Two of a Kind: Is There a Difference in the Way Twins Communication in Comparison to with Their Friends?

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Studies have been conducted on communication patterns of the unique relationships between twin siblings. Korah, Prasad, and Sreedevi (2010) describe the telepathic communication between twins as idioglossia. Künzel (2010) argues that this phenomenon is not organic, but rather learned. Ledbetter (2009) furthered this dichotomy of nature versus nurture by studying the effect of family communication patterns on friendship closeness. Other studies have been conducted on the differences in communication patterns between fraternal and identical twins (Hazel, Wongprasert, & Ayres, 2006). There have also been studies conducted on friend communication as well. However, research on this topic is limited to interracial friendship (Gareis, Merkin, & Goldman, 2011) and long-distance friendships (Lobburi, 2012). There is a research gap, however, in the comparison of twin discourse and friend discourse. Therefore, this study investigated whether or not there is a difference in the way twins communicate with one another in comparison to with a close friend. The researchers investigated this phenomenon with the use of interviews and observations. After conducting eight semi-structured interviews with four sets of twins and four close friends, we found that there is no significant difference in communication patterns between twins as compared to close friends. It was concluded that communication patterns were dependent on shared experiences and the amount of time spent together between pairs.
According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2012), in 2009, 1 in every 30 infants born in the United States were twins. Research has followed this growing rate (Hazel, Wongprasert, Ayres, 2006). Twins play a unique role in studies regarding communication. They are encompassed by the debate over organic versus learned dichotomy, more familiarly known as nature versus nurture. Past studies have been conducted involving twins, yet there is a research gap concerning whether or not twins communicate differently with each other than with a close friend. By answering this question, it may help uncover some of the factors influencing twin communication and what role these factors play. For example, this study involves multiple factors, which include the following: twin communication, family communication, friend communication, environmental effects, and turn-taking patterns. By comparing and contrasting the emphasis that each aspect has on twin communication versus twin to friend communication, researchers may gain the knowledge of which factors are more significant to the communication pattern outcomes. Friend communication and environmental effects both have clear ties to the learned dichotomy side of the argument, while family communication, twin communication, and turn-taking patterns seem to consist of both learned and organic dichotomy. A study directly comparing the two may greatly assist in making these distinctions clearer. The following study consists of doing just that by using 12 participants attending James Madison University. Three sets of twins, each with a close friend were observed during an interview which ranged from 11-36 minutes. This data was then transcribed word-for-word and then transcribed and coded by the two researchers.

**Literature Review**

There are multiple contributing factors making up the research that currently exists relating to our topic. This includes twin communication, family communication, friend communication, environmental effects, and turn-taking patterns. There is vast research on each of these individual topics, which on many different subcategories.
Twin Communication

According to Künzel (2010), identical twins are known to exhibit the most extreme form of anatomical, physiological and physical similarities of all human beings. Otherwise stated, twins are the closest conceivable things to studying one person in two separate bodies. In fact, he states it is impossible to distinguish two identical twins by their DNA. This makes for a great standard variable. According to the organic vs. learned dichotomy, it is argued that the speech of identical twins is expected to consist of the smallest possible amount of inter-speaker variation (Künzel, 2010). It is for this reason twins’ voices tend to be confused by other listeners, even close relatives, particularly over the telephone. The organic vs. learned dichotomy is more commonly referred to as nature vs. nurture. In other words, how much of an effect do life experiences influence a person’s behavior in comparison to his or her genetic make-up?

Many studies conducted on twins have been simply a comparison between identical and fraternal pairs’ speech patterns with one another. Hazel, Wongprasert, and Ayres (2006) found that there are minimal differences in the communication patterns between identical and fraternal twins. Korah, Prasad, and Sreedevi (2010) differentiate the types of twins using the terms monozygotic for identical twins and dizygotic for fraternal twins. They found that when one infant twin has a speech delay, his or her sibling mirrors it. Therefore, this causes similar speech patterns among twins.

