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The Role of Twin's Situation in Adult Romantic
Relationships.

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Abstract

Intimacy is a main factor in different relationships throughout life, especially in romantic relationships during adulthood (Montgomery, 2005). Intimacy is the ability to take part in a supportive relationship without losing one's essence (Kroger, 2004). According to previous research, identity and differentiation are integrated terms (Willis, 2013) that are connected to the development of one's intimate ability. Identity, as Erikson suggested, is the basis for intimacy development during adulthood since identity is the way one perceives oneself in the world. In addition, differentiation relates to the extent in which one perceives oneself as an individual separated from his surroundings (Bowen, 1978); thus, differentiation is important to the development of intimacy. Several studies have further suggested that individuals' lack of ability to maintain intimate relationships may be related to their low level of differentiation of self (Thorberg & Lyvers, 2006).

Siblingship effects the development of an individual throughout his life (Wong et al., 2010). This is the longest relationship one experiences in his life, created at birth, was not acquired and cannot be annulled. Unlike the development of singletons, who do not have a twin sibling and grow as separate entities, twins are almost always in a status of "twoness". The research distinguishes between two groups of twins: identical twins – Monozygotic (MZ) and non-identical twins – Dizygotic (DZ). Non-identical twins are divided into same-sex twins, and opposite-sex twins (Tancredy & Fraley, 2006). Over the years, many researchers were interested in twins and some started research the twinship experience (Neyer, 2002; Tancredy & Fraley, 2006). They found that the unique development of twins can lead to challenges in the formation of one's identity and the development of one's differentiation (Klein, 2017).

When discussing the intimacy of twins, literature provides complicated and contradicting information. Some researches see twinship as a point of strength (Foy, Vernon, & Jang, 2008; Sandbank, 1999) since it provides a basic and primary experience of an ultimate relationship and thus can give twins a better understanding of other people. This understanding could positively affect future relationships. By contrast, others present twinship as a point of weakness (Shirley, 2016; זורר, 1986; פלטיין-כהן, 2008) under the assumption that twins experience a close and unique relationship that may cause difficulty when leaving the twin's surrounding and moving on to a romantic relationship in adulthood. Nevertheless, no empirical study has yet to test the intimacy relationships of twins in adulthood. Therefore, the aim of this study is to provide updated and substantiated information on the uniqueness of twin relations in comparison to individual siblings, in regard to intimacy.

This study aims to research the relationship between sibling intimacy to romantic intimacy during adulthood while trying to find out whether development of differentiation and identity formation serve a significant function in this process.

The research hypotheses regarding the entire sample are:

1. Ascertaining the existence of a positive correlation between sibling intimacy and romantic intimacy.
2. With regard to the correlation between sibling intimacy and romantic intimacy, identifying differentiation development as a controlling factor, and identity formation as a moderating factor, among all participants.

The research hypotheses regarding the comparison between twins and single siblings are:

1. The positive correlation between sibling intimacy and romantic intimacy will be stronger among twins.

2. The controlling process of developing differentiation and the moderating process of identity formation among twins will have a greater effect in comparison to single siblings. Moreover, the hypothesis is that the strongest correlation will be found among identical twins, then non-identical twins and lastly, single siblings.

This research examined 232 participants – 57 men and 177 women, at the ages of 20-40, average age of 29.8 (SD=4.3). The sample included participants that are in a relationship and have at least one sibling. 133 of the participants are single siblings and 98 are twins. Of the twins, 22 are identical twins, and among the non-identical twins, 28 are opposite-sex twins, and 47 same-sex twins. All the participants are in a romantic relationship, average length of 6.5 years (SD=4.6). The participants were enlisted through social networks in a snowball sampling method.

