/20436106261427021>.

Merçon-Vargas, E.A., Lima, R.F.F., Rosa, E.M. and Tudge, J. (2020). Processing Proximal Processes: What Bronfenbrenner Meant, What He Didn’t Mean, and What He Should Have Meant. *Journal of Family Theory & Review*, 12(3). doi:<https://doi.org/10.1111/jftr.12373>.

Merriam, S.B., Johnson-Bailey, J., Lee, M.-Y., Kee, Y., Ntseane, G. and Muhamad, M. (2001). Power and positionality: negotiating insider/outsider status within and across cultures. *International Journal of Lifelong Education*, 20(5), pp.405–416.

Mirick, R.G. and Wladkowski, S.P. (2019). Skype in qualitative interviews: Participant and researcher perspectives. *The qualitative report*, 24(12), pp.3061–3072.

Mishler, E.G. (1986). *Research interviewing : context and narrative*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Monden, C., Pison, G. and Smits, J. (2021). Twin Peaks: more twinning in humans than ever before. *Human Reproduction*, 36(6), pp.1666–1673.

Montgomery, H. (2014). Participant Observation. In: *Understanding Research with Children and Young People*. Open University, pp.122–135.

Moore, T., McArthur, M. and Noble-Carr, D. (2008). Little Voices and Big Ideas: Lessons Learned from Children about Research. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 7(2), pp.77–91. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1177/160940690800700205>.

Mór, P. (2023). Twins in society—expectations, roles, life courses. *Twin studies in social science*, p.79.

Mosselson, J. (2010). Subjectivity and reflexivity: locating the self in research on dislocation. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 23(4), pp.479–494. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1080/09518398.2010.492771>.

Mozes Kor, E. (1992). Nazi Experiments as Viewed by a Survivor of Mengele's Experiments. In: *When medicine went mad : Bioethics and the Holocaust*. Totowa, N.J.: Humana Press, pp.3–8.

My Name My Identity (2016). *My Name, My Identity Campaign*. [online] Mynamemyidentity.org. Available at: <https://www.mynamemyidentity.org/campaign/about> [Accessed 13 Jan. 2025].

Nagel, T. (1974). What is it like to be a bat? *The Philosophical Review*, [online] 83(4), pp.435–450. doi:<https://doi.org/10.2307/2183914>.

Navarro, J.L. and Tudge, J.R.H. (2022). Technologizing Bronfenbrenner: Neo-ecological Theory. *Current Psychology*, [online] 42, pp.1–17. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1007/s12144-022-02738-3>.

Ncube, M. (2018). *Identical Twins*. London: Routledge.

Neal, J.W. and Neal, Z.P. (2013). Nested or Networked? Future Directions for Ecological Systems Theory. *Social Development*, [online] 22(4), pp.722–737. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1111/sode.12018>.

Noble, N. (2014). *School counselors' perceptions of twins*. [PhD Thesis] Available at: <https://ttu-ir.tdl.org/items/1816dfb1-8edf-4a54-8d0e-25f420b40dce> [Accessed 12 Aug. 2025].

Nursing and Midwifery Council (2018). *The Code*. [online] Nursing and Midwifery Council. Available at: <https://www.nmc.org.uk/standards/code/read-the-code-online/>.

O'Leary, S. and Moloney, M. (2020). Understanding the Experiences of Young Children on the Autism Spectrum as They Navigate the Irish Early Years' Education System: Valuing Voices in Child-Centered Narratives. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 19, p.160940692091469. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406920914696>.

Ollerenshaw, J.A. and Creswell, J.W. (2002). Narrative Research: A Comparison of Two Restorying Data Analysis Approaches. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 8(3), pp.329–347. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1177/10778004008003008>.

Olmos-Vega, F.M., Stalmeijer, R.E., Varpio, L. and Kahlke, R. (2022). A Practical Guide to Reflexivity in Qualitative research: AMEE Guide no. 149. *Medical Teacher*, 45(149), pp.1–11. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1080/0142159X.2022.2057287>.

Oxford English Dictionary (2023). messy, adj. meanings, etymology and more | Oxford English Dictionary. *Oxford English Dictionary*. [online] doi:<https://doi.org/10.1093/OED//1537547657>.

Pain, H. (2012). A Literature Review to Evaluate the Choice and Use of Visual Methods. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 11(4), pp.303–319. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1177/160940691201100401>.

Parsi, K. and Elster, N.R. (2014). Conducting Research on Social Media—Is Facebook Like the Public Square? *American journal of bioethics*, [online] 14(10), pp.63–65. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1080/15265161.2014.947825>.

Pearlman, E.M. and Jill Alison Ganon (2011). *Raising Twins*. Harper Collins.

Pector, E.A. (2002). Twin Death and Mourning Worldwide: A Review of the Literature. *Twin Research*, 5(03), pp.196–205. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1375/twin.5.3.196>.

Penninkilampi-Kerola, V., Moilanen, I. and Kaprio, J. (2005). Co-twin dependence, social interactions, and academic achievement: A population-based study. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 22(4), pp.519–541. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1177/0265407505054521>.

Pettifer, A. (2021). *The Experiences of Family Members Witnessing the Diminishing Drinking of a Dying Relative in Hospital: A Narrative Inquiry*. PhD Thesis.

Pietilä, S., Björklund, A. and Bülow, P. (2012). Older twins' experiences of the relationship with their co-twin over the life-course. *Journal of Aging Studies*, 26(2), pp.119–128. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jaging.2011.10.002>.

Pietilä, S., Björklund, A. and Bülow, P. (2013). 'We are not as alike, as you think' sense of individuality within the co-twin relationship along the life course. *Journal of Aging Studies*, 27(4), pp.339–346. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jaging.2013.08.001>.

Pini, S., Gardner, P. and Hugh-Jones, S. (2018). How and Why School Is Important to Teenagers with Cancer: Outcomes from a Photo-Elicitation Study. *Journal of Adolescent and Young Adult Oncology*, 00(00). doi:<https://doi.org/10.1089/jayao.2018.0068>.

Piontelli, A. (2002). *Twins : from fetus to child*. London ; New York: Routledge.

Piontelli, A. (2008). *Twins in the World*. London: Springer.

Pogrebin, A. (2010). *One and the same : my life as an identical twin and what I've learned about everyone's struggle to be singular*. New York: Anchor Books.

Poku, B.A., Caress, A.-L. and Kirk, S. (2019). The Opportunities and Challenges of Using Photo-Elicitation in Child-Centered Constructivist Grounded Theory Research. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, [online] 18, p.160940691985162. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406919851627>.

Prainsack, B. and Spector, T.D. (2006). Twins: A cloning experience. *Social Science & Medicine*, 63(10), pp.2739–2752. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2006.06.024>.

Preedy, P. (2024). *Twin Education*. [online] Twineducation.org. Available at: <https://twineducation.org/about/why-have-this-website/> [Accessed 24 May 2025].

Prensky, M. (2001). Digital natives, Digital Immigrants. *On the Horizon*, 9(5), pp.1–6. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1108/10748120110424816>.

Prout, A. and James, A. (1997). A new paradigm for the sociology of childhood?: Provenance, promise and problems. In: *Constructing and reconstructing childhood*. Routledge, pp.6–28.

Pulkkinen, L., Vaalamo, I., Hietala, R., Kaprio, J. and Rose, R.J. (2003). Peer Reports of Adaptive Behavior in Twins and Singletons: Is Twinship a Risk or an

Advantage? *Twin Research*, 6(2), pp.106–118.  
doi:<https://doi.org/10.1375/136905203321536236>.

Punch, S. (2002). Research with Children: The same or different from research with adults? *Childhood*, [online] 9(3), pp.321–341.  
doi:<https://doi.org/10.1177/0907568202009003005>.

Race Equality Matters. (2021). #MyNameIs - Race Equality Matters. [online]  
Available at: <https://www.raceequalitymatters.com/my-name-is/> [Accessed 13 Jan. 2025].

Redlich Amirav, D. and Higginbottom, G. (2014). New emerging technologies in qualitative research. *The Qualitative Report*, 19(26), pp.1–14.

Riessman, C.K. (2005). Exporting ethics: a narrative about narrative research in South India. *Health: An Interdisciplinary Journal for the Social Study of Health, Illness and Medicine*, 9(4), pp.473–490.  
doi:<https://doi.org/10.1177/1363459305056414>.

Riessman, C.K. (2008). *Narrative methods for the human sciences*. Los Angeles: Sage Publications.

Rogers, L.O., Niwa, E.Y., Chung, K., Yip, T. and Chae, D. (2021). M(ai)cro: Centering the Macrosystem in Human Development. *Human Development*, [online] 65(5-6), pp.270–292. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1159/000519630>.

Rosa, E.M. and Tudge, J. (2013). Urie Bronfenbrenner's Theory of Human Development: Its Evolution from Ecology to Bioecology. *Journal of Family Theory & Review*, [online] 5(4), pp.243–258. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1111/jftr.12022>.

Rosambeau, M. (1987). *How Twins Grow Up*. London: Vintage.

