



## Exploring Psychology

*Exploring Psychology: Twins 1*

### **Narrator**

Identical, or monozygotic twins, are particularly interesting because they share the same genes -unlike fraternal, or dizygotic twins, who are no more similar genetically than siblings with the same parents. If identical twins grow up apart, yet remain very similar in personality through their development into adults there must be genetic influences causing these similarities, so the argument goes. In making this audio, I met with several leading researchers in the field and also with some identical twins themselves. At Imperial College London, I met with Nancy Segal. She's been researching personality in twins for many years.

### **Nancy**

I am here in London to attend the International Twin Congress which draws together researchers from all around the world, to discuss their specialities in the medicine, and psychology, behaviour of twins. And studying identical twins raised apart is one of the most effective ways we can use twins to understand the origins of personality. And it is striking. I've studied reared apart twins for ten years and we find that despite the differences in the homes the twins are quite similar in many personality traits - from extraversion, to dominance, to aggressivity. And this does strongly under lie the fact that personality, is to a substantial degree, although not entirely, influenced by our genetic factors. And I think that for parents raising twins or for people with siblings. We can better understand why we are like some people, and why we are different from other members of our family. I think that people are fascinated with identical twins, because it challenges so many of our traditional beliefs about the way that the world works. Most of us are taught to believe, and do see evidence of individual differences in behaviour - in physique, in interests - and we come to expect it. And so when we suddenly encounter a set of identical looking, and identical behaving people, it fascinates us. It occupies our interest. It may even be disturbing to some people. Because I think in an evolutionary way, we need to distinguish who are friends are. Who our family members are and so I think it's the novelty of this that really draws our attention. And if you try a little exercise, take a picture of a pair of identical twins and maybe they're not all that good looking individually but then cover one, then take your hand away and there will be two and they will be absolutely irresistible. It works every time.