Idioglossia refers to twin language that describes the way close siblings use words and gestures that are basically unrecognizable to other people (Korah, Prasad, & Sreedevi, 2010). It is known as a telepathic communication between twins. The researchers explained how this phenomenon could cause a detrimental problem to twins’ communication skills. One may mirror incorrect use of grammar or speech sounds, leading to a higher-rate of speech delay. Korah, Prasad, and Sreedevi (2010) found that twins’ development of semantics, syntax and phonology is slower than that of their singleton peers. Twins do not literally read each other’s minds during
idioglossia, but rather have a strong understanding of what the other is saying through shared language patterns. There are many potential causes of idioglossia, but one external contributing factor is the amount of time the pair spends together.

When speaking to one another, Billman and Shatz (1984) found that twins demonstrated a frequent amount of repetition. The mother of the children participants suspected that this would have been the case between any two children of that age interacting with one another. It has not been determined what causes this repetition between the twins. Since twins have more in common than singletons, they also tend to have more mutuality and reciprocation present in a communication setting (Raban, Rafaeli, Ravid, & Kalman, 2006).

This research suggests that the communication patterns of twins are not determined by genetic make-up, but rather shared life experiences. Family members, including singleton siblings, tend to be raised in the same household and therefore share many life experiences. However, the research does not investigate the discourse between twins as compared to singletons.

**Family Communication**

In studying the discourse of twins, it is necessary to identify communication patterns adopted and shared by family members. Ledbetter (2009) furthered the idea of organic versus learned dichotomy by studying the effect of family communication patterns on friendship closeness. He emphasized the significant role that family has in teaching the basic rules and skills of interpersonal communication. This parent-child communication particularly, builds the foundation for future social relationships. Furthermore, evidence also suggests that family communication has an influence on both the experience and health of friendships. There appears to be a logical association between family communication patterns and communication competence due to these trends (Ledbetter, 2009). Consequently, an emphasis is placed on learned dichotomy over organic.
Many researchers highlight communication patterns strictly due to environmental influence. When studying how family communication patterns affect adult children’s perceptions of romantic behaviors, Fowler, Pearson, and Beck (2010) argue that the family environment is potentially the most important framework for understanding communication because it includes the development of communication behaviors. An individual’s family environment is where he or she learns how to interact in interpersonal relationships. Whether it involves parents with children, children with each other, relational partners with siblings, or relational partners with parents, adult children follow by example through their own personal experiences (Fowler, Pearson, & Beck, 2010).

On the other hand, Schrodt and Carr (2012) suggested that some traits emerge due to genetics, as well as the environment. In their study, they focused on verbal aggressiveness. Biologically, anxiety and intellectual flexibility affected the outcome, resulting in participants’ verbal aggressiveness. This supplemented family interaction playing a role in the resulting behaviors as well (Shrodt & Carr, 2012). Overall, there has not been much research done contrasting the concepts of genetic make-up and life experiences that sets of twins share. The research also does not investigate the discourse between twins as compared to the discourse between close friends.

**Friend Communication**

Although studies have been conducted on friendship communication, a majority of the studies focused on either interracial friendships (Gareis, Merkin, & Goldman, 2011) or relational closeness based on mediated communication (Ledbetter, 2008). Gareis, Merkin, and Goldman (2011) found that international students rated their friendships with American classmates lower than their home or other-culture friendships. This result could be attributed to the varying learned communication patterns amongst cultures. Ledbetter (2008) studied the multimodality of social communication using media niche theory. He found that changing media usage over time serves
as a predictor of relational closeness. Therefore, media usage has a direct connection with the extent of friends’ relationship.

Another study of friendship communication focused on social attraction and relational certainty in cross-sex friendships (Malachowski & Dillow, 2011). The researchers found that social attraction increased relational satisfaction, while relational uncertainty decreased relational satisfaction. They also found social attraction increased the use of relationship maintenance behaviors, while relational uncertainty decreased the use of these behaviors.

Arroyo and Segrin (2011) conducted the most pertinent research in relation to this study. The researchers investigated communication competence in platonic same-sex friends. They found that self and partner perceptions of communication competence affects relationship satisfaction and commitment.

Overall, the friendship communication research did not provide much relevant information in relation to the current study because each study has an emphasis unrelated to twin and friend communication. Rather, they consisted of other types of friend communication. The research to date does not yet compare twin discourse in comparison to communication between close friends.