In this research the participants had to answer a Personal Assessment Intimacy in Relationship questionnaire regarding their partner (PAIR; Olson & Schaefer, 1981), a Differentiation of Self Questionnaire (DSI; Skowron & Friedlander, 1998), and a demographic questionnaire. Then, the twins were asked to answer the PAIR questionnaire regarding their twin, and single siblings regarding a sibling (Olson & Schaefer, 1981). Finally, all participants were asked to answer the Development of Identity Formation Scale (DIDS; Luyckx et al., 2008).

Linear correlation was calculated for all research variables in order to test the research hypotheses. In accordance with the first hypothesis, a positive correlation was found between sibling intimacy and romantic intimacy. Meaning, the higher the level of intimacy with a sibling is, the higher intimacy level with a partner becomes. In addition, differentiation was found positively correlated to romantic intimacy but was

not a controlling factor to the correlation between sibling intimacy and romantic intimacy.

Regarding the correlation between sibling intimacy and romantic intimacy, no difference was found between twins and single siblings. This implies that twins, once matured, are not different than single siblings when regarding romantic intimacy.

When relating to types of siblings, a difference was found only regarding intimacy with a sibling. In detail, identical twins have the highest intimacy levels regarding their siblings, then same-sex twins, afterward opposite-sex twins with a significant difference in comparison to identical twin, and lastly, single siblings. Given the above we see that the gender of the sibling has a strong effect on the different intimacy levels. Meaning, there is a difference in intimacy levels with siblings among different kinds of siblings, but this variance does not exist in romantic intimacy. This shows that twins are not a separate group in comparison to general population, and their romantic intimacy develops in a similar way to single siblings.

Despite not being hypothesized, correlations were found between the differentiation variance and identity statuses. In order to better understand the identity variance, common patterns of participants in identity marks were identified. Three identity types were identified, which correspond to what is known from previous research (Luyckx et al., 2005): Carefree Diffusion, Moratorium, and Identity Reclosure (Valde, 1996). This led to an interesting finding that the lengths of relationships and differentiation levels were distinguishing factors between the three identity types. Moreover, the gender of the sibling (same-sex or opposite-sex) found to be controlling the differentiation variance according to identity types. It is important to emphasize that this controlling effect did not come up in the comparison between twins and single siblings.

Several important conclusions arise based on these findings. First, intimacy with a sibling and high level of differentiation are significant factors in romantic intimacy. Regarding intimacy with a sibling, this study adds to known research findings regarding relationships with siblings, and sheds light on the contribution a relationship with a sibling has on mature relationships: a close relationship with a sibling in adulthood predicts a close relationship with a spouse in adulthood.

Second, surprisingly, the conclusion drawn from our research is that mature twins who are in a relationship are not different than single siblings in their ability to develop intimacy and differentiation. Twinship has unique developmental, mental and behavioral aspects throughout life; however, apparently twins develop their romantic intimacy ability and differentiation in adulthood in a similar manner to the general population. In addition, the finding of the research points to the importance the gender of the sibling has regarding intimacy with a sibling and differentiation.

Nonetheless, there are several limitations to the present study. In this study, intimacy with a sibling was measured only in adulthood. Thus, this does not provide understanding regarding the level of intimacy with siblings during childhood. This requires longitudinal studies to understand the correlation between intimacy with a sibling and romantic intimacy. In addition, the number of participants in our sample, when divided into subgroups of different kinds of twins, is relatively small and it is possible that a bigger sample of twins will enable clarification of the differences between twins' types. Moreover, there are populations that were not included in this study: adults that grew up without siblings as well as adults that are not in a relationship. These populations can add information to our research.

Despite those limitations, this is the first research to compare twins and single siblings regarding adulthood romantic intimacy and we learn from it that twins may

develop romantic intimacy in a similar manner to single siblings. Furthermore, this study can serve as a base to the relationship between sibling relationships and the romantic relationship at adulthood. Research findings have also applied implications. First, the understanding of the importance of siblings' relationships may help teachers and educators in identifying and providing counselling and support to students. Second, this study can increase awareness of professionals to the importance of developing differentiation among same-sex siblings, similarly to twins.