Russell, J.E.A. (2014). Career Coach: The Power of a Name. *Washington Post*. [online] 14 Jan. Available at: [https://hr.uoregon.edu/sites/default/files/Power\\_using\\_name\\_Washington-Post.pdf](https://hr.uoregon.edu/sites/default/files/Power_using_name_Washington-Post.pdf) [Accessed 13 Jan. 2025].

Sahu, M. and Prasuna, J.G. (2016). Twin studies: A unique epidemiological tool. *Indian journal of community medicine/Indian Journal of Community Medicine*, [online] 41(3), pp.177–177. doi:<https://doi.org/10.4103/0970-0218.183593>.

Sandbank, A. (1999a). *Twin and Triplet Psychology*. Routledge.

Sandbank, A.C. ed., (1999b). *Twin and Triplet Psychology*. Routledge.

Sawicki, K.S. and Rogucka, E. (1998). The Position of the Monozygotic Twins Among their School Class-Mates in the Light of Results of Janusz Korczak's 'Plebiscite on Likes and Dislikes'. *Acta geneticae medicae et gemellologiae: twin research*, [online] 47(3-4), pp.133–151. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1017/s0001566000000039>.

Sawyer, S.M., Azzopardi, P.S., Wickremarathne, D. and Patton, G.C. (2018). The age of adolescence. *The Lancet Child & Adolescent Health*, [online] 2(3), pp.223–228. doi:[https://doi.org/10.1016/s2352-4642\(18\)30022-1](https://doi.org/10.1016/s2352-4642(18)30022-1).

Scaife, R. (2023). *Exploring betweenness: an autoethnographic journey into the experience of twinship and its therapeutic implications*. [DCPsych Thesis] 88wwz. Available at: <https://repository.mdx.ac.uk/item/112z90> [Accessed 6 Aug. 2025].

Schave, B. and Ciriello, J. (1983). *Identity and Intimacy in Twins*. Praeger Publishers.

Segal, H. and Knafo-Noam, A. (2018). Twin rivalry in childhood. *The psychology of rivalry*, pp.111–129.

Segal, N.L. (1999). *Entwined lives : twins and what they tell us about human behavior*. New York: Dutton.

Segal, N.L. (2017). *Twin mythconceptions: False beliefs, fables, and facts about twins*. Academic Press.

Seidelman, W.E. (1996). Nuremberg lamentation: for the forgotten victims of medical science. *BMJ*, 313(7070), pp.1463–1467. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.313.7070.1463>.

Shackle, E. (2016). Twins and the Transpersonal. *Transpersonal Psychology Review*, 18(1), pp.55–64. doi:<https://doi.org/10.53841/bpstran.2016.18.1.55>.

Shaw, C., Brady, L. and Davey, C. (2011). Guidelines for research with children and young people. *London: National Children's Bureau Research Centre*.

Seidelman, W.E. (1996). Nuremberg lamentation: for the forgotten victims of medical science. *BMJ*, 313(7070), pp.1463–1467.

doi:<https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.313.7070.1463>.

Simeonsdotter Svensson, A., Pramling Samuelsson, I., Hellström, A.-L. and Jenholt Nolbris, M. (2013). Experiences of SKYPE communication in education and research – data collection concerning young children with long-term illness. *Early Child Development and Care*, 184(7), pp.1017–1030.

doi:<https://doi.org/10.1080/03004430.2013.841154>.

Sipes, N.J. and Sipes, J.S. (1998). *Dancing Naked in Front of the Fridge*. FairWinds Press.

Smith, C. (2010). *What Is a Person?* Chicago University of Chicago Press.

Smith, E.F., Gidlow, B. and Steel, G. (2012). Engaging adolescent participants in academic research: the use of photo-elicitation interviews to evaluate school-based outdoor education programmes. *Qualitative Research*, [online] 12(4), pp.367–387.

doi:<https://doi.org/10.1177/1468794112443473>.

Smith, M. (2007). *Similarities and differences between adolescent monozygotic and dizygotic twins' quality of the sibling relationship*. PhD Thesis. The University of Texas at Austin.

Southerton, D. (2020). *Time, Consumption and the Coordination of Everyday Life*. London: Palgrave Macmillan UK. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-349-60117-2>.

Spudich, D. (2014). *Twins in Academia: a Phenomenology Exploring the Twin Relationship, Student Development and College Experiences among Twins in College*. PhD Thesis.

Spyrou, S. (2011). The limits of children's voices: From authenticity to critical, reflexive representation. *Childhood*, [online] 18(2), pp.151–165.  
doi:<https://doi.org/10.1177/0907568210387834>.

Statista (2022). *UK: leading social networks by usage reach 2022* | Statista. [online] Statista. Available at: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/284506/united-kingdom-social-network-penetration/> [Accessed 11 Oct. 2023].

Stewart, E. (2000). *Exploring Twins*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Strömpl, J. and Luhamaa, K. (2020). Child participation in child welfare removals through the looking glass: Estonian children's and professionals' perspectives compared. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 118, p.105421.  
doi:<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chilyouth.2020.105421>.

Sue, D.W., Capodilupo, C.M., Torino, G.C., Bucceri, J.M., Holder, A.M.B., Nadal, K.L. and Esquilin, M. (2007). Racial microaggressions in everyday life: Implications for clinical practice. *American Psychologist*, 62(4), pp.271–286.  
doi:<https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066x.62.4.271>.

Sullivan, J.R. (2012). Skype: An appropriate method of data collection for qualitative interviews? *The Hilltop Review*, 6(1), p.10.

Tamlyn, G. (2022). *An exploration of the narratives of young people who have experienced Emotional Based School Avoidance*. EdD Thesis.

Tancredy, C.M. and Fraley, R.C. (2006). The nature of adult twin relationships: An attachment-theoretical perspective. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, [online] 90(1), pp.78–93. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.90.1.78>.

Tárnoki, A.D., Tárnoki, D.L., Júlia Métneki and Segal, N.L. (2022). Growing up as twins: the perspectives of twin researchers. *Elsevier eBooks*, [online] pp.115–130.  
doi:<https://doi.org/10.1016/b978-0-12-821514-2.00019-2>.

Teo, T. and Ball, L.C. (2009). Twin research, revisionism and metahistory. *History of the Human Sciences*, 22(5), pp.1–23.  
doi:<https://doi.org/10.1177/0952695109345418>.

Thomas, J. and Harden, A. (2008). Methods for the thematic synthesis of qualitative research in systematic reviews. *BMC Medical research methodology*, [online] 8(1). doi:<https://doi.org/10.1186/1471-2288-8-45>.

Thorpe, K. and Danby, S. (2006). Guest Editorial: Compromised or Competent: Analyzing Twin Children's Social Worlds. *Twin Research and Human Genetics*, 9(1), pp.90–94. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1375/183242706776402957>.

Tohme, P. (2014). *Mentalizing adolescence: reflective functioning capacities in parents of identical twins and its relationship to adolescent attachment*. PhD Thesis. UCL (University College London).

Tóth, E. (2023). To be or not to be a twin? The roles and stereotypes facing twins in secondary school. *TWIN STUDIES IN SOCIAL SCIENCE*, p.63.

Treseder, P. (1997). *Empowering children & young people: Training manual: Promoting involvement in decision making*. Save the Children.

Tudge, J. (2008). *The everyday lives of young children: Culture, class, and child rearing in diverse societies*. Cambridge University Press.

Twins Trust (2025a). *Identical or non-identical?* [online] Twins Trust. Available at: <https://twinstrust.org/information/pregnancy-and-birth/finding-out/identical-or-non-identical.html> [Accessed 23 Apr. 2025].

Twins Trust (2025b). *Multiple birth statistics*. [online] Available at: <https://twinstrust.org/static/89af4d2a-49fe-4d23-bbcf8475f099762f/5cdfb852-318c-4eb8-955ef8f6b8f5d6c0/Key-stats-and-facts.pdf> [Accessed 1 Jun. 2025].

Twum-Danso Imoh, A. and Okyere, S. (2020). Towards a more holistic understanding of child participation: Foregrounding the experiences of children in Ghana and Nigeria. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 112, p.104927. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2020.104927>.

Twycross, A. (2009). An interprofessional approach to the ethics of undertaking research with children. *Nurse Researcher*, 16(3), pp.7–20. doi:<https://doi.org/10.7748/nr2009.04.16.3.7.c6942>.

UNICEF (1989). *The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child*. [online] Available at: [https://downloads.unicef.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2010/05/UNCRC\\_PRESS200910web.pdf?\\_ga=2.78590034.795419542.1582474737-1972578648.1582474737](https://downloads.unicef.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2010/05/UNCRC_PRESS200910web.pdf?_ga=2.78590034.795419542.1582474737-1972578648.1582474737).

Uprichard, E. (2008). Children as 'Being and Becomings': Children, Childhood and Temporality. *Children & Society*, 22(4), pp.303–313.

Vaziri Flais, S. (2015). *Raising twins : parenting multiples from pregnancy through the school years*. Itasca, IL: American Academy Of Pediatrics.

Vélez-Agosto, N.M., Soto-Crespo, J.G., Vizcarrondo-Oppenheimer, M., Vega-Molina, S. and García Coll, C. (2017). Bronfenbrenner's bioecological theory revision: Moving culture from the macro into the micro. *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 12(5), pp.900–910. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1177/1745691617704397>.

