

A Special Bond

by

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Submitted to the Department of Board of Photography
School of Art and Design
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Bachelor of Arts

Purchase College
State University of New York

May 2019

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When I was born, there were two others. I was blessed with a brother and sister. The three of us shared the same womb for 9 months, so you can say we have an extremely special bond. We entered the world fully aware of each other. Our connection to one another only continued to grow as we got older. Growing up with two siblings that are the same age as me created this unique relationship that is more than just sharing the same birthday. It is this indescribable relationship that would be hard to create with siblings who are not the same age as me. Sharing the same milestones and experiences throughout life is not something a majority of people can relate to with their sibling(s). Being a triplet has sparked my interest in how other twins/triplets bond with each other. How is their relationship different from the relationship I have with my siblings? How is their relationship the same as mine? Every twin/triplet has a different type of special bond with one another that is compelling to me.

Identical twins are more similar in behavioral and psychological traits than fraternal twins due to the same genes they share. This causes them to feel a deep connection with one another. Fraternal twins can also share a deep connection with one another, but in a different way. Regardless of being an identical or a fraternal twin, growing up with a sibling that is the same age as you can still cause individuals to develop distinctive personalities.

In such a twin-defined bubble, you learn at a very young age to accommodate and compromise. Your perspective is that of a twin couple, so that you habitually think of yourself in relationship to your twin. You may find that you are in constant collusion—enabling, accommodating, and depending on each other—rather than feeling free to act on your own or make your own decisions. (Friedman pg. 23).

Sometimes twins have such a deep connection with each other that they feel attached at the hip. The way twins interact with each other can greatly impact the development of their own personalities, along with how they respond to the people around them. Also, the way they are raised by their parents greatly impact their development as individuals and their connection to one another. “When twins have been raised as individuals, they experience their relationship as quite similar to that of singleton siblings — with perhaps

a deepened connection due to their identical age,” (Friedman pg. 22). Twins who are raised as unique individuals tend to develop a “self” apart from their twin.

In many situations people will see twins as a unit, ignoring their individuality. No matter if they are identical or fraternal, same gender or opposite gender, people tend to assume someone who has a twin are just like their sibling in every way. The people who do individualize people who are twins compare the twins to one another. For example, being a fraternal triplet, it is easy for people to individualize us since my siblings and I look nothing alike, and we do not even look the same age as each other. People may think of us as individual human beings, but sometimes they compare us to one another. Throughout my childhood I would get questions asking me who my parents liked better, or who was the smarter one out of all three of us, or any questions asking who was better at a certain activity. I do not want my own existence to be constantly associated with my siblings. I am my own person, and do not need to be compared to anyone else.

I chose to photograph twins/triplets to show the special bond they have with one another. As I was photographing each set of twins/triplets, I realized that I was not only showing the bonds that they have with each other, but I was revealing their individual natures that can be seen within their relationship. A quick glance at a photo of twins and you will almost immediately notice how similar the two of them look. Interestingly enough, the longer you stare at that photo, the more differences you see. Maybe one of the siblings was angry at the other that day, and their nonverbal expressions conveyed that feeling. Perhaps you noticed that one twin appeared more comfortable than the other in the photo; this might convey that they are more confident with their appearance. Their facial features, expressions, body language, and the way that each sibling carried themselves as the photo was being taken helps the viewer to individualize them.

I spent a lot of time photographing one set of twins, Leliana and Philip. I chose to include five photos of them in my project because of how interesting they are. I find it compelling how they are identical twins, but one of them is a transgender girl. They both look alike with their physical features, but are very different with their style and personalities. While viewing the photos one can see how differently they both are posing with one another. Philip’s body language shows how protective he is with Leliana. His hand on her shoulder and knee, the way his head is tilted up or looking straight on at the camera

shows a dominant side of him. Leliana's body language shows more of a submissive side to her with how she's tilting her head to the side and how her legs and hands are together in some of the photos. These traits can help one to view them as individuals rather than as a unit.