**Environmental Effects**

Environmental factors, such as noise and speaking style, can have a significant effect on discourse between individuals. Conversing with others is dependent upon the physical dimensions and learned habits. Even between identical twins, behavior was speaker-specific (Loakes, 2008).

Individuals bring something different to the table and their background and point-of-view falls under this environmental category. For instance, people with different life experiences would address a situation differently than someone who feels contrary about a specific topic. Therefore, the environment plays a role in how people converse with one another. Variables
contributing to a conversation are, in turn, situational. The situation encompasses the format and medium that people speak as well. Recent technology has altered how people interact due to new changes, specifically the SMS text message (Bernicot, Vockaert-Legrier, Goumi, & Bert-Erboul, 2012). Human-to-human interaction is greatly dissimilar to even decades ago when people generally only interacted in person.

Studies have also been conducted relating negative environmental effects to how people communicate. Properties of bullying in the workplace for instance include: humiliation, intimidation, and threats. Any situation in which these attributes are associated, resulted in a skewed response from the norm, that is if the norm is a positive work environment. This in turn leads to social ostracism, gossip, rumors, teasing, and the use of sarcasm (Namie & Lutgen-Sandvik, 2010). None of these negative results would be the outcome though if the environment did not consist of bullying. There seems to be a correlation with how people are treated under certain circumstances and how they react to these qualities. Therefore, environments have a direct effect on conversing.

It is true for the polar opposite also. When there is a positive environment and people feel more comfortable, they in turn react another way due to this. According to Burleson et al. (2011), men and women cope with different life struggles, manage distressed feelings, and address problem situations because of the supportive communication existing in their lives. Much research has supported that both genders also highly value this supportive communication from their friends, family, and romantic partners (e.g., Burleson et al., 2011). Overall, whether it be a positive or negative atmosphere encompassing a communicator, he or she converses in accordance to the environment.

**Turn-taking Patterns**

Realizing that it is your turn to chime in during a conversation is second nature to most. Acoustics and syntax, for example, are cues that one speaker’s turn is complete. Then it is
realized that it is appropriate to speak up without it being considered an interruption. Usually this may even involve a pause for up to 3 seconds (Gravano & Hirschberg, 2011). There are multiple types of interruptions, yet the number of studies completed on the effects of interruptions, have been limited. However, one stride falling under this category is that various languages, including sign language, has studies performed looking deeper into the factors contributing to the way people take turns when conversing with others (Gnisci, Sergi, Luca, & Errico, 2011).

Speakers have even been classified by gender, which gives a correct likelihood 70% of the time when involving turn-taking behavior (Grothendieck, Gorin, & Borges, 2011). During a research study involving informal conversation with friends, research shows that males prefer no gaps and female speakers favor the “all-in-together” mode when communicating (Coates & Sutton-Spence, 2001). The study found that the female speakers therefore spoke over each other and interrupted more frequently. Not only does this study demonstrate how turning-taking can be generalized by a group such as gender, but on the other hand it can also be considered speaker-specific. According to Beatty, Marshall, and Rudd (2001), individuals differ in their reactions in their social interaction. There is therefore, not necessarily a strict guideline, but rather responses differ depending on the individual. People thus respond differently when taking turns during a conversation with another person. Though there are unspoken rules in every single culture, each person is unique so there will clearly be variations.

When being looked at, people are quicker to detect their turn. If they are ignored or not cued at all by another person than they are left unaware that it is their speaking turn. This is known as the gaze cueing effect, otherwise known as, GCE. It reflects joint attention processes, which are vital in social interaction (Lachat, Conty, Hugueville, & George, 2012). Eye contact is yet another aspect of nonverbal communication that may be overlooked, but crucial to satisfactory turn-taking. It lacks the benefit of cues involving eye contact to let the other speaker know it is acceptable to talk.
Overall, much research regarding turn-taking patterns exists. For example, these studies concern social norms, genders, and nonverbal. Much of this research consisted of the observation method. These though do remain limited as well, specifically regarding interruptions.