Villanti, A.C., LePine, S.E., Peasley-Miklus, C., West, J.C., Roemhildt, M., Williams, R. and Copeland, W.E. (2022). COVID-related distress, mental health, and substance use in adolescents and young adults. *Child and Adolescent Mental Health*, 27(2). doi:<https://doi.org/10.1111/camh.12550>.

Viney, W. (2021). *Twins: Superstitions and Marvels*. London: Reaktion Books.

Viney, W. (2023). *Twinkind*. London: Thames & Hudson.

Viviers, A. and Lombard, A. (2012). The ethics of children's participation: Fundamental to children's rights realization in Africa. *International Social Work*, 56(1), pp.7–21. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1177/0020872812459066>.

Vygotsky, L. (1978). *Mind in society: the Development of Higher Psychological Processes*. Harvard University Press.

Wallace, M. (1986). *The silent twins*. London: Vintage.

Wang, C. and Burris, M.A. (1997). Photovoice: concept, methodology, and use for participatory needs assessment. *Health education & behavior : the official publication of the Society for Public Health Education*, [online] 24(3), pp.369–87. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1177/109019819702400309>.

Watzlawik, M. (2009). The Perception of Similarities and Differences Among Adolescent Siblings. *Journal of Adolescent Research*, 24(5), pp.561–578. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1177/0743558409338301>.

Weiss, C.R. and Johnson-Koenke, R. (2023). Narrative Inquiry as a Caring and Relational Research Approach: Adopting an Evolving Paradigm. *Qualitative Health Research*. [online] Available at: <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/10497323231158619?icid=int.sj-full-text.similar-articles.1> [Accessed 29 Apr. 2024].

Weller, S. (2015). The potentials and pitfalls of using Skype for qualitative (longitudinal) interviews.

Wells, F., Ritchie, D. and McPherson, A.C. (2012). 'It is life threatening but I don't mind'. A qualitative study using photo elicitation interviews to explore adolescents' experiences of renal replacement therapies. *Child: Care, Health and Development*, 39(4), pp.602–612. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1365-2214.2012.01399.x>.

Whale, K. (2017). The use of Skype and telephone interviews in sensitive qualitative research with young people: experiences from the ROCCA continence study. *Qualitative methods in psychology bulletin*, 23.

White, E.K., Garon-Carrier, G., Tosto, M.G., Malykh, S.B., Li, X., Kiddle, B., Riglin, L., Byrne, B., Dionne, G., Brendgen, M., Vitaro, F., Tremblay, R.E., Boivin, M. and Kovas, Y. (2018). Twin classroom dilemma: To study together or separately? *Developmental Psychology*, 54(7), pp.1244–1254. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1037/dev0000519>.

Wilson, S. (2019). 'Hard to reach' parents but not hard to research: a critical reflection of gatekeeper positionality using a community-based methodology. *International Journal of Research & Method in Education*, pp.1–17. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1080/1743727x.2019.1626819>.

Winnicott, D.W. (2016). Review: Twins: A Study of Three Pairs of Identical Twins. *Oxford University Press eBooks*, [online] pp.103–106. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1093/med:psych/9780190271367.003.0020>.

Woolhouse, C. (2017). Conducting photo methodologies with children: framing ethical concerns relating to representation, voice and data analysis when exploring educational inclusion with children. *International Journal of Research & Method in Education*, 42(1), pp.3–18. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1080/1743727x.2017.1369511>.

World Health Organization (2023). *Adolescent health*. [online] World Health Organization. Available at: [https://www.who.int/health-topics/adolescent-health#tab=tab\\_1](https://www.who.int/health-topics/adolescent-health#tab=tab_1).

Wright, L. (1997). *Twins : and what they tell us about who we are*. New York: J. Wiley.

Zazzo, R. (1976). The Twin Condition and the Couple Effects on Personality Development. *Acta geneticae medicae et gemellologiae*, [online] 25(1), pp.343–352. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1017/s0001566000014409>.

Zazzo, R. (1977). Genesis and peculiarities of the personality of twins. *Progress in clinical and biological research*, 24, pp.1–11.

Zempi, I. (2016). Negotiating Constructions of Insider and Outsider Status in Research with Veiled Muslim Women Victims of Islamophobic Hate Crime. *Sociological Research Online*, [online] 21(4), pp.70–81. doi:<https://doi.org/10.5153/sro.4080>.

Zhou, Y. (2015). *Adolescent twins' mental representations of self and other in relation with zygosity, attachment patterns and psychological disturbances*. PhD Thesis. UCL (University College London).

# Appendices

## Appendix 1: Ethics approval letter from the University Health, Education and Life Sciences Faculty Academic Ethics Committee for Stage One Interviews



Faculty of Health, Education & Life Sciences Research Office  
Seacole Building, 8 Westbourne Road  
Birmingham  
B15 3TN  
HELS\_Ethics@bcu.ac.uk

07/Feb/2021

Mrs Lara Alamad  
lara.alamad@bcu.ac.uk

Dear Lara ,

Re: Alamad /#7763 /sub2 /R(B) /2021 /Jan /HELS FAEC - Exploring the experiences of adolescent identical female twins in the United Kingdom

Thank you for your updated application and amended documentation regarding the above activity. I am pleased to take Chair's Action and approve this activity.

Provided that you are granted Permission of Access by relevant parties (meeting requirements as laid out by them), you may begin your activity.

I can also confirm that any person participating in the project is covered under the University's insurance arrangements.

Please note that ethics approval only covers your activity as it has been detailed in your ethics application. If you wish to make any changes to the activity, then you must submit an Amendment application for approval of the proposed changes.

Examples of changes include (but are not limited to) adding a new study site, a new method of participant recruitment, adding a new method of data collection and/or change of Project Lead.

Please also note that the Health, Education and Life Sciences Faculty Academic Ethics Committee should be notified of any serious adverse effects arising as a result of this activity.

If for any reason the Committee feels that the activity is no longer ethically sound, it reserves the right to withdraw its approval. In the unlikely event of issues arising which would lead to this, you will be consulted.

**Keep a copy of this letter along with the corresponding application for your records as evidence of approval.**

If you have any queries, please contact HELS\_Ethics@bcu.ac.uk

I wish you every success with your activity.

Yours Sincerely,

Mr. Stuart Mitchell

On behalf of the Health, Education and Life Sciences Faculty Academic Ethics Committee

## Appendix 2: Stage One Interviews Participant Information Sheet - Parents



### **Participant Information Sheet**

#### **Parents/Guardians**

### **Exploring the experiences of adolescent identical female twins in the United Kingdom**

#### **A PhD research project undertaken at Birmingham City University**

Your children are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide whether or not you wish them to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully.

#### **What is the purpose of the study?**

Twins are a growing population (Human Embryology and Fertilisation Authority, 2018) and it is important that professionals in education, healthcare and other children's services have an accurate understanding of the realities of being a twin as

opposed to preconceived ideas of twins. Most research either compares twins to singleton children, or compares different types of twins. Focusing on one group of twins, identical twin girls will provide more in-depth knowledge of about the experiences of identical twin girls from their perspective. This knowledge could hopefully benefit twins in educational, healthcare settings and elsewhere.

### **Why have my children been invited to participate?**

Your children have been invited to participate as they are adolescent identical female twins

### **Do my children have to take part?**

No, it is up to you to decide whether or not either of your children take part. If you decide you wish for them to participate, you are still free to withdraw them from the study at any time and without giving a reason.

### **What will happen to my children if they take part?**

If you agree for your children to participate in this research study, prior to the research starting, you will meet with the researcher via MS Teams or on the telephone and have the opportunity to ask any questions about the research. If you are still happy for your children to participate, you will complete an oral consent statement which will be recorded.

The research consist of two conversations with each twin via MS Teams. In the first interview they can chose from a selection of five questions about their experiences of being a twin. In the second interview they will be asked to use the river of life timeline to talk about how they have felt about being a twin during their life. There is no time limit, but it is estimated that each interview should not last longer than an hour.

You will be able to withdraw your children at any time during the study.

### **What are the possible benefits of taking part?**

The results of this research may not benefit you or your children directly, however, it is hoped that the results of this research will be used to create a better knowledge base about the needs of identical twin girls.

### **What are the possible risks of taking part?**

Although the research does not aim to ask any sensitive or distressing questions, it is still possible that your children may find participation an emotional or upsetting experience. If this is the case, the researcher can direct you to appropriate support services.

### **Will what my children say in this study be kept confidential?**

In any publications a fake name which the child can choose will be used (i.e. a pseudonym). Any other potentially identifying information such as location will not be included in the published research.

You and your children's information and data will be stored safely and confidentially using password-protected software in accordance with Birmingham City University policy and will keep the research data until the doctoral study is completed. As your children are under 18, this recording of your consent will need to be kept by the university until your children reach their 21st birthday.

### **What should I do if I want my children to take part?**

If you are interested in participating in the study, please contact the researcher either by email (the contact details are at end of this information sheet)

### **What will happen to the results of the research study?**

Each child will be sent a transcript of what has been discussed, via your email address, to ensure that they are happy with what has been recorded. The answers each child provides will form the basis of my PhD thesis. The published thesis will be available via the Birmingham City University repository. A summary of the research findings will also be sent to all participants.

