

DAY-TO-DAY COMMUNICATION BETWEEN TWINS SIBLINGS: A CONVERSATION ANALYSIS STUDY

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ABSTRACT

In this study, conversation analysis is used to examine instances of naturally occurring conversations between twin siblings. The following research question guided this study: What communicative patterns are occurring in everyday talk between twin siblings? Findings suggest that there are patterns of analytic interest present in day-to-day conversations between twin siblings. The conversational phenomena discovered included testing and speaking for one's twin. Twins engaged in testing while conversing alone to show support for their twin. As they engaged in talk with a parent present, that talk served as competition/support, role confirmation/enactment, and identification/deidentification between the twin siblings. Speaking for one's twin functioned as a competitive move, as support, and as a way to gain attention from a parent.

INTRODUCTION

The study of family communication grew out of the field of interpersonal communication in the 1970s and over the decades has taken on its own life (Rogers, 2006). According to Rogers (2006), "The family has been a central domain of study in the social sciences from the early institutional view of the family as a primary social unit to the more recent view of the family as a dynamic, socially constructed system of relationships" (p. xv). Within the field of family communication, the following topics are among the most researched: types of families, parent-child relationships, conflict, intimacy, discipline, rituals, family and the workplace, family and the media, and family and school (Turner & West, 2006b; Vangelisti, 2004). Over the past two decades, family communication study has expanded beyond earlier research boundaries (Turner & West, 2006b).

Movements in the field have spread out over a large terrain of family-related topics with the investigation of different family forms, lifestyle issues, issues of diversity, health and aging, violence and abuse, mass media and the Internet, social support, attachment, and feelings and emotions. (Turner & West, 2006b, p. xvii)

Researchers study these topics as they relate to parents, children, siblings, and extended family members. The family relationships and topics discussed by these scholars reveal significant findings; however, the most common type of relationship in America, siblingship, is underrepresented in the research.

Within the family unit, researchers have analyzed subsystems that influence the dynamics of family communication. According to Floyd (1996), 80% of Americans have one or more siblings;

however, family communication has predominately focused on other subsystems such as the parent/child relationship (Turner & West, 2006b; Vangelisti, 2004). Within sibling communication research, twins have received even less attention.

The modest amount of research on twins is perplexing because our popular culture seems to be fascinated with multiples, from the early 1960s with the introduction of the Wrigley's Doublemint Gum twin commercials, to the Olsen twins of *Full House* (1987-1995), to *Jon and Kate Plus Eight* on The Learning Channel (TLC). According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website, there has been an unprecedented rise in multiples birth rates over recent decades (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2009). The growing number of twins has led to the creation of a national Twins Day held annually in Twinsburg, Ohio as well as several organizations like the National Organization of Mothers of Twins Club (NOMOTC).

The motivation for this study comes from our society's representation of twins. There are media stereotypes of twins, portraying them as having telepathic powers or a sixth sense between them. There is a perception in our culture of the good twin and the bad twin, typically associated with a type of monozygotic (MZ) twins commonly referred to as identical twins. MZ twins share the same DNA and look exactly alike, making it hard for people to differentiate each one. In the United States, popular movies and television series such as Disney's *The Parent Trap* (1961, 1998) and *The Suite Life of Zack & Cody* show these twins dressing alike, causing mischief, and pretending to be the other sibling.

In our culture's popular literature, there are several non-fiction and fiction books featuring twin siblings; for example *Guinness World Records* shows the oldest living, the smallest, the tallest, and the heaviest set of twins. Tweedledee and Tweedledum are a set of identical twins in the children's book *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. Cultural references to twins can be found in other parts of the world like ancient Rome. Romulus and Remus are mythological twins who disputed over land, leading Romulus to kill Remus. Esau and Jacob are famous twins from the *Old Testament* whose struggle led to a life and death situation. Astrological and Zodiac signs depict this unique sibling relationship, labeling those born between May 22 and June 21 as Gemini, "The Twins." There are other modern day artifacts featuring twins such as the Minnesota Twins baseball team, Twinkies desserts, and the town of Twinsburg, Ohio. Twin siblings have fascinated societies for thousands of years and continue to fascinate modern day societies. Thus, it was surprising to learn that studies focusing on twin siblings have received only a small amount of attention from family communication scholars.

The modest amounts of studies within the literature on twins investigate this sibling relationship with the main focus on genetics. Family communication scholars and researchers in related disciplines tend to show interest in comparing twin siblings to address questions of nature versus nurture. A majority of these studies rely on self-reported data; thus, it is important to review some of the empirical research findings.

Researchers have found that genetic and environmental influences on twins help explain their interpersonal affiliation, aggression, and social anxiety (Beatty, Heisel, Hall, Levine, & La France, 2002). In one of the more provocative meta-analytic studies, Beatty et al. (2002) compared monozygotic (identical) and dizygotic (fraternal) twins in terms of genetics and