In conclusion, there is an evident research gap concerning twins. Though there continues to be a deep-rooted dispute between organic versus learned dichotomy, no research study has been conducted taking advantage of specific variables that could contribute to helping solve this. By using sets of twins, as well as their close friends, direct comparisons can be made. This may in turn, assist in associating meaning to related outcomes of their communication. By using these participants through the process of interviews and observations, the gap can be significantly smaller. Overall, the effects of the environment versus genetics can be compared, especially involving turn-taking patterns. Much research has already been established in related fields such as family communication, friend communication, and twin communication, but the links have not necessarily been made associating all three.

RQ: Is there a difference in the way twins communicate with each other in comparison to with their friends?

**Methods**

In order to obtain the desired participants, we have recruited four sets of twins from the James Madison University student body using social media and word-of-mouth communication. We each posted a Facebook status stating: “Looking for five sets of twins that attend JMU. Please direct message if you are a twin. If you know a twin, have them direct message me for further information.” The twins were asked to contact us if they were interested in participating in order to maximize the protection of human subjects in accordance with JMU, State and Federal requirements. There was no discrimination based on gender or whether the twins identified as identical or fraternal. Once the twins were recruited, we then asked them to choose a
close friend to participate in the second phase of the interview and observation process. Participants ranged from 19-22 years old and all attend James Madison University.

Once the twins initiated the process, we began emailing them with more details. During the email correspondence, interviews were scheduled at a time and location convenient to the participants. The interviews were held in private, on campus study rooms located in both of the university’s libraries. Before the interview began, we discussed the informed consent documents with the participants in order to answer any questions or concerns. Data was not collected until the consent forms were signed. The forms were kept in the advisor’s locked cabinet in order to maintain confidentiality.

The interviews were conducted using a semi-structured interview protocol in which a set of questions and objectives guided the interview. This tool was used to gather information about things that could not otherwise be efficiently observed by any other means (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011). However, the interview process was open to allowing participants to partially control the direction of the conversation. This protocol was designed to elicit authentic answers and interactions in order to investigate the communication patterns between twins and close friends. In an effort to get the most out of the interview process, we utilized an emergent design. It allowed us to identify relevant trends throughout the interviews.

The observations were conducted unobtrusively and focused on nonverbal cues and body language between the two participants. This method was used in order to identify nonverbal communication cues and to identify discourse patterns that participants were not able to self-reflect on during the interview. Data was recorded in the form of field notes by the researcher not conducting the interview, while the interview was taking place. The decision to use observation and interviewing was to increase credibility by assuming “that if two or more sources of data, theoretical frameworks, types of data collected, or researchers converge on the same conclusion, then the conclusion is more credible.” This process is called triangulation (Tracy, 843).
We originally planned to conduct a minimum of ten interviews; however, only eight interviews took place. The first phase of each case was an interview between the set of twins. The second phase was an interview with one of the twins and his or her close friend. One of the researchers conducted the interview, while the other observed and took notes of the interaction between the two. The purpose of conducting the interviews and observations simultaneously was to reduce the potential Hawthorne Effect (Modaff, DeWine, Butler, 2012) and to have access to authentic interactions between twins and the twin-friend pair.

Each interview was video taped with the participants’ permission. According to Künzel, the speech of identical twins is expected to consist of the smallest possible amount of inter-speaker variation, which is why twins’ voices tend to be confused by other listeners (2010). In order to accurately transcribe the interviews, it was necessary to use a video recorder rather than an audio recorder. Digital videotapes of the interviews were transcribed, removing all identifying information and assigning participants’ pseudonyms for reference to protect the confidentiality of the participants. Researchers worked together to transcribe the interviews word-for-word. Any tangents that were evidently unrelated to the study were not included. Video files were destroyed immediately after transcripts were completed. Until that time, the digital video files were transferred after each taped session into a password-protected computer of a member of the research team.

Transcripts of the interviews and field notes of observations were analyzed as data was collected using the constant comparison methods of a grounded theoretical approach (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). This allowed for themes to arise throughout the process. Coding occurred in three stages. In the initial data analysis phase, we independently coded the data line by line to allow the categorization of data with a “short code that simultaneously summarizes and accounts for each piece of data” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 43). Each category was assigned a color that remained consistent for each transcription. During the next stage, focused coding, we worked together and
used the “most significant and/or frequent earlier codes to sift through large amounts of data” (p. 57). Since not all of the categories were relevant to answering the research question, some were discarded during this stage. In the final stage, axial coding, we related categories to overall themes and provided a coherent emerging analysis. This aided us in not only answering the research question, but also creating two other categories that we considered significant to the gap in current research regarding this subject matter. Our final step was filling out and filing the follow-up form to properly complete the process with the IRB.