### **Who is organising and funding the research?**

This research is being conducted by Lara Alamad, a doctoral student at Birmingham City University within the Faculty of Health, Education and Life Sciences.

The research is funded by Birmingham City University.

### **Who is supervising the study?**

The Director of Studies is Dr Carolyn Blackburn, Reader in Interdisciplinary Practice and Research with Families at Birmingham City University. Email [carolyn.blackburn@bcu.ac.uk](mailto:carolyn.blackburn@bcu.ac.uk)

### **Who has reviewed the study?**

This research has been approved by the Faculty of Health, Education and Life Sciences Academic and Ethics Committee at Birmingham City University.

### **Contact for Further Information**

If you should require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact:

Email: [lara.alamad3@mail.bcu.ac.uk](mailto:lara.alamad3@mail.bcu.ac.uk)

**What if I want to make a complaint?**

If you wish to make a complaint about the conduct of the study, please contact:

Faculty Academic Ethics Committee (FAEC)

Faculty of Health, Education and Life Sciences

Birmingham City University

Westbourne Road

Birmingham B13 3TN

Email: [HELS\\_Ethics@bcu.ac.uk](mailto:HELS_Ethics@bcu.ac.uk)

**Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet, please do not  
hesitate to contact me if you have any further questions.**



## **Participant Information Sheet 16+**

### **Exploring the experiences of adolescent identical female twins in the United Kingdom**

#### **A PhD research project undertaken at Birmingham City University**

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide whether or not to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully.

#### **What is the purpose of the study?**

Twins are a growing population (Human Embryology and Fertilisation Authority, 2018) and it is important that professionals in education, healthcare and other children's services have an accurate understanding of the realities of being a twin as opposed to preconceived ideas of twins. Most research either compares twins to singleton children, or compares different types of twins. Focusing on one group of twins, identical twin girls will provide more in-depth knowledge of about the experiences of identical twin girls from their perspective. This knowledge could hopefully benefit twins in educational, healthcare settings and elsewhere.

### **Why have I been invited to participate?**

You have been asked to participate because you are an adolescent identical female twin.

### **Do I have to take part?**

No, it is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you decide to take part you are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason.

### **What will happen to me if I take part?**

If you agree to participate in this research study, prior to the research starting, you will meet with the researcher via MS Teams and have the opportunity to ask any questions about the research. If you are still happy to participate, you will complete an oral consent statement which will be recorded.

The research will consist of two conversations via MS Teams. In the first interview you can choose from a selection of five questions about your experiences of being a twin. In the second interview you will be asked to use the river of life timeline to talk about how you have felt about being a twin during your life. There is no time limit, but it is estimated that each interview should not last longer than an hour.

You will be able to withdraw at any time during the study. I will send you a transcript of what has been discussed to ensure that you are happy with what has been recorded. No one else will see this transcript.

### **What are the possible benefits of taking part?**

The results of this research may not benefit you directly, however, it is hoped that the results of this research will be used to create a better knowledge base about the needs of identical twin girls.

### **What are the possible risks of taking part?**

Although the research does not aim to ask any sensitive or distressing questions, it is still possible that you may find participation an emotional or upsetting experience. If this is the case, the researcher can direct you to appropriate support services.

### **Will what I say in this study be kept confidential?**

In any publications a fake name which you can choose will be used (i.e. a pseudonym). Any other potentially identifying information such as location will not be included in the published research.

I will store your information and data safely and confidentially using password-protected software in accordance with Birmingham City University policy and will keep the research data until the doctoral study is completed. If you are under 18, this recording of your consent will need to be kept by the university until you reach your 21st birthday.

### **What should I do if I want to take part?**

If you are interested in participating in the study, please contact the researcher by email (the contact details are at end of this information sheet)

### **What will happen to the results of the research study?**

The answers you provide will form the basis of my PhD thesis. The published thesis will be available via the Birmingham City University repository. A summary of the research findings will also be sent to all participants.

### **Who is organising and funding the research?**

This research is being conducted by Lara Alamad, a doctoral student at Birmingham City University within the Faculty of Health, Education and Life Sciences.

The research is funded by Birmingham City University.

### **Who is supervising the study?**

The Director of Studies is Dr Carolyn Blackburn, Reader in Interdisciplinary Practice and Research with Families at Birmingham City University. Email [carolyn.blackburn@bcu.ac.uk](mailto:carolyn.blackburn@bcu.ac.uk)

### **Who has reviewed the study?**

This research has been approved by the Faculty of Health, Education and Life Sciences Academic and Ethics Committee at Birmingham City University.

### **Contact for Further Information**

If you should require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact:

Email: [lara.alamad3@mail.bcu.ac.uk](mailto:lara.alamad3@mail.bcu.ac.uk)

### **What if I want to make a complaint?**

If you wish to make a complaint about the conduct of the study, please contact:

Faculty Academic Ethics Committee (FAEC)

Faculty of Health, Education and Life Sciences

Birmingham City University

Westbourne Road

Birmingham B13 3TN

Email: [HELS\\_Ethics@bcu.ac.uk](mailto:HELS_Ethics@bcu.ac.uk)

**Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet, please do not  
hesitate to contact us if you have any further questions.**

## Appendix 4: Stage One Interviews Participant Information Sheet - 10 - 15 years

Participant Information Sheet 10-15 years



### Exploring the experiences of adolescent identical female twins in the United Kingdom

#### A PhD research project undertaken at Birmingham City University

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide whether or not to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully.

#### What is the study for?

The number of twins is increasing. This means it is important that schools, hospitals and other places that look after children know about twins and what it is like to be a twin. Most research looks at comparing twins with non-twins or comparing different types of twins. This research thinks that looking at just one type of twin: identical twin girls, would provide better information.

#### What will happen to my data?

You will be given a fake name, which you can choose. The information collected about you will use that fake name. Your name will be stored separately and safely. Only the researcher and the University audit team will know who you are. However, if you tell the researcher that you are in danger or that someone is hurting you, the researcher will have to report this to someone who can help you.

#### Why have I been chosen to take part?

You have been asked to take part because you are an adolescent identical female twin.

#### What will happen if I take part?

If you agree to take part, before the research starts, you will meet with the researcher via MS Teams and can ask any questions about the research. If you are still happy to take part, you will complete an oral assent statement which will be recorded.

The research will consist of two conversations via MS Teams. In the first interview you can choose from a selection of five questions about your experiences of being a twin. In the second interview you will be asked to use the river of life timeline to talk about how you have felt about being a twin during your life. There is no time limit, but each interview shouldn't last longer than one hour. The researcher will send you a written copy of what was talked about in the interview to ensure that you are happy with what has been recorded.

#### Do I have to take part?

No. You do not have to take part if you do not want to. You can also stop taking part in the study at any time.

#### What happens afterwards?

The answers you give will be used to write a PhD thesis. A PhD Thesis is like a very long essay. The published thesis will be available via the Birmingham City University website. A summary of the research findings will also be sent to everyone who took part so that they can see the results too.

Exploring the experiences of adolescent identical female twins in the United Kingdom Participant Information Sheet 10-15 V5 23/05/21

**Contact for Further Information**

If you should require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact:  
Email: lara.alamad3@mail.bcu.ac.uk

**What if I want to make a complaint?**

If you wish to make a complaint about the conduct of the study, please contact:  
Faculty Academic Ethics Committee (FAEC)  
Faculty of Health, Education and Life Sciences  
Birmingham City University  
Westbourne Road  
Birmingham B13 3TN  
Email: HELS\_Ethics@bcu.ac.uk

**Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet, please do not  
hesitate to contact us if you have any further questions.**



## ORAL CONSENT SCRIPT

### Oral Information Giving and Consent Seeking Process

- **Project details and aims:** In my study, I want to explore the experiences of adolescent identical female twins. I'm interested in the role being a twin plays in everyday life and the inter-twin relationship and how that may change during adolescence. This is because there is very limited current research on this topic, which means that schools, healthcare and other children's services may lack the information they need to support twins. If you choose to let your children be a part of this project, here is what will happen:
- **Interviews:** I will have two conversations with each twin via MS Teams. In the first interview they can choose from a selection of five questions about their experiences of being a twin. In the second interview they will be asked to use the river of life timeline to talk about how they have felt about being a twin during their

life. There is no time limit, but it is estimated that each interview should not last longer than an hour.

- **Data sharing/access:** The answers each child provides will form the basis of my PhD thesis. I will send each child a transcript of what has been discussed to ensure that they are happy with what has been recorded. No one else will see this transcript.

- **Data storage:** I will store you and your children's information and data safely and confidentially using encrypted and password-protected software in accordance with Birmingham City University policy and will keep the research data until the doctoral study is completed. As your child is under 18, this recording of your consent will need to be kept by the university until your children reach their 21<sup>st</sup> birthday.

- **Anonymity/pseudonyms/identifiable data:** In any publications a fake name which the child can choose will be used (i.e. a pseudonym). Any other potentially identifying information such as location will not be included in the published research.

- **Risks:** While this interview does not intend to explore sensitive topics, some children may find participation in the interview an emotional or upsetting experience. If this is the case, the researcher can direct them to appropriate support.

- **Rights:** It is entirely the choice of you and your children to participate in this research. You don't have to agree to take part; you can ask me any questions you want before or throughout; you can also withdraw at any stage without giving

a reason.