environmental influences on communication since monozygotic twins are genetically identical, whereas dizygotic twins share only 50% of their genes on average. The 40 self-report studies revealed that interpersonal affiliation was 70% heritable, aggression was 58% heritable, and social anxiety was 65% heritable, indicating a need for further exploration of possible genetic influences on communication variables (Beatty et al., 2002). Given that biological siblings, particularly twins, are genetically bound, and typically raised in the same environment, Horvath (1995) wondered whether genetics might play a role in how siblings communicate. Her study focused particularly on identical (monozygotic) and fraternal twins (dizygotic) to determine if communicator style is inherited. The self-report results from twins whose ages ranged from 11 to 76 revealed a predictable relationship between communicator style and temperament, indicating identical twins as more closely related than fraternal twins in almost every variable. These findings suggest that sociability, activity, fearfulness, distress, anger, openness, relaxation, dominance, and communicator image are most likely to be inherited attributes. Beatty, Marshall, and Rudd (2001) produced similar self-report findings. They studied communicative adaptability among twin siblings whose mean age was 42 and identified particular communicative adaptability traits as inherited. Social composure was found to be 88% heritable, wit was 90% heritable, and social confirmation was 37% heritable. Conversely, it was found that articulation ability and appropriate disclosure were 0% heritable, “indicating some effect of shared environment” (Beatty et al., 2001 p. 372). Hazel, Wongprasert, and Ayres (2006) investigated similarities among fraternal and identical twins across four communication variables—communication apprehension, willingness to communicate, communication competence, and argumentativeness. The four hypotheses suggested that identical twins would be more similar in regard to each communication variable. The self-report results, however, did not support the hypotheses. There were almost matching correlations between fraternal and identical twins, ages 18 to 63 years, on all four variables (Hazel et al., 2006).

The purpose of this study is to examine naturally occurring conversations between twin siblings, analyzing patterns in their everyday talk. Our culture continues to express its interest in this type of sibling relationship, creating commercials, sitcoms, and movies depicting the life of twin siblings. There are phrases in our everyday vernacular that pertain to twins such as “It must have been my evil twin” or “They are joined at the hip.” In fiction and folklore, the German term *doppelgänger* is used to describe someone who looks identical to another person. Thousands of members of the social network Facebook participate in a celebrity doppelgänger week, posting a profile picture of celebrities they resemble. Our culture is fascinated with twins and its interest in twins will continue to escalate. The birth of twins is on the rise according to the CDC (2009), stressing the need for further research on this subset within the family unit.

Family communication research can benefit from learning about twin-to-twin talk and its effect on the family unit. Segal (1990) argues, “The family members of adult monozygotic twins are related to one another in unique fashion. The children of MZ twins, while biological first cousins, are also genetically equivalent to half-siblings because they share a genetically identical parent” (p. 613). Learning how twins communicate with one another can benefit those who interact with them as well as those who have a twin sibling. Effective communication assists with healthy relationships; this is why it is crucial to study twin-to-twin talk. With twins becoming more prevalent in society, people are more likely to encounter and interact with them. Teachers, neighbors, friends, parents, siblings, and extended families can benefit from insights

into the communication of twins. The increase in numbers of twin births, our cultural fascination with multiple births, the shortage of studies on sibling dyads, and the need for researchers to examine naturally occurring conversations are a few reasons why analyzing talk between twin siblings is necessary and significant to the area of family communication research and related fields. The goal of this study is not to generalize the findings. It is to present patterns of conversational activities specific to these sets of twin siblings. Communication is vital to all types of relationships; nonetheless, it is an important topic to study among twin siblings. Thus, I pose the following research question: What communicative patterns are occurring in everyday talk between twin siblings?

METHOD

It is important to point out that a majority of the communication studies of twin siblings, as well as siblings in general, have relied on self-report data from one participant (Beatty, Marshall, & Rudd, 2001; Bevan & Hale, 2006; Bevan & Stetzenbach, 2007; Floyd & Parks, 1995; Hazel, Wongprasert, & Ayres, 2006; Horvath, 1995; Lee, Mancini, & Maxwell, 1990; Martin, Andersen, Burant, & Weber, 1997; Myers, 2001; Myers, Brann, & Rittenour, 2008; Myers & Bryant, 2008a; Myers & Bryant, 2008b; Myers & Goodboy, 2006; Myers & Knox, 1998; Myers & Weber, 2004; Rauer & Volling, 2007; Rittenour, Myers, & Brann, 2007; Strom & Aune, 2007). In order to identify and better understand potential communication patterns of natural talk between these unique siblings, conversation analysis is the chosen methodology.

Conversation analysis is a methodology that collects natural instances of talk and transcribes these instances for further analysis. An advantage of conversation analysis is that the likelihood of misrepresentation of communication is lessened because it is taped, transcribed, and played for groups of participants to check for transcription reliability. Conversation analysis data collection tends to occur in a more natural environment than laboratories, making the data less susceptible to researcher influence. One of the principal creators of this field, Emmanuel Schegloff (1997), argues, “ordinary talk-in-interaction...offers us leverage. The interaction embodies and displays moment-to-moment the products of its own endogenous mechanisms of interpretation and analysis, both of the utterances and actions which compose it and of the oriented-to context” (p. 184). Conversation analysis provides the researcher a valuable opportunity to study instances of natural communication. Studies that employed self-report measures did not involve analysis of any actual communication; rather, participants recalled interactions and provided information based upon their recollections. Conversation analysis recognizes all parties in a relationship by capturing their verbal interaction. In order to study communication, it is crucial for researchers to analyze the actual interaction instead of relying on participants’ recollections or perceptions.

Schegloff (1997) argues that conversation analysis stays true to actual speech, privileging spoken words and avoiding *a priori* assumptions:

And because it is the orientations, meanings, interpretations, understandings, etc. of the *participants* in some sociocultural event on which the course of that event is predicated—and especially if it is constructed interactionally over time, it is *those* characterizations which are privileged in the *constitution of socio interactional reality*, and therefore have a prima facie claim to being privileged in efforts to *understand* it. (p. 167)

In other words, conversation analysis does not attempt to psychoanalyze the participants. It investigates what the participants are “doing” in their interactions. Conversation analysis relies on evidence (tapes and transcripts) to determine what is happening or unfolding instead of making assumptions (Schegloff, 1997). It allows researchers the opportunity to investigate naturalistic conversations on audio or videotapes. The researcher transcribes the conversation, providing transcripts that are a visual representation of the participants’ talk. After the transcriptions are completed, it is the job of the researcher to analyze and uncover what is happening in the conversation. In the present study, conversation analysis provides the opportunity to capture and analyze naturally occurring talk between twins in the privacy of their homes. Audiotapes were used as a less intrusive and less intimidating means of collecting data than videotapes.

