

TWIN TALK

Louisville Twin Study's Quarterly Newsletter

[LTS website](#) | twins@louisville.edu | (502) 852-9191



Louisville Twin Study: Back in Action

By Shelby Monahan

The Louisville Twin Study's (LTS) Midlife Extension is in full swing. The LTS team is inviting twins, triplets, and other multiples to join our current study looking at the contributions of child development to mental and physical functioning in adulthood. To be eligible for the Midlife Extension, individuals must have previously participated in the LTS and be between the ages of 40-65 years old.

Despite delays and complications at the start due to COVID-19, we have had over 200 participants take part in the current study since August 2020! We are so thankful for these participants taking the time (and sometimes traveling long distances) to come see us. The LTS is one of the longest running and most comprehensive twin studies in the world and it is all thanks to you—our participants!

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Interview with a Researcher: Sharon Nuss

Our participants were not the only people to grow up with the Louisville Twin Study—Sharon Nuss, MS, a long time UofL employee, spent 27 years of her ongoing 47-year university career working on the LTS. Although Sharon currently works in the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences, she fondly remembers the years she spent with the Twin Study. Sharon worked in several different roles during her time with the LTS, including testing participants and coordinating study activities.

Despite all the data collected and research articles published during her tenure at the Twin Study, the relationships and conversations with the participating families are what Sharon remembers most. Some of those fond memories include a twin eagerly and mistakenly sharing about the fancy “Shirley Pimple” drink she’d had the night before her visit, getting cussed out in baby babble for taking away a toddler’s favorite toy, and being recognized out in the community by Twin Study families. “[T]he longitudinal aspect of the study made it special for me because I was lucky enough to see the kids grow up. Not many people have that opportunity.” She emphasized just how appreciative she and the other staff were of the families who participated, saying, “We [tried] so hard to make the Twin Study fun for the participants because they were doing so much for us.”

Family Fears! Twin Terrors!

Path Analysis of Seven Fear Factors in Adult Twin and Sibling Pairs and Their Parents

by Kay Phillips, David W. Fulker, Richard J. Rose, & Lindon J. Eaves. *Genetic Epidemiology* (1987), 345-355

Do any of these make your skin crawl—Snakes? Needles? Public Speaking? Heights? Deep Water? If so, your genetics may be partly to blame. Fear factor data collected from a sample of twin pairs, sibling pairs, and parents from 341 families demonstrated significant effects of genetics for specific types of phobias. Other studies of twins have also suggested that genetics play a role in the presence of specific fears or phobias, with some studies indicating differences in heritability based on gender or type of fear.



Additional References:

1. Distel, M.A., Vink, J.M., Willemsen, G. et al. Heritability of Self-reported Phobic Fear. *Behav Genet* 38, 24–33 (2008).

<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10519-007-9182-z>

2. Sundet, J. M., Skre, I., Okkenhaug, J. J., & Tambs, K. (2003). Genetic and environmental causes of the interrelationships between self-reported fears. a study of a non-clinical sample of norwegian identical twins and their families. *Scandinavian Journal of Psychology*, 44(2).



Say Hello to our Team

Like the adage says, "It takes a village to raise a child (or should we say *children*)"... it also takes a village to run a study!

Here's our LTS team:

Director: Dr. Deborah Davis

Manager: Kendra Sikes

Research Coordinators: Ariel King & Lesa Ryan (*not pictured*)

Research Nurses: Kristin Higdon & Amy Powell

Cognitive Testers: Dr. Cevelle Barna & Shelby Monahan

Article Spotlight

Louisville Twin Study: Past, Present and Future

by Deborah W. Davis, Eric Turkheimer, Deborah Finkel, Christopher Beam and Lesa Ryan. *Twin Research and Human Genetics* (2019), 1–6

1957 The Louisville Twin Study was founded by Dr. Frank Falkner at the University of Louisville School of Medicine. Other key investigators for the original LTS include: Drs. Steven Vandenberg, Ronald Wilson, Adam Matheny, and Kay Phillips.

1964 First article published using findings from LTS. During the original LTS (1958 through 2003), around 200 papers were published using LTS data.

2000 LTS closed due lack of funding.

2008 Dr. Deborah Davis became Director of LTS. LTS staff worked to organize and archive previous study records, including digitizing paper records.

2018 LTS conducted a Midlife Pilot Study of 40 twins who had previously participated in the LTS as children. Participants traveled from across the country to participate in data collection which involved the collection of cognitive and biological data.



300 E Muhammad Ali Blvd

The building that used to house the LTS is now the UofL Medical-Dental Research Building. The LTS has moved to 571 S Floyd St.

WE WOULD LOVE TO HEAR FROM YOU

Do you have a favorite memory from a childhood LTS visit? A funny LTS anecdote? An interesting twin fact?

Share them with us!

Email us: twins@louisville.edu

Questions or concerns? Call us: (502) 852-9191

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