

# Book Reviews

## The Difference of Being Alike: Twinship Explored

**Twins and Twin Relations.** HELEN L. KOCH. University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1966. 318 pp. \$6.95.

From classical times until the present, the biological phenomenon of multiple human births has afforded material for efforts to clarify complex issues of the day. St. Augustine devoted several chapters in his *City of God* to a review of numerous writings of his period that attempted to reconcile the very different life histories of some twins with theories of astrological determination. In our day, the most common issue that twin studies attempt to elucidate is the interaction of heredity and environment. But now, as then, the twin phenomenon itself too often is not sufficiently well understood before an attempt is made to apply it to such purposes. Helen L. Koch's book is a welcome, though in some respects a seriously flawed, addition to the relatively small number of researches in which the study of twins is an end in itself, rather than a means to an end, and which are therefore potentially useful in various areas of research.

Koch reviews much of the current twin-study literature (though she does not call adequate attention to some of the psychoanalytic reports and to extended studies of one or several pairs of twins, such as those of Benjamin and Gifford), and she usefully spells out the unanswered questions and complexities which must be kept in mind in working with any twin population. The greater part of the volume, however, is devoted to a description of her own research. She has studied 90 pairs of five- and six-year-old twins, equally divided into six subgroups—boys and girls from monozygotic pairs and from same-sexed and opposite-sexed dizygotic pairs—and a control group of singly born children matched to the experimental subjects as to age, sex, and parents' socioeconomic status. Data were collected by means of play interviews with the twins, interviews with mothers and teachers, and intelligence and projective tests.

The major topics explored were the effects twin pair members have upon

each other, differences related to zygosity and sex, and twin-singleton comparisons. Toward these goals, the investigation focused on intertwin attitudes, generalized social behavior and attitudes, and such language and physical attributes as might be expected to have profound effects upon social behavior. The investigation frequently goes beyond these focal topics, however, and the appendix contains 78 pages of data tables derived directly from the study population. In the text, results are presented under these chapter headings: physical characteristics; primary mental abilities; language abilities; hand preference and stuttering; personality and attitudes; and effects of closeness, dominance, and twin separation. In addition, there are chapters on the research design, problems, and subjects, and a summary and discussion of the results. The data are extensive and valuable in many respects, but the author's sophisticated awareness of the multiple complexities of twin relationships often burdens as well as enriches the work. In the attempt to point out the great number of unresolved issues which almost any line of inquiry into twinship can lead one to, she pulls together unbroken sequences of questions, sometimes adding up to three pages. Frequently these are pertinent and provocative, but writing of this sort leaves unclear which central issues the author plans to focus on, and what to expect to find dealt with in the book.

A more basic flaw results from her decision to "simplify" the volume, so as to appeal to parents, teachers, and nonprofessional readers, by sequestering quantitative data in the appendix. However, the basic research plan, involving comparison of six twin subgroups and a matched group of singletons, and the author's attempts to explain unexpected patterns of twin-subgroup differences frequently lead her into complexities and fine detail which only the most specialized of researchers will be interested in or be able to follow. Many of the statements in which she compares multiple subgroups are

ambiguous unless one traces them through the quantitative data. One must therefore choose either to be constantly breaking up one's reading in order to locate the right table in the appendix or else to read on without being certain of the significance of the verbal description. The book sometimes offers the promise of greater clarification than is available. Some of the results are themselves ambiguous because it is not clear what part of the evaluation methodology produced them and what their reliability and validity may be.

Despite such failings, however, most workers in the fields of child and personality development, as well as investigators of twins, will find this book and the research it describes relevant and useful. Which of the many findings and conclusions will be of greatest interest will of course depend on the nature of their own background and prior work. These are some that I believe will be relevant to the efforts of workers in many fields. Subgroups of twins not separately analyzed in most studies often differ more from each other than from matched singleton controls. Thus, monozygotic female twins were rated higher than their singleton controls in confidence, leadership, and appropriate sexual identification, whereas monozygotic male twins tended in the opposite direction. Many of the differences between subgroups of twins, and between twins and singletons, appear to be indirect effects of different degrees of prematurity of birth. Evidence is adduced that, whereas substantial prematurity accounts for much of the excess mortality of twins and also for a considerable range of physical and behavioral deficits, lesser prematurity seems to be associated with certain developmental advantages, such as better speech and greater range of certain types of information, due probably to the effects of such mild prematurity on the parent-child relationship. These three conclusions are selected from literally hundreds of detailed and carefully evaluated findings. Koch is to be congratulated for the breadth of her study, the care and thoughtfulness that have gone into the sample selection, and her consideration of the many significant issues raised by her own findings and those of many co-workers.

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