TABLE 1.1 TWIN SIBLING PARTICIPANTS

<i>Names</i>	<i>Initials</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Twin Type</i>	<i>Sibling(s)</i>	<i>Parent(s)</i>
Bob and John	B & J	10	DZ	N/A	Both
Brad and Mark	B & M	10	DZ	Sister age 12	Mother
Collin and Kevin	C & K	12	MZ	Brothers ages 7 & 3**	Father*
David and Hudson	D & H	13	DZ	Brothers ages 20 & 14	Both
Brittney and Natalie	B & N	14	DZ	N/A	Mother
Amy and Sydney	A & S	15	MZ	Brother age 26 Sisters ages 23 & 19	Mother

Note. *Indicates single-parent; ** Indicates half-sibling on maternal side

The study includes six sets of twins from a rural Midwest school district who volunteered by responding to an approved letter sent to parents of twins (see Table 1.1). There was no preference as to the types of twins—monozygotic (MZ) or dizygotic (DZ)—since this study is not interested in biological comparisons, although they will be noted.

RESULTS

There were patterns of conversational phenomena consistent among the participants that are not discussed in twin research. Two particular patterns of interest here are what I call (1) testing and (2) speaking for one’s twin. For the purpose of this study, *testing* is a term used to describe instances of interactions where one twin is challenging or eliciting information from the other regarding social information and/or answers to homework questions. The twin sibling who initiates the testing sequence does not always know the correct answer to his or her question. In the excerpts, the testing sequence typically happens in the following order: testing question, participant answer, and assessment of answer. There are also instances of indirect testing, which will be discussed in the analysis of the following excerpt. Twin brothers Bob and John are at the dinner table with their mother. Initially, John and Bob engage in indirect testing regarding a classmate who recently moved to a nearby town. This excerpt is an example of indirect testing because Bob does not directly ask his brother for an answer, yet John responds.

Excerpt 1.1: M (Mother); B (Bob) & J (John), twin brothers, age 10

- 34 B: Doug (inaudible) left
35 J: No he didn't
36 (3.0)
→37 B: How much you wanna bet (goober)
[
38 ((noises))
39 J: That's awesome
40 B: He barely even knew you
41 M: Where did- he moved to Lincoln right?
42 B: Bolivar
43 (1.0)
44 J: Yes I did. (.) I just didn't hang out with him as much as you did
→45 B: What was his last name
46 J: Long.
→47 B: What?
48 J: It is Long?
49 B: Wise.
50 J: WISE! Dang it! I was thinkin' Adam Long

In line 34, B begins a sequence of indirect testing, stating that Doug moved. He is talking at the dinner table to M while J is present. In this excerpt, indirect testing follows this order: speaker comments, an unsolicited recipient responds, and initial speaker replies. In line 35 J self-selects to speak, disagreeing with B's initial claim. J's disagreement leads B to challenge him to a bet, implying that B is certain of Doug's whereabouts. In line 39, J's utterance violates Grice's (1975) maxim of relevance because he does not provide B with a relevant response. In line 45, B initiates a testing sequence, asking J to provide Doug's last name. J responds to B, stating "Long," starting the XXYY repair sequence (X is the repairable, Y is the repair). B elicits clarification, uttering "What" in line 47. J responds with an emphasis on "Long" (second X) with rising intonation: "It is Long?" J's emphasis on the last name with rising intonation gives the appearance that J is unsure of his answer. In line 49, B engages in an other-initiated repair, providing the correct last name (Y). J responds to B's repair, uttering "Wise! Dang it! I was thinkin' Adam Long" (Y). J's emphasis on the name "Wise!" followed by "Dang it!" implies that he knew the correct answer and still failed the test. J's echo of the correct name confirms to B that J agrees with him. J's interjection of "Dang it!" displays both an appreciation response for B's correct answer and a marker of his disappointment with himself. J then offers an account for his incorrect answer, showing B and M that he was confused.

This excerpt provides valuable insights into B's and J's relationship through indirect and direct testing. B is able to display his knowledge of information even though J disagrees with him twice. This leads B to engage in testing three times with J in lines 37, 45, and 47. Based on the testing sequences in this excerpt of talk, B's and J's utterances appear to show competitiveness between them. Testing sequences initiated by B imply he is engaging in deidentification from his twin. Line 41 provides an example of B's deidentification: "He barely even knew you." This utterance implies to J and M that Doug is B's friend, not a mutual friend of B and J. Throughout the rest of the excerpt, B provides evidence through his testing sequences that Doug is his friend.

Siblings (twin and nontwin) experience many “references,” and search for their own identity (Watzlawik, 2009). Social comparisons can lead siblings to identification or deidentification. Identification occurs when siblings have something in common with one another, strengthening each one’s own position—“We are special” (Watzlawik, 2009). Deidentification is when siblings search for their own niche or uniqueness to avoid comparisons and to minimize sibling rivalry/competition. Watzlawik (2009) conducted a study of sibling identification and deidentification of twins (MZ and DZ) and nontwins. Dizygotic twins (same-sex and opposite sex), same-sex siblings, and opposite sex siblings tend to name more differences (character traits, looks, and athletic abilities) than similarities (interest and shared abilities/activities). “Despite all the similarities between the different groups of siblings, monozygotic twins prove to be a special case. They do not seem to overidentify with one another, but they show less deidentification” (Watzlawik, 2009, p. 576). Watzlawik (2009) argues that monozygotic twins may have more difficulties finding their individual niches. Watzlawik (2009) provides a motive for the occurrences of testing between B and J. In this excerpt, B’s testing sequence contributes to the sense of competitiveness in his utterances towards J.