One photographer I drew inspiration from is Mary Ellen Mark. She was both a documentary and portrait photographer best known for her intimate and empathetic photographs of people. One series of photographs she took is called "Twins," where she went to the annual Twins Day Festival in Twinsburg, Ohio and photograph twins. Mark was fascinated with the idea that two people could look exactly alike, which led to her interest in twins. She photographed them using a 20x24 Polaroid camera. "By using this camera, she could show, in precise detail, not only how much twins are alike but the subtle qualities that often make them so different" (Mark). She took her photos with a backdrop and lights that were set up in a large tent at the Twins Day Festival grounds. Months after photographing them, she spent numerous hours over the phone talking to the twins she photographed. She would ask them about important moments in their lives. She had complete creative control over this project to ensure that her photo series would come out the way she envisioned it.

There are a few similarities with Mark's "Twins" series that I have found in my work capturing twins. One similarity would be that we both captured the unique bonds that exist between twins. Mark's photographs encapsulated the similarities, as well as the distinct differences that make each twin a unique individual. I tried to express this double-sided nature in my own photographs of twins. Mark achieved this goal by using a large polaroid camera, and in contrast I achieved mine by using a digital camera. I had a certain level of creative control over my work, which allowed me to choose what lighting I wanted to use, along with how I wanted to position my subjects. My subjects also had creative control, including how they should pose with one another and the location where they wanted to take the photos. I wanted them to choose a location where they are the most comfortable in, and/or a space that was personal to them. I also believe that allowing my subjects to choose their poses can give more insight into who they are as individuals, instead of having me tell them to strike a pose they might not like. It is important to me that the people I am photographing can feel like they can be themselves.

Another photographer's work that I looked at for inspiration is Nicholas Nixon. "He is a photographer best known for his work in documentary and portraiture photography" ("Nicholas Nixon").

One series of photographs that is compelling to me is “The Brown Sisters” series. This series follows a group of four sisters and photographs them over the span of 40+ years. Nixon started taking a photo of them annually since the summer of 1975. These photos document the changing appearance of the four sisters as they age.

They settled on the series’ two constants: the sisters would always appear in the same order, and they would jointly agree on a single image to represent a given year. Another unchanging fact about these portraits are that they are made with an 8 × 10” view camera on a tripod and is captured on a black and white film negative. ("Nicholas Nixon: Forty Years of The Brown Sisters").

Nixon is still continuing this series to this day.

The series of photographs I took of twins/triplets is similar to Nixon’s photographs of the Brown sisters in the way that we both photographed siblings. Similar to Nixon, I also photographed some of the same sets of twins over and over again, but the difference with my work is that I did not photograph them over the span of many years. My photography sessions took place over several months to a year. While looking at each photo of the Brown sisters, I find myself noticing their differences in appearance, clothing, and posture as they age. There is a similar aspect with my work where one might look at each set of twins/triplets and point out the differences and similarities that they have with their sibling(s). The difference is with Nixon’s work, one might point out the differences/similarities looking at each photo, but with my photos, one might point out the differences/similarities of each sibling within one of my photos.

Relationships between anyone with same age sibling(s) will always be unique and something to be talked about. They may depend on each other a lot of the time, but they are also individual human beings who can think on their own. Part of my identity will always be part of my siblings identities with us being a triplet, but I am much more than that. Being a triplet does not fully make up who I am as a person. Society needs to recognize individuality within every human, including twins/triplets.

Works Cited

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www.maryellenmark.com/text/books/twins/text001_twins.html.

"Nicholas Nixon." *Artnet*, www.artnet.com/artists/nicholas-nixon/biography.

"Nicholas Nixon: Forty Years of The Brown Sisters." *The Museum of Modern Art*,

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Leliana and Philip No. 1
2019
16.5x11



Leliana and Philip No. 2
2019
16.5x11



Leliana and Philip No. 3
2019
11x16.5



Leliana and Philip No. 4
2018
16.5x11



Leliana and Philip No. 5
2019
16.5x11



Elizabeth, Andrew, and Theodora
2019
16.5x11



Shaun and Kyle
2019
16.5x11



Kelsey and Kiera
2019
16.5x11



Mariah, Joey, and Bianca
2019
16.5x11



Josh and Ashley
2019
16.5x11