The Attachment Theory and Emotional Development: A Twin Study

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Attachment theory describes behaviors in affectionate relationships, such as parent-infant bonds. This project expanded attachment theory's application to sibling relationships through 2 inquiries: "Does sibling status impact attachment within sibling and caregiver relations?" and "Does sibling status impact emotional development within sibling and caregiver relations?" Prior research and personal assumption suggested twins have a stronger attachment/ emotional bond than singletons. Because adolescence is an important developmental stage, twins (n=26) and singletons (n=26) ages 12 to 18 were recruited using convenience sampling. Using a frequency-based Likert scale, participants completed an anonymous 48-question survey developed by the researcher to measure attachment and emotional development with their sibling and caregiver from their perspective. Two-tailed t-tests were used to measure raw scores for the attachment construct and means and standard deviations were calculated for each group. Overall, concerning attachment (12 items), singletons and twins were found to attach to their sibling to a similar extent ($p>.05$). However, singletons were found to have a higher attachment to their caregiver than twins ($p<.05$). A chi-square test was used to measure emotional development items and degrees of freedom were calculated for each group. Concerning emotional development (8 items), no difference in frequency of dominance, social dependence, or conflict was found for twins and singletons ($p>.05$). These results suggest that society's differing treatment of twins and singletons, at least within the adolescent stage, is inconsistent with the dynamics of these interpersonal connections, supporting the recent biopsychosocial shift in parenting multiples as individuals.

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