In this excerpt of talk, Collin tests his brother Kevin about answers to math problems while their father is present. Their father also engages in a testing sequence with Kevin.

Excerpt 1.2: F (Father); C (Collin) & K (Kevin), twin brothers, age 12

- 1 C: What is 42 divided by 7?
- 2 K: In Missouri I’ll punch your tooth
- 3 F: What is 42 divided by 7?
- 4 C: 6=
- 5 K: =42 divided by 7 is 8
- 6 F: ((laughs))
- 7 C: ((laughs))
- 8 F: Nice Kevin
- 9 K: ((Laughs)) I know, I’m quick
- 10 C: Have you ever got off in the gold yet?
- 11 K: Yeah, what comes first? 6?
- 12 C: I’m a full crate ahead of you already
- 13 F: A whole what?
- 14 C: Okay, it goes (.) it goes multiplication through nine (.) multiplication
- 15 through twelve (.) division an then addition subtraction addition=
- [
- 16 K: Through twelve
- 17 C: = subtraction addition addition keep on multiplication till 12 through=
- [
- 18 K: Collin’s on a—I’m on a
- 19 C: =9
- 20 F: So, you’re further ahead than he is?
- 21 K: No
- [

→22 C: Yeah it goes-
 23 K: No no he's on multiplication 9
 [
 24 C: Multiplication 9 is the last one
 [
 25 F: You little liar
 26 K: Multiplication 9 is first multiplication 12 is second addition is next
 27 he's on addition I'm almost on multiplication 9
 28 F: So, that means you're going on fourth crate?
 29 C: Yeah
 30 F: Perfect
 31 C: No no it's not
 32 F: You gonna pass fourth crate?
 33 K: Oh yeah like 8 times 7 is-
 →34 F: What is 8 times 7?
 →35 C: 60 um 72?
 →36 K: Wrong!
 →37 C: 63
 →38 K: Wrong!
 →39 C: ((laughs)) 56?
 40 F: Hey, there's half the job
 41 K: Heck yes
 42 F: Yeah I figured that, do you actually think about or you just repeatin' what
 [[
 43 K: ((laughs))
 44 C: He seriously tries
 45 F: you heard ((performing C)) 72, 56, 87
 46 K: ((laughing))
 47 F: ((performing C)) Whatever they're all somethin' they're all numbers
 48 K: ((giggles)) Yeah
 49 F: ((performing C)) Pick which one you like
 50 K: ((laughing))
 51 C: My friend- ((giggles)) my friend that is seventh partner he walks by me an
 52 goes "Your brother failed again" I'm like "yeah I know"

In line 1, C begins the testing sequence with a math question. K speaks in the appropriate turn slot; however, it is uncertain who his response is directed to. If K is responding to C, K's utterance is play-fighting, violating Grice's conversational maxim of relevance. Levinson (1983) posits that one of the most important ideas in pragmatics is the notion of conversational implicature, a theory developed by Grice. According to Grice's (1975) theory, conversation should follow four basic maxims: quantity, quality, relevance, and manner. Quantity refers to making your contribution to the conversation as necessary without adding more information than solicited. Quality is speaking the truth, including not speaking of anything for which you lack adequate evidence. Relevance is simply saying things related to the topic of the conversation.

Manner pertains to being orderly, brief, avoiding obscurity of expression, and avoiding ambiguity (Grice, 1975). If K is not responding to C, then his utterance is directed to F.

Line 1 occurs at the beginning of the audiotape, making it difficult for the participants to recall their prior talk. In line 3, F repeats C's question, engaging himself in the testing sequence. Once F asks the question, C offers his answer in line 4. C is answering for his twin, which is another conversational phenomenon discussed later. It is apparent that F's question is directed to K because C asked the same question of K in line 1. In line 4, C's utterance displays the following: his knowledge of math, his opportunity to answer for his brother, or both. K latches onto C's answer with an incorrect response, causing F and K to laugh. Hopper (1992) states, "In these transcriptions latching [=] indicates a TRP (transition-relevance place) that gets rush-through" (p. 135). "Rushing-through is commonplace and not always entirely competitive, but if it happens repeatedly, its user may hog the floor" (Hopper, 1992, p. 135). K seems to know that C will answer the test question, which is evident by K's rush-through in line 5. In lines 6 and 7, F and K are engaging in shared laughter. Glenn (2003) states, "In two-party situations, *laughing at* is not shared. Thus two-party shared laughter will likely be a *laughing with*, while multi-party laughter may be *laughing with* or *laughing at*" (p. 113). In this sequence, F and K are exhibiting *laughing at* because there are three people in the interaction. K is laughing at himself because he quickly provided the correct answer as if it was the right answer.

In line 10, C displays testing when asked where K is ranked in his math level. Testing describes instances of interactions where one twin is challenging or eliciting information from the other regarding social information and/or answers to homework questions. C's question functions as a way to "call out" K on his abilities in front of F. K answers him, displaying uncertainty about the correct level. This is evident when K asks C a question for verification. In the following line C asserts his math level, stating "I'm a full crate ahead of you already." C's use of the word "already" implies that C has surpassed K in math rankings. "Crate" is a term implemented in this math class to assess the abilities of students, and is used in place of words such as level or grade. F is not familiar with the use of the word crate, which is evident by the repair request in line 13. In the following line C explains to F how the crate system works, displaying to F that C is credible to discuss the rankings. C begins with the word "Okay," which functions as a next turn acknowledgment and continuer (Filipi & Wales, 2003). It is evident that K is not credible, because in line 11 he asks C which crate comes first.