**Findings and Interpretations**

Singletons appear to find difficulty in understanding the lives of twins. Being an identical twin myself, I admit that I have trouble imagining what it would be like not having one. This is a common topic that singletons ask us about. They frequently inquire: “Do you like being a twin?” The only response that I have to offer is that I do not know it any other way. Personally, I do not have all the answers about the unique bond that exists between her and I. Not only do we share the same genetic makeup, but also we have lived together since birth with our parents. When it came time for college, it was a mutual agreement among our family members that it was time for us to go our separate ways. This decision has greatly influenced the communication between us. Now dependent on texting, calling, Skyping, and Facebook messaging for the majority of the last three years, my twin and I have greatly altered our relationship since the separation. For instance, it undoubtedly feels different catching up with her every so often as opposed to eating dinner with her every night.

Throughout our lives, many of our peers called us by our last name for they did not know how to differentiate us. We shared some classes and sometimes awkwardly left for the bus in the morning wearing similar outfits. Our coach even pushed for us to play doubles together on the high school tennis team. There just seemed to be an unexplainable awareness that we had of each other’s next moves in not only sports, but many aspects of life. I could tell how she was
feeling before she even said something. Occurrences such as this have sparked my curiosity surrounding this topic. I was hesitant concerning the phenomenon of telepathy, but always questioned the explanation of what has gone on between my sister and I for as long as I can remember. I have also noticed some similarities between how my closest friend and I act together. This combination made for an interesting research study that Gina and I created together. The arrangement of a twin and singleton presented an ideal pairing to investigate any similarities and differences.

We were interested in learning more about the phenomenon of twin communication so we conducted a study to find out whether or not twin communication differed from communication between close friends. After conducting eight semi-structured interviews with four sets of twins and four close friends, we found that there is no significant difference in communication patterns between twins as compared to close friends. It was concluded that communication patterns were dependent on shared experiences and the amount of time spent together between pairs. We did, however, notice a few recurring themes in the stories our participants shared. These themes included shared experiences, baby language, and sports telepathy.

**Shared Experiences**

I knew that after 18 glorious years of having to keep a short haircut so that friends, family, and teachers could tell my sister and I apart, college would be a perfect excuse for us to finally part ways. I definitely love my sister, but I also love my independence. Most people who do not have a twin reasonably have difficulty comprehending what having one would be like. Basically having a twin consists of sharing almost everything, not just your birthday. This includes more than clothes and friends. We attended the same schools, joined the same clubs, played the same sports, and associated ourselves with the same people overall. Our family is extremely close and we all frequently do activities together. Therefore, my sister and I spent the
majority of our time together, which in turn lead to us having not only identical DNA, but also identical life encounters. We thought the same way because we were trained to, whether it be in school, by our parents, or through the same life experiences.

During our preliminary research, we learned of the learned versus organic dichotomy (Ledbetter, 2009). This offered a relevant explanation of our findings in this study. When we inquired about the idea of twin telepathy, our twin participants all expressed that they did not believe this phenomenon to be a true genetic encounter. Ultimately, all four pairs shut down the organic explanation. In contrast, all of the participants attributed the telepathic-like experiences, such as finishing each other’s sentences and knowing what the other is thinking, to their numerous shared experiences during the twins’ lifetimes. Friend 3 stated it best when discussing sports, “They learned the same things the same way so they learned to react the same way. I don’t believe in telepathy, but I believe in what they were saying earlier about experiences.”

