

IDENTICAL TWINS AND TELEPATHY

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ABSTRACT

The idea of a special bond between identical twins that enables them to share sensations at a distance has been widespread for at least 150 years. Despite abundant anecdotal evidence for such a bond, parapsychologists have failed to investigate it adequately, while psychologists have generally ignored it altogether. An outline of research to date is given, and reasons for the somewhat inconsistent results are discussed.

The day my brother was killed, I had gone out early on horseback and was on my way to visit our shepherds on the way to Carboni. Then, just as I was putting my watch in my waistcoat pocket after looking at the time, I received such a violent blow on my side that I fainted. When I reopened my eyes, I was lying on the ground in the arms of Orlandini, who was throwing water in my face . . .

"Hey," said Orlandini. "What's happened to you?"

"My God," I replied, "I have no idea, but didn't you hear a shot?"

"No."

"It feels as if I had just been shot—here."

And I showed him where I felt the pain.

"For one thing," he went on, "there wasn't any kind of shot, and what's more there's no hole in your jacket."

"In that case," I replied, "it's my brother who has just been killed."

And indeed he had, as described in Alexandre Dumas' novel *The Corsican Brothers* (1844), possibly the earliest reference in modern times to the idea that twins can communicate across space. Either this was a popular belief at the time of writing, or Dumas was demonstrating precognition when, earlier in the book, he describes the rapport between his twin heroes:—

We had to be cut apart with a scalpel, which means that however far apart we are now we still have one and the same body, so that whatever impression, physical or mental, one of us perceives has its after-effect on the other. Well, these last few days I have been feeling sad, morose and sombre for no reason and experiencing terrible pangs. It's clear that my brother is feeling profoundly sorrowful.

It was not until 1883, however, that serious attention seems to have been given to the subject of twin telepathy. Galton (1883, pp.226–231) estimated that about one third of twin pairs experienced telepathy in some form, and published five pages of anecdotal evidence. Gurney et al. (1886) reported several cases in considerable detail, one of them concerning a man whom Gurney knew personally. One of the most suggestive was that of a man in a Toronto theatre who clearly saw his twin brother staring up at him from the pit, with an agonised expression on his face. The brother was in fact dying at that very moment—in China.

One might have thought that evidence of this kind would have encouraged other researchers to look into the subject, but it was not until more than fifty years later that a paper appeared in a parapsychological journal, misleadingly

entitled "An experimental investigation of the telepathy phenomenon in twins". Only six pairs of twins were used as subjects, of which only one pair was identical. One of these was unwell during the experiment, results were at chance level, and the whole exercise was a complete waste of time. It also seems to have discouraged further research, as is so often the case with negative evidence, however poorly gathered. (Kubis & Rouke, 1937).

Further research was however urged by a leading American authority on twins, Professor Horatio Newman, professor of zoology at the University of Chicago. He made his views very clear (1942, pp.20–21):—

One cannot associate closely with one-egg twins without soon discovering that many of them regard themselves as endowed with something like telepathic powers. Many pairs of these twins have told me stories of strange experiences and stick to them in spite of my attempts to explain them away or to discredit them.

One pair of twins with whom he associated especially closely were two of his own graduate students (*ibid.*, p.24):—

... both of these hard-boiled, critical biologists strongly favour the view that there is some subtle affinity between one-egg twins that makes it possible for one to know what the other is thinking about. They themselves have almost daily experiences that support the view that they are in communication without employing the ordinary media of exchange in common use.

Newman cites two cases in which twins gave identical answers to examination questions, mistakes and all. In one case, the twins had found it difficult to read all the set books, so they had decided to read half each. One of them assured Newman that her exam had contained questions on a book she had neither read nor discussed with her sister. "When she began to think about the matter, however, the answer came to her and she wrote it out without difficulty." Their exam papers were so similar that they were accused of cheating, although they pointed out that they had sat as far apart as possible on purpose, having been similarly accused previously.