Lines 20 through 23 are shown because they display the conversational practice of simultaneous speech. F asks C a question about his math level; however, K and C answer simultaneously, offering different responses. K answers for C, which is an example of the communication phenomenon presented later in the study—speaking for one's twin sibling. In line 33, K begins to answer his own math problem instead of responding "yes" or "no" to F's question. Since K did not provide an answer to his own math question, F engages in testing, asking K for the correct response. K provides an incorrect answer and C is quick to assess K, emphasizing the word "wrong." Pomerantz (1984) posits that assessments are "products of participation" (p. 57). They allow the speaker to demonstrate his or her knowledge of what is being assessed, identifying the participant as a knowing participant. In this instance of testing, F asks the question to K, K answers the question, but C provides the assessment of K's answer instead of F. In lines 37 and 38, K answers the question and C assesses it with emphasis, "wrong!" C's

responses to K imply that C knows the correct answer and is willing to display his math abilities. K uttering the incorrect answer twice reinforces the perception held by F and C that K is not as strong in math as C. In line 39, K laughs before stating the correct answer with rising intonation. F jokingly states, “Hey, there’s half the job.” F’s sarcastic response appears to imply a negative assessment of K’s own effort in learning math. It appears that F is expressing to K that F knows he is not fully participating in class. K responds, verifying F’s implication about K’s math skills and/or lack of effort in the class. In line 42, F confirms his assessment of K’s lack of interest, effort, or ability to do well in math.

In lines 42 to 44, K laughs at F’s utterance and C offers his account of his brother’s abilities. Accounts are face-saving practices used to attempt to repair or mitigate discrediting dimensions of an event. They are corrective mechanisms in communication (Buttny, 1987). C’s utterance expresses to F that K does try in math instead of guessing at the answers. In line 42, F questions K in regard to whether he is “thinking” or “repeating” answers. F’s question displays his preference for K to explain himself instead of C adding his own account of K’s performance. K responds to F with laughter, indicating K is not offended by F’s utterance. In lines 45 and 47, F engages in the conversational performance act of role-switching (impersonation, mimicking). F changes his voice, mimicking K, and utters projected (future) quotes. F’s impersonation could function as a teaching moment for K. F’s projected quotes expresses to K his (K’s) own attitude towards math. The content and prosodic features of F’s delivery indicates that he is engaging in a sarcastic impersonation of K. Through F’s impersonation, F is able to convey to K how K is presenting himself. This impersonation may or may not have an effect on K’s participation in math. In line 46, K giggles and adds a minimal response (Crow, 2007), implying he is not upset with F’s impersonation of him.

K’s utterance displays a nonverbal acknowledger (giggles), and a minimal response which lets F know that K is handing the floor back to F. In line 49 F continues his role-switching, adding “Pick which one you like.” K responds with laughter, and C engages in reported speech. Reported speech is characterized as quoting another person’s, or one’s own, prior words. It can take the form of a direct quotation (quoting exact words of the original speaker) or indirect quotation (a summary of the interaction in the words of the teller) (Holt, 1996). Reported speech can also be “double-voiced discourse,” meaning the original and the present speakers are reflected in the narrative (Buttny, 1998). In lines 51 and 52, C elaborates on K’s math skills, providing evidence of K’s recent performance on a math test through reported speech of a classmate. C’s utterance displays the following: K is bad at math, a classmate provides this assessment to C, and C confirms the classmate’s assessment.

This excerpt of conversation highlights the notion of testing between twin siblings in the presence of and with active participation by a parent. Throughout this excerpt, F reinforces his assessment of their differing math skills without disagreement from either twin. K is confirming, in this excerpt, his role in the family as the stereotypical “dumb jock,” whose main interest is in sports. This appears to be K’s role in the family, which F confirms and K exhibits in the conversation. Some family roles enacted by children are formal (created by society) such as stepchild, son, and foster child. There are also informal roles (created by families) for children, which consist of the silly child, the jock, and the brain (Socha & Yingling, 2010). K appears to function in the role of the jock, whereas C appears to enact the role of the brain.

The next excerpt of talk illustrates the conversational phenomenon of speaking for one's twin with a parent present. The conversation takes place in a minivan where their mother directly asks Natalie questions but her sister, Brittney, also answers.

Excerpt 2.1: M (Mother); B (Brittney) & N (Natalie), twin sisters, age 14

- 50 M: Natalie how did your boat do
 51 N: It didn't go up past-
 [
 →52 B: It didn't go all the way
 53 N: It went—it went (.) it was off by this much ((nonverbal))
 [
 →54 B: She tried it twice too
 55 N: Just to show you how far we got mine
 56 B: You know what just because my Daddy doesn't make my=
 [
 57 M: Did you fail (.) did you fail (.) did you fail
 58 B: =project doesn't mean
 [
 59 N: Oh
 60 N: No I had a hundred on everything else
 [
 →61 B: She got (.) it was only minus twelve (.) it was like
 62 worth a hundred an five points
 [
 63 N: What'd ya- what'd ya- what'd ya get on your social studies
 64 test
 65 B: I don't know I didn't have to take it 'cuz ah seventh eighth hour I never
 66 saw her so then what do you do

The excerpt begins with M addressing N, asking N about her boat project. In line 52, B interrupts N, recasting her sister's utterance by elaborating on N's narrative. This is the first example of B speaking for her twin. B's utterance is considered as an interruption, not an overlap, for the following three reasons. First, M explicitly addresses N, instead of asking, "How did your boat do?" The pronoun "your" would imply that either sister could answer their mother's question because of the absence of an address term. West and Zimmerman (1983) explain two criteria for an overlap: "(1) The overlap must begin at least two syllables from any transition-relevance place in the current turn unit. (2) The overlapping utterance must not support or facilitate the current speaker's utterance" (p. 104). B joins the conversation at a nontransition-relevance place, making her turn an interruption.

