

WISCONSIN TWIN RESEARCH NEWSLETTER



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Spotlight on Research

Relationships among Different Reports of Impulsivity and Inhibitory Control

We collect information about temperament from a variety of sources during visits to families with twins. We not only ask mothers to report on each twin's behavior, but we ask each twin about his or her own behavior during puppet interviews. Staff members report on each twin's behavior, and each twin's behavior during the games is also assessed. In addition to examining the information that is collected, we are interested in how the information from these different sources is interrelated.

We sought to examine the relationships between the different sources of information while looking at the temperamental traits of impulsivity and inhibitory control. Past research suggests that these traits are related but distinct, such that a child who has higher levels of impulsivity also has lower levels of inhibitory control (defined as the ability to inhibit inappropriate responses). We wanted to explore the extent to which mothers' reports of twins' impulsivity and inhibitory control related to staff members' reports of twins' impulsivity, and to the twins' perception of their own impulsivity. Likewise, we hoped to determine how the games designed to assess impulsivity and inhibitory control related to the ratings of these traits.

At the outset, we should make it clear that being impulsive is not inherently a good or bad thing. Although some tend to think of impulsivity in a negative light, impulsive people can also be described as spontaneous, active, and fun-loving.

We visited 117 sets of twins aged six to ten years. Mothers' reports of their twins' impulsivity and inhibitory control were obtained from a mailed questionnaire. During a home visit, the each twin individually reported his or her impulsivity during puppet interviews and played two games designed to assess impulsivity and inhibitory control. In the first game, each twin was left alone to play a game that was nearly impossible to win. He or she was assessed on whether or not any of the rules were broken in order to win a prize. In the second game, each twin played Jenga® with a staff member and was made to wait varying amounts of time for his or her turn. Each twin

was assessed on the extent to which he or she was able to restrain his or her frustration with having to wait to take a turn. Staff members also reported their observations of each twin's impulsivity.

Consistent with previous research, we found a high degree of overlap between the two traits of impulsivity and inhibitory control. We found that mothers' reports of impulsivity and inhibitory control were strongly related to twins' self-perceptions of their own impulsivity, as well as to reports by staff members. With respect to behaviors observed during the games, when the different sources were looked at individually only staff members' reports of behavior corresponded to the levels of impulsivity or inhibitory control. Mother and child reports were not associated with behavior observed during the games. However, after combining the reports from mothers, twins, and staff members, as well as the scores from the two games, the combined report of impulsivity was significantly related to the combined report of the behaviors observed during the games.

These results point to the importance of using a variety of different measures, both reported and observed, when assessing impulsivity and/or inhibitory control. Reported and observed data appear to tap slightly different aspects of impulsivity. However, when the different reports are combined, the ensuing relationship between them indicates that they are all measuring the same temperamental trait. By collecting information from mothers, twins, and staff, as well as noting observations of behavior, a more complete picture of a child's level of impulsivity is revealed. We are continuing to use this method of analysis across other areas of temperament.

This also reminds us of the importance of the involvement of both twins and their caregivers. Every questionnaire and interview provides another perspective and allows us to draw more complete pictures with respect to what we are studying. We appreciate all of your time and effort that you put in to further our research!



Potty Training Twins



Potty training one child is a challenge. Potty training twins, however, involves double the time, equipment, and patience. While there are specific tips for potty training two little ones, there are some general suggestions for potty training which can also be applied to twins. Dozens of books are available on toilet training and some of them offer radically different and contradictory advice. Parents must adopt a strategy that seems best for their family. What follows is some general, middle-of-the-road advice for your consideration. We realize that “one size doesn’t fit all,” and that this advice might not be quite right for your twins.

Children begin potty training somewhere between 18 months and 3 years of age. Before beginning, make sure your child is prepared. This does not mean your child has reached a certain age, but rather he or she is physically, cognitively and psychologically ready. Signs of readiness may include: staying dry for at least two hours at a time, having regular bowel movements, being able to follow simple directions, being uncomfortable with dirty diapers, wanting to use the potty chair, and wanting to wear regular underwear. Every child is different and your child may or may not show all of these signs.

Once your child shows signs of readiness, it is important to verify that it is the right time for you and your child. Potty training is a major change in your child’s life, and it can be a stressful time for all involved. If other changes are taking place, such as a new baby in the family, a different babysitter, or something as minor as changing bedrooms, you may want to wait until your child adjusts.

There are many things you can do to prepare for potty training. First, you want to begin discussing the toilet with your child. This can be done through conversation, videos, books, etc. The more your child understands about the process, the better the chance that he or she will succeed. You may also want to let your child see others using the toilet correctly, such as yourself or the other parent. Finally, bring some fun to the bathroom. For example, let your child pick out their potty chair or decorate it with stickers.

Patience is key when it comes to potty training! Make all efforts not to force your child to use the potty chair. If you sense that your child is resisting,

perhaps try backing off. It is okay to take a few days off of potty training. Remember that your child will be ready when they feel they are ready. It takes anywhere from several weeks to months to complete the potty training process. Accidents throughout this process are normal. Try to avoid punishing your child for not using the potty. Instead, be patient and reiterate to them that “next time we can try and use the potty.” Lastly, show encouragement and praise when attempts in the potty chair are successful.

Another issue to consider is whether to use disposable training pants or underwear during the training process. Disposable training pants can be great because they are convenient and easy. However, they can slow down the training progress if your child realizes that they are similar to diapers and he or she begins to use them as such. It may be a good idea to use disposable training pants in the beginning and then transition to underwear after your child has some successes with the potty.