In the second case, another pair of twins also produced identical exam papers despite being deliberately placed on opposite sides of the room. They were then made to take their next exam in separate rooms. There was a delay in one of the rooms, and the other twin firmly refused to start "until his brother was ready". Once again, they wrote identical papers, and the headmaster had to agree they had not cheated. "It must be because you are twins," he conceded. (*ibid.*, pp.21–23)

Newman concluded that it was "fairly certain" that psychic bonds between twins did exist, and urged Rhine and his colleagues at Duke University to examine them. They seemed reluctant to do this, although Stuart (1946) did include two pairs of twins in an experiment designed to test for differences in ESP ability between closely related and unrelated pairs. The former gave "significantly positive results" and the latter "significantly negative" ones. Rogers (1960) tested six pairs of twins, one of which "obtained a deviation of +142 in 80 runs (CR = 8)." Overall results were not significant.

It was not until 1961 that the first study of its kind of any value to modern researchers was carried out, by a team of three Toronto-based psychologists, who described a method of selecting suitable twin pairs for telepathy experiments. They studied a total of 35 twins (14 identical pairs and seven single

members of identical pairs) and found that, just as Galton had predicted eighty years previously, about one third of them claimed to have experienced telepathy. Statements included the following:—

“We both think the same things at the same time, and I can tell what her feelings are.”

“Once when my sister cut her hand, I could feel the pain in my hand . . . or if she burns herself.”

“This afternoon, when I was going to ask her for some money, she asked me if I wanted some. She seemed to know.”

“Yes, I frequently know when there’s something wrong. Not specifically, though. I feel on edge and unhappy for no reason.”

“I can imagine what he is doing and see the place, like right now, even if I’ve never been there or heard the place described.”

An opportunity to carry out a spontaneous remote viewing experiment was evidently missed. Indeed, for reasons not stated the Toronto team never got around to doing any experimental work at all, though they did some invaluable preliminary work in listing what they considered to be the necessary qualifications for a successful pair of twins.

They had to be absolutely identical, that is—brought up together, often with similar-sounding first names, wearing the same clothes and seldom separated, e.g. by being sent to different schools. They had to be extrovert types, and they also had to be sheep in Schmeidler’s classification, that is to say that they did not deny the possibility of telepathy occurring, rather than goats, who did. Ideally, they had already actually experienced telepathy or at least thought they had.

“Our inquiry suggests,” they concluded, “that twins are a class of people who are predisposed to having ESP and with whom little work, and none of that systematic, has been attempted.” (Sommer et al., 1961).

One twin who has confirmed his predisposition to having ESP with his brother happens to be a former president of the Parapsychological Association, Rex G. Stanford. In an interview (Bolen, 1974) he stated:—

Ray and I were interested in the same girl in another city in Texas, and one day I took a plane trip to visit her. When I got back Ray called me and told me I had been visiting *his* girlfriend. It was a good example of the sort of feelings we exchange with each other at times . . . most of the exchanges that have gone on—the more detailed ones—have been from Ray picking up on me rather than the other way round. But I have apparently picked up on him a number of times, too.

Despite such uncompromisingly positive testimony from an authoritative source, and plenty more like it from earlier and subsequent sources, systematic work remains largely unattempted. It was still possible to state in 1978 that “there is no evidence that twins have any special aptitude for ‘telepathic’ exchange” (Palmer, 1978, pp.148–9). This, as we shall see, may have been because researchers had been looking for such an aptitude in the wrong places.

LABORATORY RESEARCH

In 1965 one of the world’s leading scientific journals published a short paper by two ophthalmologists from Jefferson Medical College, Philadelphia, which must have raised a few eyebrows with its uncompromising conclusion:—

Thus extrasensory induction of brain waves exists between individuals when they are completely separated.

The researchers wanted to see if they could find evidence to support the widely held belief that illness in one twin often led to a similar illness in the other. They did this in the simplest way imaginable, by artificially altering the brainwave pattern of one twin subject, and recording a similar alteration in the pattern of the other, who was in another room. Senders were asked to sit quietly and keep their eyes open until asked to close them, thereby generating alpha rhythm. Receivers were given similar instructions. A total of 15 pairs of twins were tested.

