

MCTFR *update*

minnesota center for twin and family research | spring : summer : 2010



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NEWS ABOUT OUR LATEST FOLLOW-UP

We'll be welcoming back 29-year-old female twins for a fifth follow-up.

It's that time again! Summer in Minnesota brings beautiful weather and barbecues. Here at the MCTFR, it also brings the start of another follow-up study. In May 2010, we began welcoming back our group of 29-year-old female twins. This is our group of female twins born between 1981-1984. For some of you, this will be your sixth visit to the Twin Study! Most of you have come to anticipate what to expect at a MCTFR visit, and while most things have remained the same, we are happy to announce that we have made a few changes to this follow-up. Most importantly, the visit is much shorter! We have zeroed in on the questionnaires and lab tasks we are most interested in at this age, eliminating redundant questions wherever possible, to cut this visit down to half a day (about 4 hours).

We recognize that your time is very valuable, and most likely, you've only become busier as you've entered your late-twenties and early-thirties. That was one motivation for shortening the assessment this time around. A second motivation behind the change was to ask you questions relevant to adulthood. These questions relate to work, home buying, financial stresses, marriage, family, and – whether you are a parent or not – your opinions about raising children.

As you may know already, the MCTFR seeks to study the genetic and environmental factors that influence development. Some people change a lot between their early and late 20's while others do not change very much at all. At your last visit you reflected on your life since age 20. Here's a snapshot of the changes that occurred for your group overall, by the time you reached age 24:

90% changed mailing addresses

37% became engaged to be married

26% got married

***See more results on page 3!**

We look forward to working with you again and getting a glimpse of your life in this stage of adulthood. It will take us several years to assess the 373 twin pairs eligible in our female cohort, and it is important that we arrange your visits as close to age 29 as possible. A MCTFR Recruiter will be calling you to provide more details and scheduling options. If you have any immediate questions about this project, please call Allie Savela at 612-626-8775.

Thank you again for all your continued help and dedication over the years!

Follow the Data

See how data gets from your visits to our researchers.



Interview & Lab

Participants complete interviews, surveys, and tasks in the psychophysiology lab.



Consensus

Files are reviewed by a team of people who synthesize responses and make it possible to analyze behaviors, moods, and attitudes.



Data Management

A numeric code is applied to your files so they can be turned into quantifiable data and be entered into the database.



Research & Results

Researchers extract information from the database for research projects, or to provide feedback results on things like dominance or personality.

In our previous newsletter, you read about our Psychophysiology committee. In this issue, you'll meet the Data Management Committee. This committee plays an integral part in the research process, by organizing data from visits so that it can be analyzed.

Data Management

As a participant at the Minnesota Center for Twin and Family Research, you have completed countless interviews, questionnaires, and tasks in the psychophysiology lab over the years.

Some of our participants have visited as many as 6 times over the last 21 years! If you are one of these participants, that means that you have contributed an amazing 150+ files of information to our study! Have you ever wondered how researchers take that information and translate it into findings for publications? The Data Management team plays a very important role in that process.

Once all of your information has been synthesized by interviewers, psychophysicologists, and a consensus team, the Data Management staff then turns that information into quantifiable data. In other words, they take the details of your life and experiences and apply a numeric coding system to the information that you have provided. For example, you have filled out questionnaires that ask you to respond to a question or a statement by circling "definitely true (T)," "probably true (t)," "probably false (f)," or "definitely false (F)." Data Managers take the answers that you provide and give them a numeric value. So, T=1, t=2, f=3, and F=4.

T t f F
= 2

The number assigned to each response choice is random. This means that you don't "score more points" on a questionnaire by circling "f" instead of "T." The reason we give each response choice a number is because it helps researchers add up how many people responded similarly on each item. So if we wanted to find out how many people circled "t" for the statement "I am just naturally cheerful," our statistical programs would count up how many 2's were entered into

By the numbers

All the information we collect from our participants is entered into a secure database. Some of our participants have contributed 150+ files over the years!

the database. This total is called a frequency statistic.

After data managers code your files, they enter each number into our database not once, but twice. Each file is re-entered for accuracy. One of the most important skills for a data manager is attention to detail. They must meticulously code, enter, and verify data to ensure all of the information we receive from you is accurately portrayed in researchers' findings. Data Management also goes to great lengths to ensure that all information you give in connection with this study remains completely confidential.

Another important role of Data Management is keeping in touch with all of the MCTFR participants! Whether we are sending you a newsletter just to keep you updated, or contacting you about our newest research opportunity, staying in contact with you is extremely important to our study. Data Management has to stay on top of any new or updated contact information and uses mail, email, phone calls, and various social networking websites to stay in touch with everyone. With so many amazing participants agreeing to come back over numerous years, this can be a big task. Just think how many times your contact information has changed and multiply that by thousands!

Data Management is a unique committee at the MCTFR because most of its members are undergraduate students. They squeeze in work hours in between all their classes. But the opportunity to contribute to and learn about what goes into a successful research study is rewarding. And, as you can see, Data Management plays a big role in keeping the MCTFR a well-oiled machine!