You can withdraw your information/data until 31<sup>st</sup> October 2022, after which data analysis begins.

- **Audio/video recording:** With your permission, I would like to make a video or audio recording of the discussions I have with your children to make sure I'm getting an accurate record of their thoughts

- **Publication plans:** The project will be published in a thesis. A copy of my thesis, will be deposited both in print and online in the University archives.

- **Complaints/concerns procedure:** If you have any complaints or concerns please feel free to contact me in the first instance. My email is [lara.alamad@bcu.ac.uk](mailto:lara.alamad@bcu.ac.uk)

- **Ethics review details:** This research project has been reviewed and approved by This research has been approved by the Faculty of Health, Education and Life Sciences Academic and Ethics Committee at Birmingham City University. If, after contacting me with any concern, you're still unhappy and wish to make a formal complaint, please contact the ethics committee via email [HELS\\_Ethics@bcu.ac.uk](mailto:HELS_Ethics@bcu.ac.uk)

- **Questions/concerns?** Do you have any questions?

- Do you give your permission for me to interview your children [state names of both children] via MS Teams on two occasions and to record those interviews?

- Do you give permission for me to re-contact them to clarify information?

- Do you give me permission to quote [state names of both children] directly (using a pseudonym)?
- Are you happy for your children [state names of both children] to take part?

## Appendix 6: Stage One Interviews Oral Consent Script 16+



### ORAL CONSENT SCRIPT

#### Oral Information Giving and Consent Seeking Process

· **Project details and aims:** In my study, I want to explore the experiences of adolescent identical female twins. I'm interested in the role being a twin plays in everyday life and the inter-twin relationship and how that may change during adolescence. This is because there is very limited current research on this topic, which means that schools, healthcare and other children's services may lack the information they need to support twins. If you choose to be a part of this project, here is what will happen:

· **Interviews:** I will have two conversations with you via MS Teams. In the first interview you can choose from a selection of five questions about your experiences of being a twin. In the second interview you can use the river of life

timeline to talk about how your feelings about being a twin during your life. There is no time limit, but it is estimated that each interview should not last longer than an hour.

- **Data sharing/access:** The answers you give will form the basis of my PhD thesis. I will send you a transcript of what has been discussed to ensure that you are happy with what has been recorded. No one else will see this transcript.

- **Data storage:** I will store your information/data safely and confidentially using encrypted and password-protected software in accordance with Birmingham City University policy and will keep the research data until the doctoral study is completed. As you are under 18, this recording of your consent will need to be kept by the university until your 21<sup>st</sup> birthday.

- **Anonymity/pseudonyms/identifiable data:** In any publications a fake name which you can choose will be used (i.e. a pseudonym). Any other potentially identifying information such as location will not be included in the published research.

- **Risks:** While this interview does not intend to explore sensitive topics, you may find participation in the interview an emotional or upsetting experience. If this is the case, you can stop the interview at any time and the researcher can direct you to appropriate support.

- **Rights:** It is entirely your choice to participate in this research. You don't have to agree to take part; you can ask me any questions you want before or throughout; you can also withdraw at any stage without giving a reason.

You can withdraw your information/data until 31<sup>st</sup> October 2022, after which data analysis begins.

- **Video/or audio recording:** With your permission, I would like to make a video or audio recording of our discussions to make sure I'm getting an accurate record of your thoughts.

- **Publication plans:** The project will be published in a thesis. A copy of my thesis, will be deposited both in print and online in the University archives.

- **Complaints/concerns procedure:** If you have any complaints or concerns please feel free to contact me in the first instance. My email is [lara.alamad@bcu.ac.uk](mailto:lara.alamad@bcu.ac.uk)

- **Ethics review details:** This research project has been reviewed and approved by This research has been approved by the Faculty of Health, Education and Life Sciences Academic and Ethics Committee at Birmingham City University. If, after contacting me with any concern, you're still unhappy and wish to make a formal complaint, please contact the ethics committee via email [HELS\\_Ethics@bcu.ac.uk](mailto:HELS_Ethics@bcu.ac.uk)

- **Questions/concerns?** Do you have any questions?

- Do you give your permission for me to interview you via MS Teams on two occasions and to record those interviews?
- Do you give permission for me to re-contact you to clarify information?
- Do you give me permission to quote you directly (using a pseudonym)?
- Are you happy to take part?

## Appendix 7: Stage One Verbal Assent Form



### **Verbal Assent Form for Children under the age of 16.**

**Exploring the experiences of adolescent identical female twins in the England**

**A PhD research project undertaken at Birmingham City University**

**Child/Young Person to answer yes or no to the following questions**

- Has somebody else explained this project to you?  
Yes/No
- Do you understand what this project is about?  
Yes/No
- Have you asked all the questions you want?  
Yes/No
- Have you had your questions answered in a way you understand?  
Yes/No
- Do you understand it's OK to stop taking part at any time?  
Yes/No
- Are you happy to take part?  
Yes/No
- Are you happy for your voice to be recorded?  
Yes/No
- Are you happy to be on video?  
Yes/No

If any answers are “no” or you don’t want to take part, that’s OK! No one will be cross with you.

## Appendix 8: Stage One Interview Questions

### Stage One Interview Questions

Adapted from Pietila et al., (2013)

Can you tell me something about your earliest memory of being a twin?

What was it like when you both started school?

How did the relationship between you and your twin change when you started school?

Can you tell me about a time when it felt like an advantage to have a twin?

Can you think of a time when you would have preferred to be a singleton?

What was it like to be a twin when you became teenagers?

Can you tell me about an activity you like to do with your twin?

How do you spend time with your twin?

What is it like to be a twin now as you have grown older?

How would you like your relationship with your twin to be when you are both adults?

If you could tell people one thing about being a twin, what would it be?

## Appendix 9: Ethics Amendment Application

**Please ensure this is securely disposed of when no longer needed.**

**Project Details**

0. Are you applying for ethics review of an Amendment to an application which has previously received BCU approval?

Yes  
 No

**This is the correct form.**

**Please provide specific, concise information for all questions, using clear and simple language.**

**Then ensure the Declarations are signed.**

**Once the Declarations have been signed your form will automatically submit and you will receive an auto-email from the ERM (Ethical Review Manager) system to confirm its receipt.**

**If you do not receive this confirmation or have any difficulties please contact HELS\_Ethics@bcu.ac.uk or BLSethics@bcu.ac.uk or BCU\_ethics@bcu.ac.uk**

1. Original Project Reference (for example Tedman /0743 /R(A) /2016 /Dec /HELS FAEC)

Alamad /#7763 /sub2 /R(B) /2021 /Jan /HELS FAEC

2. Project Title

Exploring the experiences of adolescent identical female twins in the United Kingdom

3. If you have PNF number (Project Notification Form) please enter it here.

**Project Lead**

#### 4. Project Lead

Title	First Name	Surname
<input type="text" value="Mrs"/>	<input type="text" value="Lara"/>	<input type="text" value="Alamad"/>
Department/Course <input type="text" value="PhD Health"/>		
Email <input type="text" value="lara.alamad3@mail.bcu.ac.uk"/>		
Faculty <input type="text" value="HELS"/>		

Please note that if you are a member of staff studying with the Education Development Service (EDS) your application will be processed in HELS regardless of the faculty/department you work in. Please select HELS. Thank you.

#### 5. Do you have a supervisor?

- Yes  
 No

##### 5.a

Title	First Name	Surname
<input type="text" value="Dr"/>	<input type="text" value="Carolyn"/>	<input type="text" value="Blackburn"/>
Work Email <input type="text" value="carolyn.blackburn@bcu.ac.uk"/>		

##### 5.a

Title	First Name	Surname
<input type="text" value="Dr"/>	<input type="text" value="Shannon"/>	<input type="text" value="Ludgate"/>
Work Email <input type="text" value="shannon.ludgate@bcu.ac.uk"/>		

#### ! Important

**Please note that (one of) your supervisor(s) must sign the Supervisor Declaration for your application to submit!**

Once both the Project Lead Declaration and the Supervisor Declaration have been signed the form will automatically submit and send you both notification that it has been submitted. If you do not receive notification of submission, please contact your supervisor.

#### Project Information

6. Please outline your proposed amendments to the approved study, and the reasons for these changes.

Due to technical issues during the MB Teams conversation, the interviews were conducted in a more traditional style as opposed to the more participatory mode of interviewing originally planned. As child participation is integral to the ethos of my PhD from a theoretical and methodological level, a more participatory method of generating data is required. Photo-elicitation would fulfil this requirement. Simply defined as the inclusion of a photograph into a research interview to ignite discussion (Harper, 2002, photo-elicitation originally centred on interviews using images selected by the researcher (Woodgate et al. 2017). With the influence of the participant action research PhotoVoice technique (Wang and Burns, 1997), this has changed and photos taken by participants are commonly used (Fritz and Lyseck, 2014, Pini et al 2018). Ultimately, photo-elicitation uses photographs to stimulate a conversation between researcher and participant (Smith et al 2012).