In line 54, B recasts her sister's utterance followed by an elaboration of N's narrative. This implies B is supporting and facilitating her sister's response, confirming B's utterance as an interruption. N does not complete her utterance because she is cut-off by B, violating N's completion right. In this instance, N does not finish her thought because her sister, B, interrupts her utterance. B's negative assessment, "It didn't go all the way," is a type of competitive

behavior labeled as a personal criticism (Littlejohn, 1996). B implies a negative evaluation of N's participation in the project. B's interruption conveys her intent to take over the floor, which is a competitive move.

In line 53, N continues her narrative as B overlaps, adding her assessment of N's performance to their mother. This is the second example of B speaking for N, which is a competitive overlap. B's overlap (line 54) is competitive because it does not occur near a TRP. B is informing M that N had two unsuccessful chances to reach the finish line. The content and delivery of B's utterance is competitive in nature; B is criticizing N's performance. N's absence of an acknowledger implies that she is ignoring B's utterances or cannot hear B's responses in the van. In line 55, N says, "Just to show you how far we got mine," indicating that their mother did not observe her initial nonverbal representation. This implies that N is sitting in the front passenger seat of the van. It would be distracting for their mother to drive while watching N if she was in the back seat. N uses the word "we"; however, it is evident in the following line that "we" does not mean N and B. If B participated with N in the boat project, it would not seem logical for B to utter a demand ticket in the following line. Nofsinger (1975) defines a demand ticket as, "those utterances which seem to refer to some unidentified statement (e.g., "Guess What?" or "Yuh know something?"), and those which use a name or title as a summons (e.g., "Jo Anne?" or "Mommy?")" (p. 2). B's utterance is a type of competitive behavior labeled as a presumptive attribution. Littlejohn (1996) defines presumptive attribution as, "attributing thoughts, feelings, intentions, and causes to the partner that the partner does not acknowledge" (p. 276). B is implying that their dad built (or helped with) N's project but not B's project; however, N does not acknowledge or deny B's claim.

In line 57, M rejoins the conversation, asking a second question directed to N. Their mother's repetition may function as a means to direct N's attention away from her sister's criticism. Her interruption of B's utterance is a power move to gain the floor, displaying her dominance in the parent-child relationship. Parents have the power to manipulate consequences; they can reward or punish their children (Littlejohn, 1996). M has not responded to B, implying that she is punishing B by not acknowledging B's utterances. In line 59, N acknowledges her receipt of their mother's question with "Oh." N's delayed response to their mother indicates that she was listening to B's utterance of lines 56 and 58. Heritage (1998) says: "In responses to English questions, prefacing with the particle *oh* indicates that, from the viewpoint of the answerer, a question is problematic in terms of its relevance, presuppositions, or context" (p. 291). N's "Oh" indicates that her sister's utterance is problematic in terms of presupposition or relevance to the topic. N does not confirm or deny their dad's participation in the construction of her boat, making B's utterance irrelevant. In line 60, N is informing their mother of her score on the project as B interrupts, speaking for her twin for a third time. B's utterance (line 61) contradicts N's response, implying competitiveness towards her sister. B is reporting to their mother that N is incorrect regarding the calculation of the final grade. In line 62, B continues her utterance while N interrupts in line 63. N displays competitiveness as she interrupts B at a non-TRP. N self-selects to speak, eliciting information from B regarding her score on the social studies test. This is the first time in the excerpt that B has been acknowledged. N's utterance gives the appearance of competitiveness, implying to their mother the following: B did not take the test or B did not perform well on it. B ends the excerpt of conversation, justifying why she did not take the test: "I never saw her so then what do you do."

The interaction among N, B, and their mother provides interesting information and examples of speaking for one's twin. There are three people in the car, yet N and her mother only converse with each other. B interjects her account of N's boat project without acknowledgment from N or their mother. In fact, their mother does not acknowledge B throughout the excerpt. On the other hand, N acknowledges B in line 63 where she shifts the topic of conversation to B's performance on the social studies test. B's utterances in the excerpt are competitive: she disagrees with N's accounts, she criticizes N's assistance from their father, and she criticizes N's grades. B's criticisms towards N lead their mother to ask another question, functioning to shift the attention back to N before a conflict erupts between the sisters. M interrupts B, repeating her question (three times), regulating the conversation by shading the topic back to N. Shading is when a new topic emerges out of the old, demonstrating competence in maintaining the conversation (Crow, 2007). Their mother is enacting the role of arbitrator without explicitly asserting herself. She is indirectly impeding a potential conflict between the sisters. "In some cases, a sibling conflict may occur in the presence of one or both parents, and they may decide whether to become involved. Interestingly, not all parents choose to do so" (Roloff & Miller, 2006, p. 153).

Systems theory explains the interaction occurring between parent/child and sibling/sibling relationships. "The structural model provides a clear framework to understand the subsystems of the family and the interactions of these subsystems in terms of social organization" (Jennings & Wartella, 2004, p. 598). Hierarchy and interdependence are two properties of systems theory present in the excerpt. During the excerpt of conversation, N and her mother are interacting in their mother/daughter subsystem in the presence of B. Within every system, there is a hierarchy of subsystems affecting the family. N and her mother are conversing as if B was not in the van, which might explain why B displays competitiveness in her utterances. "Although early research focused on sibling rivalry as a cause of sibling conflict, recent research suggests that causes may simply reflect interdependency" (Roloff & Miller, 2006, p.153). This interdependency present in N's and B's twin sibling relationship contributes to their conflict.