Time spent together. Twins that attend the same university are choosing to extend their previously bonded relationship into their college experiences. Two of the four sets of twins that we interviewed even share the same major. Two of the three same-sex pairs live together and the third plans to move into the same development next year. Therefore, not only have their childhoods been shared, but the transition into adulthood now consists of many of the same experiences as well. Twins 3 especially stood out because the longest that they reported being separated was a mere 36 hours. Twin 3S explained, “We think alike. We don’t know what each other is thinking at all times. Something will spark our memory or thoughts.” His description resonated throughout all of the interviews in that shared thoughts, appearing as telepathy, was simply due to the shared experiences of the pairs. Certain happenings would, in turn, remind them of a familiar occurrence. This was not exclusive to solely twins though. Twin 4G and Friend 4 have been friends since the third grade. They extended this friendship into college, where they are now roommates. “When you grow up with someone, you can just talk like that,”
explained Friend 4. She expressed a special bond between Twins 4, but as far as the communication goes, it did not differ greatly from the friendship type that they share.

**Finishing sentences.** A suspected trend in twin communication consists of finishing one another’s sentences. After conducting the interviews, it has been concluded that though this does happen, it did not take place a significant amount of times to consider it a product of being a twin. “Imagine getting the story from one person, but two different people,” Friend 3 joked. This phenomenon was a result of time spent together. “We have a lot of the same experience and we like to watch a lot of the same tv shows, sometimes there will be an instance when something comes up and we think it’s funny. I’ll make a comment about it and quote some stupid show, and he’ll be like ‘I was literally about to say that.’ Just ‘cause we have a lot of the same experiences. It’s not really mind reading; it’s just that we draw from the same experiences,” said Twin 2N. He and his brother agreed that it had nothing to do with genetics though.

**Family dynamics.** Another aspect that was brought to our attention regards the relationship that the twins have with their families. After asking the twins about themselves, the interviewer then transitioned into questions associated to the family dynamics. We found that family structure does not have any pertinent ties to the communication patterns between twins. Three of the pairs have parents who are still married, and one pair comes from a family of divorced parents. When asked to describe their family communication, Twin 3S responded, “They know everything about our lives.” Twin 3K agreed by stating, “99% of everything, they know.” This differed greatly from Twins 1, who rarely keep in contact with their parents. Not only do parents’ marital status and relationships with parents seem to have a little influence on the twins’ communication with each other, but neither do sibling relationships. One set does not have any additional siblings and the three other sets identified having one additional sibling. The twins’ relationships with their other sibling ranged from close to detached, yet overall, we found that it does not influence the twin communication because all four sets reported having a close
relationship with their twin sibling.

Sports Telepathy

Growing up, I was a part of one of those families where it was evident that the father secretly wished he had a son. My sister and I were enrolled in what seemed like every possible sport known to man. We loved it and the coaches seemed to appreciate it too. My sister and I evidently shared a certain “vibe” of trust and comfort that I have difficulty putting into words. Senior year of high school, my varsity tennis coach urged us to play doubles together because we both had a sense of where each other were on the court. In softball she was more prepared at shortstop than our other teammates because she was aware of what pitch I would throw next. Finally, in basketball I was already down the court by the time she was ready to pass her obtained rebound. I never really understood this, but after the interviewing process, I was satisfied to learn that we were not alone and others appeared to have somewhat of an explanation to my questions dating all the way back to tee ball.

We attempted to investigate the idea of twin telepathy and its connection to twin communication. When we specifically asked the twin participants about this phenomenon, they all shared the same reaction. “I knew this was coming,” said Twin 2N. The pairs all laughed at the inquisition. None of the participants believed this phenomenon to be true, but a couple identified telepathic-like occurrences. Without being prompted, two of the pairs shared anecdotes of athletic games where they subconsciously knew where the other was in relation to the field or court.

Twin 1K revealed multiple examples of this sort of telepathy throughout his lifetime and he explained, “When we played sports like soccer, I would know where he was or if we played basketball, we kind of knew where each other were on the field.” This was not limited to physically demanding activities. Other competitive events were included in their similar mentality, according to Twin 1T. “Any kind of game like [charades] and people split us up every
time. We just have to say one word and it will trigger something,” he said. This was the only incident that the twins could relate to the idea of telepathy.

In contrast, the set of co-ed twins could not relate to this phenomenon. This could be due to the fact that the pair did not participate in athletic teams together. “Never really have done like a team thing,” said Twin 4B. It leaves us to wonder if they would have experienced this phenomenon had they participated in team sports together.

