

Attachment and exceptional experiences amongst twins reporting “exceptional experiences

ABSTRACT:

The starting point is the theory of attachment concerning the formative influence of early relationships between the child and parents. Despite attachment theory being well-researched in terms of these relationships, by contrast there is almost no research reported on the attachment between pairs of twins.

In addition to a review of the extant literature on attachment, two pilot studies were carried out on physiological connectedness amongst pairs of twins who were selected for their known scores on measures of attachment. The methodology that was developed involved exposing one of the pair of twins to a shock or surprise stimulus while the electrodermal responses in the other twin were recorded thereby enabling us to examine the recording of this for possible synchronous rapport between the pairs of twins.

For the purpose of selecting suitable twins and documenting their range of experiences, a self-report questionnaire the Exceptional Experiences Questionnaire was given to potential participants. This documented the range and frequency of synchronous and telepathic-like experiences. Twins were selected on the basis of having reported several exceptional experiences together and on their availability and interest in being tested.

Further assessment of the degree of attachment between pairs of twins was provided by the Experiences in Close Relationships (Revised), a well-established test giving scores on two subscales “avoidance” and “anxiety”.

Two studies were carried out in London with 4 pairs of twins and then with a further 7 pairs of twins who met the selection criteria. The test procedure exposed one member of the pair of twins to a surprise stimulus at randomly chosen time interval (e.g. one twin at the selected time placed her hand in a bucket of ice) while the other twin was monitored for the electrodermal response. Each twin completed five trials, with each trial involving a surprise stimulus given during one of eight possible exposure time windows. An experimenter who was blind to the selections of windows then attempted to identify the exposure windows by viewing the electrodermal recordings

The first study gave 19 trials with 4 hits (correct identification of time period when the other twin was exposed to the stimulus). This result was above chance, but not significantly so ($p = .21$ in a binomial test, $MCE = 2.38$). Since all the twins reported a high degree of attachment, no conclusions could be drawn about a relationship between success in telepathy and degree of attachment.

In the second study, the results produced 12 hits out of 53 trials, which reached statistical significance ($p = .043$, $MCE=6.63$). Since both studies followed the same standardised design, it can be considered justified to collate the data from both these studies. The result here with 16 hits out of 72. $MCE=9$ reaches then significance. More confirmatory experiments are needed.

Keywords

Twins, Telepathy, Synchronous reactions, Connectedness, Attachment

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