“The most effective person for a negotiation depends in part on whom they face: Evidence from a twins study”

Abstract: Individuals create their own unique environmental signatures all around them that other people need to face. We bring this notion into research on person × situation interactions in negotiation, which has identified settings in which individual differences have larger vs. smaller effects on settlements. Drawing from classic personality theories which suggest that interaction partners are part of a person’s ‘situation’, we introduce the new theoretical construct of person × person-as-situation interaction effects. The paper argues that bargaining performance is a function of the unique pairing between negotiator and counterpart. Analyses tested to what extent given negotiators reliably reach different outcomes with some counterparts than with others. Because partners cannot interact multiple times without carryover effects, a new methodology used twin siblings as stand-ins for each other. Participants were a community sample of adults who attended a festival for twins in the Midwestern United States. Individuals negotiated against each other while, elsewhere, their co-twins negotiated against each other. In support of the hypothesis, co-twins were similar in their relative performance across their stand-in negotiation counterparts. This new evidence for person × person-as-situation interactions suggests that some emergent dyadic outcomes are at least partly predetermined by the idiosyncratic and yet systematic combination of individuals involved.