**Baby Language**

In two separate interviews with twins, participants shared stories about having their own language as toddlers without being prompted by the interviewer. “Apparently we didn’t start talking until we were like 2 and a half [....] and we had our own language up until then...We had our own language that we communicated with and we actually have videos of it. It wasn’t actual English,” said Twin 1K. In the second twin interview, the interviewer specifically asked the set of twins if they had this experience as well. This question was encouraged by the emergent design of the interview guide. The twins could not personally recall engaging in this phenomenon. We assumed that this phenomenon was an outlier and scratched it from our interview guide. To our surprise, during our interview with the third set of twins, Twin 3K expressed that his mother told them once before about a similar account. “My mom would always tell stories about how she would walk by and we’d be in the crib and she’d hear ‘[jibberish]’ like babies just like making sounds back and forth,” he explained as best as he could. This theme especially stood out to us because of it’s redundancy in two separate interviews. None of the sets of twins could offer an explanation for this.

These stories of baby language ties directly into our research about idioglossia (Korah et al., 2010), in which twins are said to have their own language and gestures that do not make sense to an outsider. We propose that this unique theme be researched further in order to learn more about idioglossia in relation to twins. As young adults, it appeared to be similar life
experiences contributing to twin communication patterns; therefore, a gap in the research regarding baby language still exists.

As a twin myself, the idea of baby talk is a new phenomenon for me. Having learned about the occurrence by multiple twin pairs that we interviewed, our interest was sparked to learn more about it. I questioned my mother about anything special concerning this topic regarding my sister and I. She could not recall anything, which is why I find the recollections of the participants especially enticing for further studies.

Discussion

In this qualitative study of twins and close friends, we sought to determine if there is a difference between communication patterns of twins as compared to close friends. It was concluded that there is no significant difference. The communication patterns between both pairs can be attributed to shared experiences and the amount of time spent together. Our findings complement Ledbetter’s (2009) study that concluded that learned communication skills, rather than organic factors, affect interpersonal communication. We also found that nurture outweighs nature when concerning communication similarities of twins. This research is significant because the number of twins born in the United States is exponentially increasing (CDC, 2012). According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, in 2009, 1 in every 30 infants born were twins. With that ratio in mind, it is necessary to study this growing population.

Limitations

Our study contained numerous limitations. First, our sample included only four groups of twins and friends for a total of 12 participants. For more reliable results, future studies should recruit more sets of twins and friends. Second, our sample was limited to ten males and two females. Three of the four sets of twins were same-sex male pairs, one was a co-ed pair, and none were same-sex female pairs. We suggest that future studies recruit more same-sex female pairs and co-ed pairs to balance out the sample. The close friend chosen by each participant was
also the same sex as the twin. This may or may not have had an influence on communication patterns. Third, the close friends recruited by the twins were also students from the same university. Three of the four close friend pairs met during their time in college. Therefore, the time spent together was limited to as short as less than a year. In one case, the friends have known each other since childhood, but this was an outlier. In future studies, it is suggested to recruit pairs of close friends with a longer friendship history. Fourth, our twin participants all attend the same university. Participants from the same university were recruited for convenience purposes. This characteristic could have limited the results of our study because it is likely that twins who attend the same school report closer relationships and more shared experiences. We advise researchers looking to expand on this study to interview twins who attend the same university, as well as those who attend separate schools. Fifth, though the participants were all over the age of 18, their ages maximized at 22. Any further studies should consider incorporating participants with a larger age range in order to make the findings more applicable.
References


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Appendix A
Consent to Participate in Research

Identification of Investigators & Purpose of Study
You are being asked to participate in a research study conducted by Gina Cook and Sarah Konecnik from James Madison University. The purpose of this study is to identify whether or not there is a difference in the way twins communicate with one another in comparison to with their close friends. This study will contribute to the researchers’ completion of their SCOM 385 advanced research project.

Research Procedures
Should you decide to participate in this research study, you will be asked to sign this consent form once all your questions have been answered to your satisfaction. This study consists of an interview and observation that will be administered to groups of participants in their home or the university library. You will be asked to provide answers to a series of questions related to their relationship and communication patterns. Interviews will be digitally video-recorded with your permission. Video files will be destroyed once the recordings have been transcribed and all names of persons identified in the interviews have been replaced with pseudonyms.