According to Turner and West (2006a), systems theorists posit that family members are interdependent, and conflict occurs in interdependent relationships. It is rare for someone to express disagreement with an individual they do not depend on in the same way as family members (Turner & West, 2006a). Their mother's lack of acknowledgment towards B could function as a means to connect with N, fostering their mother/daughter relationship. Or, their mother recognizes B's utterances as competitive and ignores her as a means of silencing B. N's and B's sibling subsystem is evident in lines 63 to 66 where they interact with each other. N's question to B implies competitiveness: "What'd ya- what'd ya- what'd ya get on your social studies test." If N thought that B took the test and/or did well on the test, she most likely would not have inquired. It is interesting to note that N does not respond to B's prior utterances; however, B immediately responds to N when asked a question. B's immediate response confirms that she was seeking attention from N in the conversation. In this excerpt, the conversational phenomenon of speaking for one's twin functions as a means of competitiveness with the goal of gaining attention from M.

The next excerpt is also an example of the conversational phenomenon of speaking for one's twin. The conversation takes place in the kitchen where David and Hudson are having a conversation on the topic of sleep.

Excerpt 2.2: D (David) & H (Hudson), twin brothers, age 13

- 3 H: So David?
4 D: Yes
5 H: Why aren't you- why are you so tired
6 D: I don't know:::w
→7 H: Like 'cause he slept pretty well last night and woke up=
8 D: =I know, slept well
9 H: What?
10 D: I know, slept well
11 H: You always slept well?
12 D: I KNOW. I. SLEPT (.) WELL!
13 H: SORRY! BUT YOU WEREN'T TALKING CLEARLY
14 D: I was talkin' perfectly clear to me anyway
15 H: No you weren't
16 D: Yes I was
17 H: Don't talk with your mouth full
18 D: It's not full there's still room in my mouth
19 ((sniffles))
20 H: Don't talk with food in your mouth

In line 5, H engages in a self-initiated repair, reformulating his question. D offers an ambiguous response, violating Grice's (1975) maxim of manner. According to Grice (1975), the maxim of manner says avoid obscurity of expression, avoid ambiguity, be brief, and orderly. D replies, emphasizing the word "know" in a tired-sounding way. The instance of speaking for one's twin occurs in line 7. H speaks for D, providing an assessment, using the pronoun "he" instead of "you." The use of "he" indicates H is speaking to their mother on behalf of D; however, there is no third party response. D's ambiguous response (line 6) is a violation of Grice's maxim of manner. D's violation serves as a reason why H decides to speak for D. In line 8, D immediately responds, latching onto H's utterance at a TRP, or a moment at which speakership is available (Hopper, 1992). Paul ten Have (1999) says that latching occurs "when one spate of talk directly follows another, with no gap between the two" (p. 88). D's latching (indicated by the equal signs) signifies agreement. H's role as the "chatty twin" could be another explanation as to why he speaks for D. This is made evident by H's topic initiation in line 3, H's inquiry to D in line 5, and H's conversation repairs in lines 9 and 11.

Line 12 is where D expresses his agitation towards H's inquiry in line 11. This is apparent through D's emphasis of words and raised voice. H apologizes to D with a raised voice, emphasizing his words. This is where the topic of conversation shifts to the meta-topic of speaking clearly. D does not accept H's insincere apology, and justifies his lack of clarity in his speech in line 14. D's response is a competitive behavior which is labeled as a denial of responsibility. Littlejohn (1996) defines this type of competitive behavior as, "statements that deny or minimize personal responsibility for the conflict" (p. 276). In lines 15 and 16, H and D engage in a brief disagreement sequence. Brenneis and Lein (1977), who investigated child discourse, would say that H and D are engaging in an argumentative sequence called inversion. "Successive statements may be drawn in turn from a category and its inverse, or, in some cases, from a category and one other category which represents a denial or negation" (Brenneis & Lein,

1977, p. 56). H and D are displaying inversion between denial and affirmative statements. In line 17, H utters a directive on table manners to D. D responds sarcastically, leading H to initiate a self-repair of his prior directive, ending the disagreement sequence. D does not respond to H's last utterance, indicating that he is obeying his brother's final directive. H is taking on the role of "little parent" in a process known as parentification (Byng-Hall, 2008). This is interesting because the older sibling is typically involved with parentification; however, H and D are the same age. In lines 17 to 20, H enacts the role of parent, while D enacts his role as the baby or younger child.

This excerpt of talk provides an example of speaking for one's twin; however, it differs from excerpt 2.1 for several reasons. In line 3, H asks D why he is tired this morning. D provides an ambiguous answer, "I don't know," violating Grice's maxim of manner. The violation is one explanation for why H speaks for D in line 7. D does not provide a preferred (unambiguous) answer as the second part of the question/answer adjacency pair in line 8. H speaks once for D, leading D to respond immediately. D latching onto H's utterance could indicate agreement with H's assessment. Or, it could indicate that D wants to speak for himself. D shows his agitation with the topic of the conversation, stating in a louder voice, "I KNOW. I. SLEPT (.) WELL!" Systems theory provides insights as to why H speaks for D—family roles. Systems theory as a process model explains the importance of interaction and communication among family members. Family roles are allocated by members and/or created out of experiences in the family system. The family continues to grow and maintain itself through interdependency (Turner & West, 2006a). According to Turner and West (2006a), "each member's role enactments contribute to creating and maintaining the family. These principles give rise to the notion that family members will behave in ways that are needed by the system as a whole" (p. 126). In this excerpt, D appears to enact the roles of sensitive twin and baby, whereas H appears to engage in his roles of chatty twin and "little parent."