FUN FACTS

Between 1971 and 2001,
265,677
children from other coun-
tries were adopted by U.S.
citizens.

<http://www.adoptioninstitute.org>

The technical name for the
scientific study of twins is
Gemellology.

<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/570213>

GEDI Project *update*



Thank you to everyone who participated in our GEDI (Genes, Environment and Development Initiative) study by providing a confidential DNA sample to be used in groundbreaking research.

The collection phase of this project is now complete and we're happy to report that over 7,880 of you contributed to this project. This is an outstanding result! The DNA samples are now being genotyped to identify over 660,000 unique genetic markers, and our researchers are busy preparing our environmental data to compare with this genetic information. We're confident your contributions will lead to important advancements in scientific discovery about human behavior. We'll continue to keep you updated on the collective results of these efforts. Thanks for making this research possible!



SEND US YOUR PHOTOS!

We're sprucing up our hall-
ways and we need your help.

All our participants were once Minnesota residents, although not all of them have stayed. In fact, we have participants living in Japan, the United Kingdom, Finland, Australia, Canada, Switzerland, Paraguay, France, and Nigeria!

We would like to invite you to send us your photos from around the world! Send us a snapshot of you and your twin or sibling on your travels or in the place you now call home. We will hang up the photos in our hallways so you and your fellow participants can see them on display.

Send your photos to :
Serena Eberlein
N218 Elliott Hall
75 East River Rd.
Minneapolis, MN 55455

Or Email a digital copy of your
photos to:
seberlei@umn.edu

Please include first and last names with all submissions so our staff can identify you. To main-
tain confidentiality, we will not display your names on the posters.

Life Event Changes

***Continued from cover story.**
*(These statistics apply only to our
cohort of female twins who are now
age 29.)*

21% of our female twins,
as of age 24, had at least one
child and 4 of our participants
adopted a child

12% attended a vocational
training or trade school

54% of our female twins
moved in with a romantic
partner

31% attended community
college

69% attended a 4 year
college or university

45% received a
promotion at work

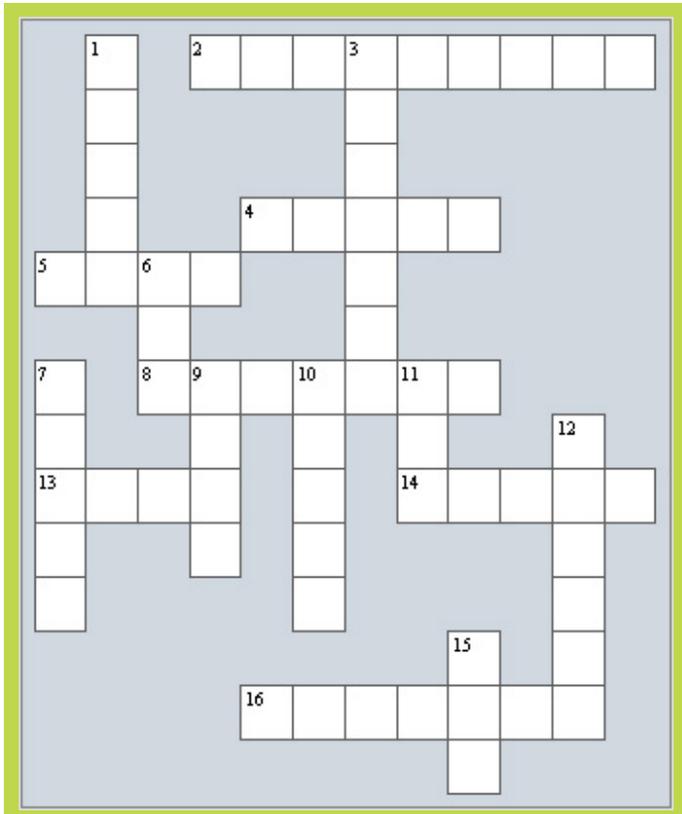
3% served in the military



Address Service Requested

MCTFR Crossword

Test your knowledge of the MCTFR!



Across

2. One half of your visit, mostly involving answering questions.
4. These pairs can be either monozygotic (identical) and dizygotic (fraternal).
5. Our recent DNA collection project where we collected your blood.
8. A family member who is not biologically related is _____.
13. A measure of physiological response or ability. (*Hint: Don't worry we won't give you a grade on this!*)
14. You inherit these from your parents, identical twins share all of these, and fraternal twins share about half.
16. The information you give us is confidential, in order to maintain your _____.

Down

1. Sometimes interviews are done over the _____ instead of in person.
3. The name of the hall (building) where our Center is located.
6. A sequence of information found in your genes.
7. The acronym for our Center.
9. The information that you provide to us that is later de-identified and analyzed.
10. You eat this for lunch during your visit to the study.
11. The acronym for the device that measures your brainwaves, called an electroencephalogram.
12. Reciting a list of numbers tests your short-term _____.
15. One half of your visit, usually involving electrode sensors and eye tests.

Want to know the answers?

Visit us on the web at <http://mctfr.psych.umn.edu>