Potty training twins has many of the same elements of potty training singletons, but with a slightly different approach. It may be helpful to have

YOU'RE INVITED!

TO ATTEND THE
WISCONSIN ORGANIZATION
MOTHERS OF TWINS CLUB'S
(WOMOTC)
2005 FALL CONVENTION
OCTOBER 7TH & 8TH

Hosted by the Proud Parents of Twins Club
at the Kalahari Resort and Convention Center in
Wisconsin Dells.

Guest speakers, family fun, and twin related
items for sale!

WOMOTC is an organization for twins clubs in Wisconsin and individuals who do not have a club in their area. We help start twins clubs, share ideas, give support, and help people grow as parents of twins.

Call Suzanne Gorecki at (414) 744-0282* for more information about registering and fees for the fall convention, or visit www.womotc.org.

*WTP is not affiliated with WOMOTC. Please direct all related questions to Suzanne. Thank you!

(Potty Training Continued...) two potty chairs so that you do not have to worry about waiting for turns, sharing the toilet, etc. It may be easier for the twins to listen and focus if they are separated during the process of training, though this may not always be possible. Try not to use one twin's progress to inspire the other twin. Even though the twins were born at the same time, they may not be ready to toilet train at the same time. If one is focused and ready while the other is not, try to keep the one twin interested and progressing without excluding the other twin. This can be done by continuing to take the one twin to the potty, offering him or her praise without the other twin around, and then going back to normal business. This way, the twin that is not progressing as fast will not feel as though he or she

is competing or left out since the enthusiasm of the parent is shown behind closed doors in the bathroom. If you are the parents of a boy/girl twin pair, you may notice that your girl might be ready to potty train before your boy. Boys are often found to complete toilet training later than girls. Thus, don't be afraid to begin training one of your twins before the other. With time, the other twin will be ready for training as well.

Ultimately, patience is the key to successful potty training, and knowing that each twin will eventually be ready to use the toilet should be remembered. The less pressure you place on your children while continuing to encourage them to use the potty, the better the entire process will be for both you and your children.

WISCONSIN TWIN PROJECT SITE IN MILWAUKEE NEEDS YOUR HELP!

WE ARE LOOKING FOR AFRICAN AMERICAN, HISPANIC, AND OTHER MINORITY FAMILIES WITH TWINS JUST UNDER THE AGE OF 3 WHO LIVE IN OR NEAR MILWAUKEE. ELIGIBLE FAMILIES MAY BE PAID FOR THEIR PARTICIPATION. IF YOU LIVE IN THE MILWAUKEE AREA AND ARE INTERESTED IN LEARNING MORE ABOUT THIS RESEARCH OPPORTUNITY PLEASE CALL (414) 805-5668.



It Takes Two Fun for All Ages!

Springtime Flower Placemats

You will need:

- ✿ clear contact paper
- ✿ flowers and leaves
- ✿ scissors

For each placemat, cut 2 pieces of contact paper approximately 12" x 18". Peel the backing off one piece and lay it sticky side up on. Remove blossoms and leaves from their stems and arrange them on the sticky side of the contact paper. Press everything flat with your fingers. Some flowers will work better if you remove the petals and use them individually. Peel the backing off the 2nd piece of contact paper. Place it sticky side down over your arrangement. Do not worry about lining up edges exactly. You will probably get some wrinkles. Just press everything down as flat as possible and your place mat will look beautiful. Trim around the edges with scissors.

Twins and Autism We still need your help!

We estimate that there are as many as 100 pairs of twins under the age of 16 years in Wisconsin in which one or both twins has autism, or some other form of pervasive developmental disorder (PDD-NOS or Asperger's Syndrome). We have great personal and scientific interest in these disorders, and we just received a major grant from the National Institute of Health to begin a twin research study to help understand these complex disorders.



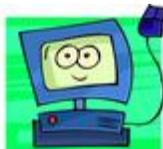
Thus far, we have located over 70 twin pairs in which one or both has autism or a related challenge; however, this is an insufficient number to do our research. We would appreciate a phone call or email from the parents of any twin with autism (identical or fraternal, boy or girl, regardless of whether the co-twin has a disorder or not) living anywhere in Wisconsin. We would appreciate our readers mentioning our efforts to parents of twins with autism spectrum disorders. All we need to know at this time are the age and diagnosis of the twins, as well as contact information for the future. We would like to know about the existence of all such twin pairs, even if they might not choose to participate in the study.



Please let us know if your address or phone number changes.

Email: wisconsintwins@waisman.wisc.edu
Phone: (608) 265-2674

Visit our website!
<http://psych.wisc.edu/wtp>



THANK YOU!

As an expert on your own twins, you possess important knowledge. We appreciate the time you take to talk on the phone, fill out questionnaires, and visit with us. Each piece of information furthers research in child development.



We value your input!

DO YOU HAVE COMMENTS, QUESTIONS, OR SUGGESTIONS?

- If your twins are under the age of 3 years, contact Carrie Arneson at clarneso@wisc.edu or (608) 265-2674.
- If your twins are over the age of 3 years, contact Nicci Schmidt at nlschmidt2@wisc.edu or (608) 265-2674.
- If you want to relay information to us about a twin or set of twins with autism or other related disorder, please contact Dr. Hill Goldsmith at (608) 262-9932 or hgoldsm@wisc.edu.

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