It is argued that the use of photos generates different layers to a discussion, as participants respond to the visual stimuli, generating memories and consideration of symbols (Gleav et al., 2017). This is because, by asking the participant to select the photograph, the researcher is acknowledging the status of the participant as an expert in their own lives and the participant becomes a collaborator in the research process, as their choice of photographs also translates to a choice of which data source to analyse (Pain, 2012). The participatory nature of photo-elicitation has led to its increased use as a research method for researchers working with children and young people (Groundwater-Smith et al., 2015).

The use of a photograph can generate a more detailed response from participants as the process of reflection begins with the taking or selection of a photograph, as opposed to when the researchers ask the question (Melton and Johnson, 2015). When discussing broad or difficult to define concepts such as experience, a photograph can provide a sound starting point for discussing (Smith et al., 2012). This has relevance to my research, as my interviewees often initially struggled to discuss their experiences without prompting from the interviewer. By allowing the participants to select their own photos could minimize the imbalance of power, the participant is choosing what to show and can provide a greater context about their lives (Wells et al., 2012). The use of the participant's own photos means participants know what is in the image and can choose what to discuss (Gleav et al. 2017). Furthermore, by using an additional method of data collection, I will be adding rigour to my data and thus in overall research.

I will have a conversation with each twin individually via MB Teams. In this interview, each child will be asked to select two photographs of themselves with their twin that are important to them and to discuss the photograph and their choice of photograph with the interviewer. They can share the photo via MB Teams or via email. There is no time limit, but it is estimated that each interview should not last longer than 45 minutes. The photograph itself will not be used in the final research.

**Data storage and confidentiality**

The photographs will be received in an electronic format. Therefore, once the photographs are received via email, the following BCU data requirements will be adhered to:

Electronic data will be stored in encrypted, password-protected BCU devices only.

Electronic data will be transferred via secure BCU servers or encrypted, password-protected BCU devices only.

Electronic data will be erased from all files in line with guidance from BCU IT department

The research participants have all been assigned an ID code, and this will be used to label the photographs for collection and digital storage and maintain the confidentiality of research participants.

7. Please upload any supporting documents.

Documents

Type	Document Name	File Name	Version Date	Version	Size
Other Document	Oral Consent Script Photo-Elicitation16+ V.1 09.01.22	Oral Consent Script Photo-Elicitation16+ V.1 09.01.22.docx	09/Jan/2022	1	23.5 KB
Other Document	Oral Consent Script Photo-Elicitation Activity Parents V.1 09.01.22	Oral Consent Script Photo-Elicitation Activity Parents V.1 09.01.22.docx	09/Jan/2022	1	23.8 KB
Other Document	Participant Information sheet Photo-Elicitation Activity 10-15 V1 09.01.22	Participant Information sheet Photo-Elicitation Activity 10-15 V1 09.01.22.docx	09/Jan/2022	1	20.2 KB
Other Document	Participant Information sheet Photo-Elicitation Activity 16+ V1 09.01.22	Participant Information sheet Photo-Elicitation Activity 16+ V1 09.01.22.docx	09/Jan/2022	1	20.9 KB
Other Document	Participant Information sheet Photo-Elicitation Activity-Parents V1 09.01.22 (1)	Participant Information sheet Photo-Elicitation Activity-Parents V1 09.01.22 (1).docx	09/Jan/2022	1	21.0 KB

## Declarations & Signatures

8. Please read the statement below and sign.

### Project Lead Declaration

- The information in this form is accurate to the best of my knowledge and I take responsibility for it.
- I have not begun recruiting participants or collecting secondary data.
- If approved, I agree to conduct this research as it has been described in this application and subject to terms of approval.
- Before implementing any substantial changes to the conduct of this research I will submit an amendment application and await approval.
- I will not disclose identifiable data to third parties without consent from the person identifiable from the data, unless legally required to do so.
- I understand that research records/data may be subject to inspection for audit purposes.
- I understand that this application, supporting documentation and relevant correspondence may be held by BCU for up to 5 years after the study is completed and may be reviewed as part of the normal procedures to ensure correct processing or investigate any complaints.

**Signed:** This form was signed by Mrs Lara Alamad (Lara.Alamad@bcu.ac.uk) on 11/Jan/2022 01:40

! Important

**Please note that (one of) your supervisor(s) must sign the Supervisor Declaration for your application to submit!**

Once both the Project Lead Declaration and the Supervisor Declaration have been signed the form will automatically submit and send you both notification that it has been submitted. If you do not receive notification of submission, please contact your supervisor.

9. **Project Lead** - to request your supervisor's signature of the Supervisor Declaration press the 'Request Signature' button, enter their email and send the request.

**Signed:** This form was signed by Mrs Carolyn Blackburn (Carolyn.Blackburn@bcu.ac.uk) on 11/Jan/2022 06:40

Supervisor - If you agree with all statements below in the Supervisor Declaration please sign using the 'Sign' button to the left of the application.

### Supervisor Declaration

- I am satisfied that the scientific content of the research is suitable for this level of academic study.
- I take responsibility for working with the Project Lead to ensure that this research is conducted in accordance with the relevant disciplinary legal requirements and guidelines.
- I take responsibility for ensuring that data collection tools are appropriate prior to their use.
- I will consult the ethics committee if I have areas of uncertainty or concern regarding the risk and ethics of this research.
- I have read and understood this application and agree that it may be submitted for ethics review.

## Appendix 10: Ethics Amendment Approval Letter



Faculty of Health, Education & Life Sciences Research Office  
Seacole Building, 8 Westbourne Road  
Birmingham  
B15 3TN

HELS\_Ethics@bcu.ac.uk

14/Jan/2022

Mrs Lara Alamad

Lara.Alamad3@mail.bcu.ac.uk

Dear Lara ,

**Re: Alamad /#7763 /sub2 /Am /2022 /Jan /HELS FAEC - Exploring the experiences of adolescent identical female twins in the United Kingdom**

Thank you for your application for approval of amendments regarding the above study. I am happy to take Chair's Action and approve these amendments.

Provided that you are granted Permission of Access by relevant parties (meeting requirements as laid out by them), you may continue your activity.

I can also confirm that any person participating in the project is covered under the University's insurance arrangements.

Please note that ethics approval only covers your activity as it has been detailed in your ethics application. If you wish to make any changes to the activity, then you must submit an Amendment application for approval of the proposed changes.

Examples of changes include (but are not limited to) adding a new study site, a new method of participant recruitment, adding a new method of data collection and/or change of Project Lead.

Please also note that the Committee should be notified of any serious adverse effects arising as a result of this activity.

If for any reason the Committee feels that the activity is no longer ethically sound, it reserves the right to withdraw its approval. In the unlikely event of issues arising which would lead to this, you will be consulted.

**Keep a copy of this letter along with the corresponding application for your records as evidence of approval.**

If you have any queries, please contact HELS\_Ethics@bcu.ac.uk

I wish you every success with your activity.

Yours Sincerely,

Professor Joanne Brooke

On behalf of the Health, Education and Life Sciences Faculty Academic Ethics Committee



## **Participant Information Sheet**

### **Parents/Guardians**

#### **Exploring the experiences of adolescent identical female twins in the United Kingdom - Photo-Elicitation Activity**

##### **A PhD research project undertaken at Birmingham City University**

Your children are being invited to take part in the second part of a research study. Before you decide whether or not you wish them to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully.

##### **What is the purpose of the study?**

Twins are a growing population (Human Embryology and Fertilisation Authority, 2018) and it is important that professionals in education, healthcare and other children's services have an accurate understanding of the realities of being a twin as opposed to preconceived ideas of twins. Most research either compares twins to singleton children or compares different types of twins. Focusing on one group of twins, identical twin girls will provide more in-depth knowledge of the experiences of

identical twin girls from their perspective. This knowledge could hopefully benefit twins in educational, healthcare settings and elsewhere.

### **Why have my children been invited to participate?**

Your children have been invited to participate as they are adolescent identical female twins and have participated in the first part of this research project. In the first part, your children were asked questions by the researcher. In the second part of this project, each child will be interviewed individually and asked to share and discuss a photograph that they have chosen.

### **Do my children have to take part?**

No, it is up to you to decide whether or not either of your children take part. If you decide you wish for them to participate, you are still free to withdraw them from the study at any time and without giving a reason.

### **What will happen to my children if they take part?**

If you agree for your children to participate in this research study, prior to the research starting, you will meet with the researcher via MS Teams and have the opportunity to ask any questions about the research. If you are still happy for your children to participate, you will complete an oral consent statement which will be recorded.

The research consists of a conversation with each twin separately via MS Teams. Each child will be asked to select two photographs of themselves with their twin that are important to them and to discuss the photograph and their choice of photograph with the interviewer. There is no time limit, but it is estimated that each interview should not last longer than 45 minutes. You will be able to withdraw your children at any time during the study.

### **What are the possible benefits of taking part?**

The results of this research may not benefit you or your children directly, however, it is hoped that the results of this research will be used to create a better knowledge base about the needs of identical twin girls.

### **What are the possible risks of taking part?**

Although the research does not aim to ask any sensitive or distressing questions, it is still possible that your children may find participation an emotional or upsetting experience. If this is the case, the researcher can direct you to appropriate support services.

### **Will what my children say in this study be kept confidential?**

In any publications, a fake name that the child can choose will be used (i.e. a pseudonym). Any other potentially identifying information such as location will not be included in the published research.