Extrasensory induction, defined as "the appearance without conventional elicitation of an alpha rhythm in one twin while it is being evoked under standard conditions in the other", was observed in only two of the pairs, and was not observed in any of the control tests run with pairs made up by a twin and a non-twin. The successful pairs were "intelligent, educated, serene Caucasian males 23 and 27 years of age" and their positive results were repeated "on several occasions" (Duane & Behrendt, 1965).

This may have been the first-ever demonstration of anomalous communication at a distance (albeit not strictly telepathy as usually understood) carried out in controlled laboratory conditions. At least four attempts at replication have been reported, including one allegedly carried out in Bulgaria of which no details have been made public (Ostrander & Schroeder, 1971, p.291).

In the first of these, Dr Aristide H. Esser and two colleagues from the Rockland State Hospital stated that:—

In a physically isolated subject, we have observed physiological reactions at the precise moment at which another person, the agent, was actively stimulated.

Of their twelve subjects, four were identical twins and eight fraternal ones. Stimuli were entirely verbal, consisting of emotive phrases or names, and measurement of the receiver's reaction was done by means of a plethysmograph, an apparatus which measures blood volume (in this case in a finger). The whole of one of the identical twins' run is illustrated to demonstrate "how obvious the plethysmographic reactions are".

This experiment was designed not so much to look for psi in twins, but to look for it in a group entirely consisting of people who were either closely related or close friends (Esser et al., 1967).

The second replication attempt was less successful, possibly because as the authors admit:—

In retrospect, the experimenter is convinced that the experimental situation itself would be unfavourable to extrasensory communication, just as in fact it would be unfavourable to creativity.

Such unfavourable conditions included apprehension among the subjects, who were not well known to the experimenter, the "decidedly 'laboratory'" setting, and the rigour of the time schedule. Even so, the polygraph record (for skin resistance, respiration and heart rate) revealed three coincidences out of a total of eight "arousal points" while the subject was watching a film which had "pronounced arousal value". The researchers concluded that "the observation does deserve further exploration", though it does not appear to have received any until 1984. (Barron & Mordkoff, 1968).

In that year, Columbia University PhD candidate Evelyn Bohm produced a study which deserves far more attention than it has been given (apparently none at all until here). Like Esser and his colleagues, she was primarily looking for evidence for psi in the subjects who were most likely to demonstrate it, and finding it notably with psychics, identical twins and close pairs (e.g. family members or room-mates). She too used instrumented recording (of galvanic skin response) to demonstrate "shared feeling states", and there are indications that, unlike the authors of the report mentioned above, she exercised a very strong positive experimenter effect. Part of her success may be due to the fact that her experimental sessions were up to 150 minutes in length compared with only about 20 minutes in each of the two experiments mentioned above. (Duration of the Duane and Behrendt experimental periods is not given). (Bohm, 1984).

Charlesworth (1974) also took trouble to create a psi-conducive setting not unlike that of the Ganzfeld, in which both sender and receiver were put in a dreamlike state through relaxation, deep breathing and guided visual imagery exercises. Senders were asked to insert an image unknown to the receivers into the latter's dream imagery. His first experiment, using non-twins, was highly successful, the experimental group showing "significant psi-hitting". However, in a second experiment using twenty identical and twenty fraternal twins, he found that the latter scored significantly higher than the former. This may have been because "the fraternal twins were significantly more extraverted than the identical twins (Mann-Whitney U test, $p < 0.01$)". It may be, therefore, that extroversion is more psi-conducive than merely being an identical twin, at least for experiments involving image transfer.

In 1989, however, a French medical researcher published the results of a somewhat unusual series of experiments which suggested that identical twins can produce remarkable results under the appropriate conditions. His subjects were a single pair of identical twins (male, aged 20) who seem to have been co-operative and enthusiastic. A set of Zener cards was used in which each symbol was a different colour (red cross, yellow circle, black square, green star and blue waves).

Tests were held under three different experimental conditions: for the first series of four runs the twins were able to see each other over a low curtain. This clearly gave them excellent opportunities for cheating by signalling (it may be that the researcher designed conditions favourable to cheating to see if his subjects would cheat). However, if they were signalling, they were not very good at it, for results were close to chance (20%) with scores of 24, 16, 20 and 28% (mean 22%).