Speaking for one's twin revealed an issue worthy of further investigation: speaker interchangeability. On the tapes, parents and the siblings appeared comfortable with one twin talking on behalf of the other. It appeared as if the twins were treated as one person, speaking freely regardless of whom the question was directed to. In these excerpts (shown), only one parent used an address term that did not deter the other twin from speaking. This parent did not reprimand the twin or repeat the address term and question to signal the other twin to speak. Speaker interchangeability is worth examining to determine whether this is a common practice among twin siblings and/or siblings in general during family conversations.

In summary, the data did reveal communication phenomena that are not discussed in conversation analysis or family communication research: testing and speaking for one's twin. Testing is a label created for the purpose of this study to define the phenomenon present in the twin siblings' interactions. Future studies are needed to further investigate conversational patterns and phenomena as they relate to the unique twin siblingship. The purpose of this study is to report these findings as preliminary insights into twin siblings' everyday conversation; nevertheless, it is not to be generalized.

DISCUSSION

This study highlights twin-to-twin talk utilizing systems theory and pragmatics to better understand twin siblings as they communicate with each other. Systems is a crucial theory to apply in research on family communication because it focuses on the creation and maintenance of relationships through interactions. These twin participants displayed the following functions—role confirmation/enactment, twin identification/deidentification, and supportiveness/competitiveness—through interactions with their twin sibling and/or parent. Systems theory was used to describe the influence family roles and twin identification have on relationships within sibling subsystems, other subsystems, and larger subsystems.

Pragmatics places emphasis on what is occurring within a conversation (conversational acts and sequences) and the importance of conversational structure, describing interactions without psychological assumptions. It made possible an objective description of the communication between interactants. The application of both theories offered the researcher an opportunity to discuss participants' communication as it contributed to the ongoing construction of the twin siblingships and relationships with parents. Roles are products of observations and experiences, and they can also be allocated by the family (Turner & West, 2006a). Intrapersonal role conflict internally occurs in a family member when his or her role is incompatible with his or her own self-perceptions. In the first excerpt of talk (1.1), B's utterances do not give the appearance of supportiveness; instead, they appear competitive in nature towards J. B's competitiveness is displayed after J's indirect testing of his knowledge in line 35.

The remainder of the excerpt shows B engaging in the following: challenging J to a bet, negatively assessing J's friendship with Doug, and initiating a testing sequence with J. B's testing could indicate that he and J are experiencing interpersonal role conflict. Interpersonal role conflict can occur when, "two or more family members wish to enact the same role behaviors" (Turner & West, 2006a, p. 125). B's testing sequence shows their mother that in this case B knows more information than his brother (i.e., the smart twin). B's utterances display that he is confident of his knowledge of the topic of conversation. Turner and West (2006a) claim that individuals have the capacity to drop a given role, pick up another role, or modify it. This begs the question whether their parents are indirectly or directly influencing deidentification between them. "Twins have more difficulties in developing independence and a positive identity than nontwins due to the fact they have to emancipate themselves from both their parents and cotwins" (Watzlawik, 2009, p. 562).

In excerpt 2.2, system theory provides insights as to why H speaks for D—family roles. Systems theory as a process model explains the importance of interaction and communication among family members. Family roles are allocated by members and/or created out of experiences in the family system. The family continues to grow and maintain itself through interdependency (Turner & West, 2006a).

According to Turner and West (2006a), "Therefore, each member's role enactments contribute to creating and maintaining the family. These principles give rise to the notion that family members will behave in ways that are needed by the system as a whole" (p. 126). D enacts the roles of

sensitive twin and baby, whereas H engages in his roles of chatty twin and “little parent.” It is uncertain whether D’s role as the sensitive twin is socially structured through his patterns of behavior, or is a role allocation by the family members. Both of D’s roles are present in the excerpt, contributing to stability in the family system. D’s role as the sensitive twin and/or baby explains why H speaks for him in the excerpt. D is not an extrovert like H, and H takes on the role of “little parent” when interacting with D. H’s role of chatty twin is created and sustained in the interaction with D.

CONCLUSION

The implications of this study are that the conversation analysis approach to twin research offers more details on twin siblings’ everyday communication patterns than self-reports. More scholars need to implement the conversation analysis approach, investigating communication practices that constitute family relationships (Turner & West, 2006a). Twin researchers in related disciplines need to learn about this new conversation analysis approach to twin talk. Their findings can contribute to this initial collection of twin sibling communication patterns in everyday talk. This study advocates the use of conversation analysis in the field of family communication, stressing the importance of natural occurring talk as data.

This study addresses Turner and West’s (2006a) concern for more research on family relationships that have “remained relatively unexplored” such as the twin sibling relationship. Little is known about the nature of how adolescent twin siblings communicate with each other. This study reveals specific conversational practices and phenomena in the twin participants’ interactions, yet it did not exhaust every practice and phenomenon. These initial findings are important because they offer a new understanding of twin-to-twin talk that was not previously available. There is still an abundance of undiscovered information regarding twin siblings and communication between them. This study does open up for discussion the notion that twin siblings do engage in specific communication patterns.

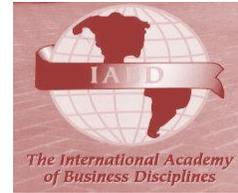
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INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF INTERDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH

VOLUME 4, NUMBER 1, August 2015

ISSN 2165-3240



**A PUBLICATION OF FROSTBURG STATE UNIVERSITY AND THE
INTERNATIONAL ACADEMY OF BUSINESS DISCIPLINES**

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