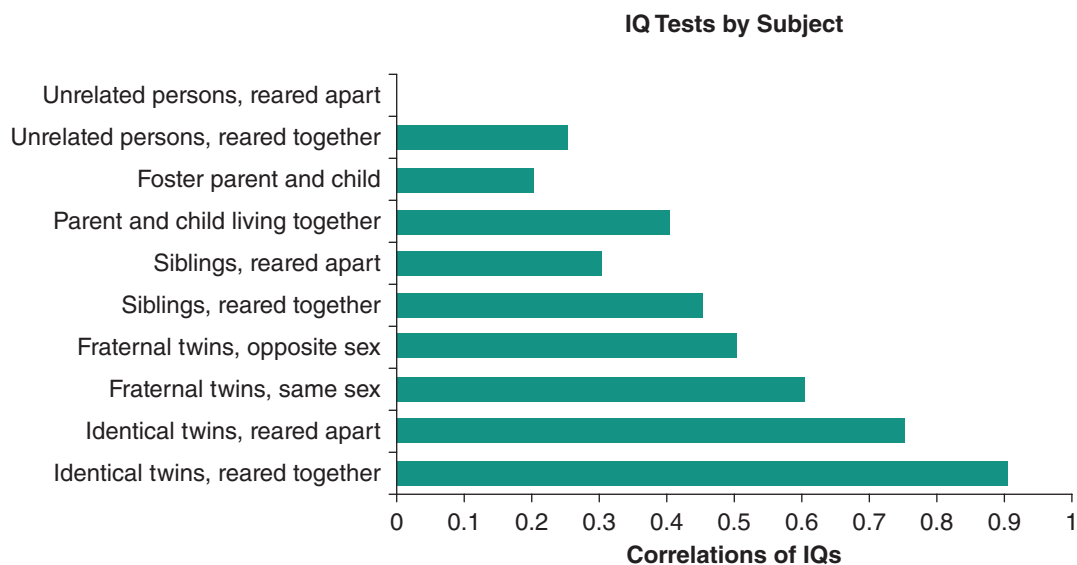


The Minnesota Twins Study



Graph 1: IQ Correlations

The Minnesota Twins Study

In 1979, a scientist named Thomas Bouchard set out to study the similarities and differences between twins—both identical and fraternal—who were separated within the first 6 months of their lives and raised apart from each other. Over the course of 11 years, he and his research team collected data on over 1,500 pairs of twins, as well as over 350 adopted and biological siblings. The data they collected included multiple measures of personality, mental abilities, values, interests, motor skills, reading, spelling, and writing. Additionally, they conducted detailed medical assessments and lengthy interviews with many of their subjects. Many striking similarities were found among individuals who shared the same genetics, even in cases where they were not raised in the same household. In 1990, Bouchard published the results of this study. His work was highly received by scientists in many different disciplines, some of whom saw his work as strong evidence that many of the factors that determine what people are like are rooted in our genetics. The graph above shows the correlations of IQs for the subjects they studied.

A Case Study of Twins

Separated as infants, twins Gerald Levey and Mark Newman grew up to share characteristics ranging from their experiences as firefighters to their tastes in beer. Neither knew of the other's existence until a shared acquaintance brought them together. Upon meeting for the first time each saw his own reflection. They had grown the same mustache and sideburns, and each wore the same glasses. As the brothers talked, they discovered they had more than looks in common. Levey went to college and graduated with a degree in forestry. Newman planned to go to college to study the same subject but opted to work for the city trimming trees. Both worked for a time in supermarkets. Levey had a job installing sprinkler systems. Until relatively recently, Newman had a job installing fire alarms. Both men are bachelors attracted to similar women—"tall, slender, long hair." In addition to being volunteer firefighters, they both share favorite pastimes of hunting, fishing, going to the beach, watching old John Wayne movies and pro wrestling, and eating Chinese food in the wee hours after

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a night on the town. Both were raised in the Jewish faith but neither is particularly religious. Both men drink only Budweiser beer, holding the can with one pinkie curled underneath and crushing the can when it's empty.

In becoming acquainted, observes Jerry, "we kept making the same remarks at the same time and using the same gestures. It was spooky. . . . He is he and I am I, and we are one."

Arguments Against the Study

Despite its impact, questions have been raised about the reliability of the twins study. For example, separated twins shared the same environment before birth. Researchers are not certain how much this can influence our later development. More importantly, separated identical twins are rarely separated at the moment of birth. The twins in the Minnesota study had on average 5 months together before they were separated. If the first 6 months of life are indeed important, environment could still be contributing to their similar personality traits. Third, after their reunion, the twins averaged nearly 2 years together before they participated in the study. Naturally, the researchers paid special attention to their similarities and may have overlooked important differences to strengthen their findings. Finally, many critics have argued that because most of the twins came from white, middle-class households, their similarities are a result of social and economic advantages rather than shared genetics.

Writing Portfolio

Based on the data collected through the Minnesota Twins Study, one could argue that *[make a claim based on the data]*. The data support this claim in a number of ways, such as *[briefly summarize specific data points to support the claim]*. Overall, the study seems to argue that what makes us who we are is *[provide a warrant to connect the data to the claim]*. However, there are some limitations to the study. Most notably, *[briefly summarize one or more arguments against the study]*.