

TALK

TWIN RESEARCH IN NATURALISTIC AND SEMI-NATURALISTIC CONTEXT

Nancy L. Segal

Department of Psychology, California State University, Fullerton, USA

nsegal@fullerton.edu

ABSTRACT

Twins reveal a wealth of information about human behavior just by acting naturally. Comparative analyses of monozygotic (MZ) and dizygotic (DZ) twin pairs set within naturalistic and semi-naturalistic contexts will be described. A semi-naturalistic study that incorporated virtual twins (i.e., pairs of same-age unrelated children reared together since early infancy) offers additional perspectives. The unique feature of these studies is that the unit of analysis is the joint behavior of the pairs, rather than the degree of similarity between the co-twins. Ethological studies of human behavior using twins have reported findings on fear of strangers (comfort vs. discomfort), joint puzzle completion (cooperation vs. competition), social closeness (physical proximity/interaction vs. physical distance/lack of interaction), prisoner's dilemma (cooperation vs. defection), social preference (cotwin vs. peer), empathy (twin vs. stranger), maternal favoritism (healthy vs. sickly infant), tacit coordination (coordinated vs. uncoordinated choices), and reunions of young separated twins (interest/attraction vs. disinterest/little attraction). Some studies were completed by the presenter, while others come from the extant literature. These studies will be described, and new empirical data from ongoing research on tacit coordination will be presented. The relative infrequency of ethologically-based twin studies will be considered, compared with the wealth of experimental twin research. Twin-based projects for future investigations will be suggested. Genetically and environmentally informative twin and "twin-like" kinships, that would add to what we know, and can know, from naturalistic studies of twins include unrelated look-alikes and adult reared-apart twins.