For the second series, the subjects were placed so as to exclude any form of sensory contact (exact details not given) and the receiver was provided with a set of symbols to look at. This, he said, helped him recognize which card "came to mind". It certainly seems to have, since scores shot up to 64, 92, 72, 88, 80 and 88% (mean 80.66%). The results of the second run (23 correct guesses out of 25) were obtained on a day when the subjects had stopped at a local bar and arrived "*dans un état euphorique d'ébriété sommaire*" that is, somewhat drunk.

For the third series, conditions were as above except that the receiver had

no set of symbols to look at. A single run was held; with 19/25 correct guesses. One of the twins (but not the other, the researcher noted) then developed a severe skin rash which led to the suspension of the tests, and before they could be resumed the twins were called up for military service.

An unconventional method of selecting target cards was used. The sender was asked to shuffle the pack, pick out one card, look at it and then replace it in the pack, shuffle again, pick another card and so on until 25 cards had been viewed. While there may be those who feel that such an irregularity invalidates the entire experiment, it can also be argued that it made the results even more remarkable than they appear to be, since the receiver had no idea how many of each symbol there would be in a run. (In the event, there was a gap of nearly nine percent between the stars (16.8%) and the waves (25.2%) selected, and it was also the waves that were most frequently wrongly perceived).

Extraordinary claims call for extraordinarily good evidence, and this experiment should be repeated under conventional protocols before being accepted. This may not be possible, since it could be that a strong experimenter effect was at work here—the author seems to have done his best to create psi-favourable conditions. And future researchers might like to see if a few glasses of wine help raise ESP scores. (Robichon, 1989).

To conclude this survey of laboratory studies, mention should be made of a filmed experiment by Czech researcher Zdenek Rejdák, of which this author has seen a brief extract. It shows tests for community of sensation being carried out with identical twins under hypnosis, the sender tasting various liquids and substances and the receiver, standing with his back to the sender, describing what he tasted. There was no sound track, and this author cannot lip-read Czech. He has been assured that results were entirely successful although he was not given details. (Rejdák, 1984). This may have been for security reasons since the tests were carried out on soldiers in the Czech army (which has a long history of interest in applied psi and was using what is now known as remote viewing in World War I—Rejdák, 1974)

THOUGHT CONCORDANCE

We are constantly hearing accounts of the many similarities between twins reunited after living separate lives, sometimes since birth. When they meet, they are wearing similar clothes, each has a fox terrier called Joker, both share a favourite author, and so on. Such similarities do not necessarily involve telepathy. It is reasonable to assume that two people who are genetically identical (and have usually been raised together) will respond in similar ways to any given stimulus and develop the same likes and dislikes. This is known in the psychological jargon as thought concordance.

Blackmore and Chamberlain (1993) tested twins under two conditions: 'free response' and 'ESP'. In the former, senders were asked to choose a picture and a number, and to draw whatever they liked, receivers being asked to write or draw what came to mind or to identify the picture from a set of four. In the 'ESP' condition, the experimenter told the sender what to send. Results showed apparently clear evidence for concordance and none for ESP. However, as the authors themselves point out, "this experiment suffers from several shortcomings, including the small numbers of subjects and use of only one

experimenter . . ." Indeed, only three pairs of identical twins were used, and they were apparently not selected according to the guidelines given by Sommer and colleagues (see above). The fact that the tests were done in a school classroom may also have been a psi-inhibiting factor.

France and Hogan (1973) also reported evidence for thought concordance in identical twins, using a single experimenter as sender and each of nine identical twin pairs as receivers, with control groups of non-identical twins and siblings. They did not test for inter-twin telepathy, thus finding no evidence for ESP for the simple reason that they did not look for it. Similar results were reported by Nash and Buzby (1965).

Thought concordance may well play a part in responses to an identical stimulus presented to two twins, e.g. "Think of a number" or "Choose one of these pictures". It can also, perhaps, explain why one of the twins questioned by Newman (see above) told him that "we both think the same things at the same time". However, it is hard to see what it has to do with cases such as that of the twin who felt pain when her sister cut her hand (assuming they were out of sight of each other at the time).