You and your children's information and data will be stored safely and confidentially using password-protected software in accordance with Birmingham City University policy and will keep the research data until the doctoral study is completed. As your children are under 18, this recording of your consent will need to be kept by the university until your children reach their 21st birthday.

### **What should I do if I want my children to take part?**

If you are interested in participating in the study, please contact the researcher either by email (the contact details are at end of this information sheet)

### **What will happen to the results of the research study?**

Each child will be sent a transcript of what has been discussed, via your email address, to ensure that they are happy with what has been recorded. The answers each child provides will form the basis of my PhD thesis. The published thesis will be available via the Birmingham City University repository. A summary of the research findings will also be sent to all participants.

### **Who is organising and funding the research?**

This research is being conducted by Lara Alamad, a doctoral student at Birmingham City University within the Faculty of Health, Education and Life Sciences.

The research is funded by Birmingham City University.

### **Who is supervising the study?**

The Director of Studies is Dr Carolyn Blackburn, Reader in Interdisciplinary Practice and Research with Families at Birmingham City University. Email [carolyn.blackburn@bcu.ac.uk](mailto:carolyn.blackburn@bcu.ac.uk)

### **Who has reviewed the study?**

This research has been approved by the Faculty of Health, Education and Life Sciences Academic and Ethics Committee at Birmingham City University.

### **Contact for Further Information**

If you should require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact:

Email: [lara.alamad3@mail.bcu.ac.uk](mailto:lara.alamad3@mail.bcu.ac.uk)

### **What if I want to make a complaint?**

If you wish to make a complaint about the conduct of the study, please contact:

Faculty Academic Ethics Committee (FAEC)

Faculty of Health, Education and Life Sciences

Birmingham City University

Westbourne Road

Birmingham B13 3TN

Email: [HELS\\_Ethics@bcu.ac.uk](mailto:HELS_Ethics@bcu.ac.uk)

**Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet, please do not  
hesitate to contact me if you have any further questions.**



## **Participant Information Sheet 16+**

### **Exploring the experiences of adolescent identical female twins in the United Kingdom - Photo-Elicitation Activity.**

#### **A PhD research project undertaken at Birmingham City University**

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide whether or not to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully.

#### **What is the purpose of the study?**

Twins are a growing population (Human Embryology and Fertilisation Authority, 2018) and it is important that professionals in education, healthcare and other children's services have an accurate understanding of the realities of being a twin as opposed to preconceived ideas of twins. Most research either compares twins to singleton children, or compares different types of twins. Focusing on one group of twins, identical twin girls will provide more in-depth knowledge of about the experiences of identical twin girls from their perspective. This knowledge could hopefully benefit twins in educational, healthcare settings and elsewhere.

#### **Why have I been invited to participate?**

You have been asked to participate because you are an adolescent identical female twin and have participated in the first part of this research project. In the first part, you were asked questions by the researcher. In the second part of this project, you

and your twin sister will be interviewed individually and asked to share and discuss a photograph that you each have chosen.

### **Do I have to take part?**

No, it is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you decide to take part you are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason.

### **What will happen to me if I take part?**

If you agree to participate in this research study, prior to the research starting, you will meet with the researcher via MS Teams and have the opportunity to ask any questions about the research. If you are still happy to participate, you will complete an oral consent statement which will be recorded.

The research consists of a conversation with you and your twin separately via MS Teams. You will be asked to select two photographs of yourself with your twin that is important to you and to discuss the photograph and your choice of photograph with the interviewer. There is no time limit, but it is estimated that each interview should not last longer than 45 minutes.

You will be able to withdraw at any time during the study. I will send you a transcript of what has been discussed to ensure that you are happy with what has been recorded. No one else will see this transcript.

### **What are the possible benefits of taking part?**

The results of this research may not benefit you directly, however, it is hoped that the results of this research will be used to create a better knowledge base about the needs of identical twin girls.

### **What are the possible risks of taking part?**

Although the research does not aim to ask any sensitive or distressing questions, it is still possible that you may find participation an emotional or upsetting experience. If this is the case, the researcher can direct you to appropriate support services.

### **Will what I say in this study be kept confidential?**

In any publications, a fake name that you can choose will be used (i.e. a pseudonym). Any other potentially identifying information such as location will not be included in the published research.

I will store your information and data safely and confidentially using password-protected software in accordance with Birmingham City University policy and will keep the research data until the doctoral study is completed. If you are under 18, this recording of your consent will need to be kept by the university until you reach your 21st birthday.

### **What should I do if I want to take part?**

If you are interested in participating in the study, please contact the researcher by email (the contact details are at end of this information sheet)

### **What will happen to the results of the research study?**

The answers you provide will form the basis of my PhD thesis. The published thesis will be available via the Birmingham City University repository. A summary of the research findings will also be sent to all participants.

### **Who is organising and funding the research?**

This research is being conducted by Lara Alamad, a doctoral student at Birmingham City University within the Faculty of Health, Education and Life Sciences.

The research is funded by Birmingham City University.

### **Who is supervising the study?**

The Director of Studies is Dr Carolyn Blackburn, Reader in Interdisciplinary Practice and Research with Families at Birmingham City University. Email [carolyn.blackburn@bcu.ac.uk](mailto:carolyn.blackburn@bcu.ac.uk)

### **Who has reviewed the study?**

This research has been approved by the Faculty of Health, Education and Life Sciences Academic and Ethics Committee at Birmingham City University.

### **Contact for Further Information**

If you should require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact:

Email: [lara.alamad3@mail.bcu.ac.uk](mailto:lara.alamad3@mail.bcu.ac.uk)

### **What if I want to make a complaint?**

If you wish to make a complaint about the conduct of the study, please contact:

Faculty Academic Ethics Committee (FAEC)

Faculty of Health, Education and Life Sciences

Birmingham City University

Westbourne Road

Birmingham B13 3TN

Email: [HELS\\_Ethics@bcu.ac.uk](mailto:HELS_Ethics@bcu.ac.uk)

**Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet, please do not  
hesitate to contact us if you have any further questions.**



### **Participant Information Sheet 10-15 years**

#### **Exploring the experiences of adolescent identical female twins in the United Kingdom - Photo-Elicitation Activity.**

#### **A PhD research project undertaken at Birmingham City University**

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide whether or not to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully.

#### **What is the purpose of the study?**

The number of twins is increasing. This means it is important that schools, hospitals and other places that look after children know about twins and what it is like to be a twin. Most research looks at comparing twins to non-twins or comparing different types of twins. This research thinks that looking at just one type of twin: identical twin girls would provide better information.

#### **Why have I been invited to participate?**

You have been asked to participate because you are an adolescent identical female twin and have participated in the first part of this research project. In the first part, you were asked questions by the researcher. In the second part of this project, you and your twin sister will be interviewed individually and asked to share and discuss a photograph that you each have chosen.

### **Do I have to take part?**

No, it is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you decide to take part you are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason.

### **What will happen if I take part?**

If you agree to participate in this research study, prior to the research starting, you will meet with the researcher via MS Teams and have the opportunity to ask any questions about the research. If you are still happy to participate, you will complete an oral assent statement which will be recorded.

The research consists of a conversation with you and your twin separately via MS Teams. You will be asked to select two photographs of yourself with your twin that is important to you and to discuss the photograph and your choice of photograph with the interviewer. There is no time limit, but it is estimated that each interview should not last longer than 45 minutes.

You will be able to withdraw at any time during the study. I will send you a transcript of what has been discussed to ensure that you are happy with what has been recorded. No one else will see this transcript.

### **What will happen to my data?**

You will be given a fake name, which you can choose. The information collected about you will use that fake name. Your name will be stored separately and safely. Only the researcher and the University audit team will know who you are. However, if you tell the researcher that you are in danger or that someone is hurting you, the researcher will have to report this to someone who can help you.

### **What are the possible risks of taking part?**

Although the research does not aim to ask any sensitive or distressing questions, it is still possible that you may find participation an emotional or upsetting experience. If this is the case, the researcher can direct you to appropriate support services.

### **What will happen to the results of the research study?**

The answers you give will be used to write a PhD thesis. A PhD thesis is like a very long essay. The published thesis will be available via the Birmingham City University website. A summary of the research findings will also be sent to everyone who took part so that they can see the results too.

### **Contact for Further Information**

If you should require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact:

Email: [lara.alamad3@mail.bcu.ac.uk](mailto:lara.alamad3@mail.bcu.ac.uk)

### **What if I want to make a complaint?**

If you wish to make a complaint about the conduct of the study, please contact:

Faculty Academic Ethics Committee (FAEC)

Faculty of Health, Education and Life Sciences

Birmingham City University

Westbourne Road

Birmingham B13 3TN

Email: [HELS\\_Ethics@bcu.ac.uk](mailto:HELS_Ethics@bcu.ac.uk)

**Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet, please do not  
hesitate to contact us if you have any further questions.**

## Appendix 14: Stage Two Oral Consent Script Photo-Elicitation Activity Parents



### ORAL CONSENT SCRIPT

#### Oral Information Giving and Consent Seeking Process - Photo-Elicitation Activity

- **Project details and aims:** In my study, I want to explore the experiences of adolescent identical female twins. I'm interested in the role being a twin plays in everyday life and the inter-twin relationship and how that may change during adolescence. This is because there is very limited current research on this topic, which means that schools, healthcare and other children's services may lack the information they need to support twins. If you choose to let your children be a part of this project, here is what will happen:
- **Interviews:** I will have a conversation with each twin individually via MS Teams. In this interview, each child will be asked to select two photographs of themselves with their twin that are important to them and to discuss the photograph and their choice of photograph with the interviewer. There is no time limit, but it is estimated that each interview should not last longer than 45 minutes. You will be able to withdraw your children at any time during the study.