Time Required
Participation in each interview will require about an hour of your time, for a maximum of two hours for subjects participating in both phases of the study.

Risks
The investigator does not perceive more than minimal risks from your involvement in this study (that is, no risks beyond the risks associated with everyday life).

Benefits
There are no direct benefits from participation in this study. The potential benefit of the research as a whole is to identify if there is a difference in the way twins communicate with each other in comparison to with a friend.

Confidentiality
There is a high level of confidentiality in this study. The names of the participants will be replaced with pseudonyms in the transcripts and final report of results, the consent forms will be kept in the professor’s locked cabinet, and the video files will be saved on a locked personal computer and will be destroyed upon transcription. However, the interviews will be conducted as a group and therefore, the research team and other interview participant will be aware of your answers to a series of questions. Every participant agrees to keep communication shared during the interviews confidential.

The results of this research will be presented in partial fulfillment of SCOM 385 Qualitative Communication Research Methods. It may also be presented at the JMU Communication Studies Conference and/or submitted for publication in a journal of undergraduate research. The results of this project will be coded in such a way that the respondent’s identity will not be attached to the final form of this study. The researcher retains the right to use and publish non-identifiable data. While individual responses are confidential, aggregate data will be presented representing averages or generalizations about the responses as a whole. All data will be stored in a secure location accessible only to the researcher. Upon completion of the study, all information that
matches up individual respondents with their answers (including video recordings) will be destroyed.

**Participation & Withdrawal**

Your participation is entirely voluntary. You are free to choose not to participate. Should you choose to participate, you can withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. If you choose to withdraw please know that your video-recorded comments will be immediately destroyed and will not be used in the research project.

Moreover, you may choose to participate in the interview but decline being video recorded or having portions of your interview recorded. In such cases, please know the researcher will take mental note of your comments and summarize them later in a log. You may, at any time, ask the researcher to communicate her understanding of your comments, revise your comments for clarification, or request that certain comments not be logged.

**Questions about the Study**

If you have questions or concerns during the time of your participation in this study, or after its completion or you would like to receive a copy of the final aggregate results of this study, please contact:

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Chair, Institutional Review Board
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Giving of Consent
I have read this consent form and I understand what is being requested of me as a participant in this study. I freely consent to participate. I have been given satisfactory answers to my questions. The investigator provided me with a copy of this form. I certify that I am at least 18 years of age.

☐ I give consent to be video taped during my interview. ________ (initials)
☐ I give consent to be observed during my interview. ________ (initials)
☐ I give consent to keep shared communication confidential. ________ (initials)

______________________________________    ______________
Name of Participant (Printed)

______________________________________    ______________
Name of Participant (Signed)                         Date

______________________________________    ______________
Name of Researcher (Signed)                               Date

______________________________________    ______________
Name of Researcher (Signed)                               Date
## Appendix B

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<tr>
<th><strong>General Question Areas</strong></th>
<th><strong>Possible Probes</strong></th>
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| **Personal Information and Family Life** | - Tell me about yourself?  
- Tell me about your family?  
  - How many siblings?  
  - Parents still married? |
| **Family Communication Patterns** | - How would you describe your family communication?  
- What are your family rituals?  
- What topics do your family talk about?  
- How often do you talk to your family? |
| **Twin Communication Patterns** | - How would you describe your relationship?  
- What stories do you share?  
- What stories do you not share?  
- How often do you talk to your twin?  
- What channels of communication do you most often use when talking to your twin?  
- How do you respond when people ask about twin telepathy?  
- What are the differences in your communication patterns with each other compared to with your friends?  
- What are the similarities in your communication patterns with each other compared to with your friends?  
- How is your communication different or the same as compared to your other siblings? |
| **Friend Communication Patterns** | - How would you describe your relationship?  
- What stories do you share?  
- What stories do you not share?  
- How often do you talk to your friend?  
- What channels of communication do you most often use when talking to your friend?  
- What are the similarities/difference in your communication patterns with each other compared to with the other twin? |