- **Data sharing/access:** The answers each child provides will form the basis of my PhD thesis. I will send each child a transcript of what has been discussed to ensure that they are happy with what has been recorded.
- **Data storage:** I will store you and your children's information and data safely and confidentially using encrypted and password-protected software in accordance with Birmingham City University policy and will keep the research data until the doctoral study is completed. As your child is under 18, this recording of your consent will need to be kept by the university until your children reach their 21<sup>st</sup> birthday.
- **Anonymity/pseudonyms/identifiable data:** In any publications a fake name which the child can choose will be used (i.e. a pseudonym). Any other potentially identifying information such as location will not be included in the published research.
- **Risks:** While this interview does not intend to explore sensitive topics, some children may find participation in the interview an emotional or upsetting experience. If this is the case, the researcher can direct them to appropriate support.
- **Rights:** It is entirely the choice of you and your children to participate in this research. You don't have to agree to take part; you can ask me any questions you want before or throughout; you can also withdraw at any stage without giving a reason.  
You can withdraw your information/data until 31<sup>st</sup> October 2022, after which data analysis begins.

- **Audio/video recording:** With your permission, I would like to make a video or audio recording of the discussions I have with your children to make sure I'm getting an accurate record of their thoughts
- **Publication plans:** The project will be published in a thesis. A copy of my thesis, will be deposited both in print and online in the University archives.
- **Complaints/concerns procedure:** If you have any complaints or concerns please feel free to contact me in the first instance. My email is [lara.alamad3@mail.bcu.ac.uk](mailto:lara.alamad3@mail.bcu.ac.uk)
- **Ethics review details:** This research project has been reviewed and approved by This research has been approved by the Faculty of Health, Education and Life Sciences Academic and Ethics Committee at Birmingham City University. If, after contacting me with any concern, you're still unhappy and wish to make a formal complaint, please contact the ethics committee via email **HELS\_Ethics@bcu.ac.uk**
- **Questions/concerns?** Do you have any questions?
- Do you give your permission for me to interview your children [state names of both children] via MS Teams and to record those interviews?
- Do you give permission for me to re-contact them to clarify information?
- Do you give me permission to quote [state names of both children] directly (using a pseudonym)?

- Are you happy for your children [state names of both children] to take part?

## Appendix 15: Stage Two Oral Consent Script Photo-Elicitation Activity 16+



### **Participant Information Sheet 16+**

#### **Exploring the experiences of adolescent identical female twins in the United Kingdom - Photo-Elicitation Activity.**

#### **A PhD research project undertaken at Birmingham City University**

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide whether or not to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully.

#### **What is the purpose of the study?**

Twins are a growing population (Human Embryology and Fertilisation Authority, 2018) and it is important that professionals in education, healthcare and other children's services have an accurate understanding of the realities of being a twin as opposed to preconceived ideas of twins. Most research either compares twins to singleton children, or compares different types of twins. Focusing on one group of twins, identical twin girls will provide more in-depth knowledge of about the experiences of identical twin girls from their perspective. This knowledge could hopefully benefit twins in educational, healthcare settings and elsewhere.

#### **Why have I been invited to participate?**

You have been asked to participate because you are an adolescent identical female twin and have participated in the first part of this research project. In the first part, you were asked questions by the researcher. In the second part of this project, you and your twin sister will be interviewed individually and asked to share and discuss a photograph that you each have chosen.

### **Do I have to take part?**

No, it is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you decide to take part you are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason.

### **What will happen to me if I take part?**

If you agree to participate in this research study, prior to the research starting, you will meet with the researcher via MS Teams and have the opportunity to ask any questions about the research. If you are still happy to participate, you will complete an oral consent statement which will be recorded.

The research consists of a conversation with you and your twin separately via MS Teams. You will be asked to select two photographs of yourself with your twin that is important to you and to discuss the photograph and your choice of photograph with the interviewer. There is no time limit, but it is estimated that each interview should not last longer than 45 minutes.

You will be able to withdraw at any time during the study. I will send you a transcript of what has been discussed to ensure that you are happy with what has been recorded. No one else will see this transcript.

### **What are the possible benefits of taking part?**

The results of this research may not benefit you directly, however, it is hoped that the results of this research will be used to create a better knowledge base about the needs of identical twin girls.

### **What are the possible risks of taking part?**

Although the research does not aim to ask any sensitive or distressing questions, it is still possible that you may find participation an emotional or upsetting experience. If this is the case, the researcher can direct you to appropriate support services.

### **Will what I say in this study be kept confidential?**

In any publications, a fake name that you can choose will be used (i.e. a pseudonym). Any other potentially identifying information such as location will not be included in the published research.

I will store your information and data safely and confidentially using password-protected software in accordance with Birmingham City University policy and will keep the research data until the doctoral study is completed. If you are under 18, this recording of your consent will need to be kept by the university until you reach your 21st birthday.

### **What should I do if I want to take part?**

If you are interested in participating in the study, please contact the researcher by email (the contact details are at end of this information sheet)

### **What will happen to the results of the research study?**

The answers you provide will form the basis of my PhD thesis. The published thesis will be available via the Birmingham City University repository. A summary of the research findings will also be sent to all participants.

### **Who is organising and funding the research?**

This research is being conducted by Lara Alamad, a doctoral student at Birmingham City University within the Faculty of Health, Education and Life Sciences.

The research is funded by Birmingham City University.

### **Who is supervising the study?**

The Director of Studies is Dr Carolyn Blackburn, Reader in Interdisciplinary Practice and Research with Families at Birmingham City University. Email [carolyn.blackburn@bcu.ac.uk](mailto:carolyn.blackburn@bcu.ac.uk)

### **Who has reviewed the study?**

This research has been approved by the Faculty of Health, Education and Life Sciences Academic and Ethics Committee at Birmingham City University.

### **Contact for Further Information**

If you should require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact:

Email: [lara.alamad3@mail.bcu.ac.uk](mailto:lara.alamad3@mail.bcu.ac.uk)

### **What if I want to make a complaint?**

If you wish to make a complaint about the conduct of the study, please contact:

Faculty Academic Ethics Committee (FAEC)

Faculty of Health, Education and Life Sciences

Birmingham City University

Westbourne Road

Birmingham B13 3TN

Email: [HELS\\_Ethics@bcu.ac.uk](mailto:HELS_Ethics@bcu.ac.uk)

**Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet, please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any further questions.**

## Appendix 16: Research Activity Schedule

Format	Activity
This information was sent via email.	Send Participant Information sheets to parents and CYP
This was conducted via MS Teams	Arrange and obtain oral consent
This was conducted via MS Teams	Interview One: Chronological questions
This was conducted via MS Teams	Interview Two: Photo Elicitation
This was conducted via email.	Member checking: Full interview transcripts sent for participant review.

## Appendix 17: Recruitment Strategy

Date	Organisation contacted	Response	Outcome	Participants
07/05/2021	Tweeted on professional account	11 retweets, 8 likes		
18/07/21	Twins Group 1 Facebook page	None		
	Twins Group 2 Facebook page	None		
	Twins Club 3 Facebook page	None		
	Twins Club 4 Facebook page	None		
	Twins Club 5 Facebook page	None		
	Twins Club 6 Facebook page	None		
	Twins Club 7 Facebook page	None		
	Twins Trust	Positive	Advert posted on social media	14 + 2 more on 23/09/21
19/08/21	Retweeted on professional account + hashtags	3 Retweets, 3 likes		
	Tweeted by EBMBBC + hashtags	3 Retweets, 3 likes		
	Request to post on a twins internet forum	Declined		
	Request to post on a UK-wide parents of twins Facebook group	Declined		
	Request to post on a local Facebook Page	Posted	1 enquiry, email sent, no further response	
20/08/21	Posted in online parenting forum	None		
	Posted on a Facebook parenting group	None		
	Posted on a local parenting Facebook page	None		
	Request to post on a mother of multiples Facebook page	None		
	Request to post on a local twins group Facebook page	None		
	Request to post on a local twins group Facebook page	None		
23/08/21	Classroom Whisperer twitter account with 10k followers	Retweeted. One further retweet.		
21/09/21	BCU Research call to action	None		

## Appendix 18: Conference Presentations

Alamad, L. (2023). Exploring the Experiences of Adolescent Identical Female Twins. Twins Trust Research Meeting.

Alamad, L. (2023). Exploring the Experiences of Adolescent Identical Female Twins. CHiFCO.

Alamad, L. (2024). Exploring the Experiences of Adolescent Identical Female Twins. ICOMBO Twin Congress.

Alamad, L. (2024). My Doctoral Methodology: Narrative Inquiry. Methodology Presentations for EdD Students. Birmingham City University