Future researchers should bear the possibility of thought concordance in mind, and they should have no difficulty in designing experiments, such as the Spanish one described below, in which it can ruled out as an explanation for observed results.

CRISIS TELEPATHY

I have become more and more inclined to the belief that it is the highly emotional or exciting thoughts that are most apt to get through, and to make an impression on another mind.
[Wilkins & Sherman, 1951/1971, p. 116]

This is the opinion of the explorer and aviator Sir Hubert Wilkins, whose series of 68 telepathy tests carried out in 1937-38 with Harold Sherman as receiver are probably the most successful on record as well as the best documented and witnessed. If this is true of telepathy in general, as Wilkins and Sherman showed beyond any reasonable doubt, we can expect it to be particularly true of inter-twin psi.¹ It is certainly the case that many of the most dramatic instances of this have involved highly emotional states, usually associated with death, an accident, an operation or an illness. The experience of Dumas' Corsican twin may have been fiction, but as the following examples (from Sieveking, 1981) indicate, it could well have been based on fact.

One day in 1948, 20-year-old Alice Lambe of Springfield, Illinois, felt a massive blow on the left side of her body and a sharp pain. She fell off her chair, cried out to her father "Something's happening to Diane", and passed out. Something was indeed happening to her sister, 70 miles away at the time. She was in a train crash which left her with two fractured ribs and concussion. Alice's aches and pains continued throughout her sister's period of convalescence.

¹ The two or three Wilkins-Sherman tests using Zener cards were among the least successful of the series, although Sherman did score above chance and showed some interesting displacement effects. Wilkins noted "I was not particularly interested in carrying out experiments with these cards, because it seemed to me that, if there were one especially difficult way to demonstrate the possibility of thought transference, it would be with five marked cards." (ibid., p. 420). However, he told Sherman "You seem to get *all* the very *strong* thoughts and sense the vivid conditions." (p. 406; italics in original).

In another crash coincidence, reported in 1975, a hospital worker not only felt severe pain in her left leg but also came out in bruises all over her left side. At the same time, her sister was involved in a car crash 400 miles away. The most tragic of all such cases was that of a pair of twins whose fate was reported by their non-twin sister Mrs Joyce Crominski. According to her, one twin had woken up one night suffering unbearable chest pains. An ambulance was called, but she died on the way to hospital—as did her twin sister whose chest had been crushed in a road accident. Mrs Crominski reckoned that the crash and the rude awakening had been simultaneous.

There are numerous reports of twins responding at a distance to operations being carried out on their brothers or sisters, and of women feeling labour pains during their sisters' pregnancies. Some such cases may be partly due to suggestion when one twin knew the other was having an operation or a baby, but not all. A particularly intriguing one involved a 13-year-old girl who suddenly went to sleep in the middle of the day at the same time as her sister was being given an anaesthetic for a minor operation.

Even allowing for misreporting, faulty memory and that old favourite, 'coincidence', it is clear that cases such as these point to the direction in which twin telepathy should be studied. As we shall see, it is not difficult to design simple (and harmless) experiments in which the receiving twin is tested for reactions to a stimulus presented to the distant sender.

FIELD RESEARCH

If researchers have been reluctant to invite twins to their laboratories, they have been even less willing to visit them in their homes. A search of the literature in several languages has revealed the total number of published field studies to be one.

In 1976, an eight-member team including five medical doctors from the Spanish Parapsychology Society carried out a series of experiments in the home of two four-year-olds, Silvia and Marta Landa. They were following up a local newspaper report that when Marta had burned her hand on a clothes iron, Silvia had felt a sharp pain and produced a blister identical to Marta's although she was ten miles away at the time. The researchers were told of several similar incidents in the past, one of which was witnessed by a local doctor who was treating Marta for tonsillitis, which Silvia did not have. He was surprised to find both girls to be running a temperature of 102°F. On the day of the team's visit, just before experiments were due to start, Marta banged her head on a door whereupon Silvia burst into tears.

Marta, the sender, stayed with her mother in a ground-floor room while Silvia went up to a second-floor room with her father. Experimenters accompanied each of them. Six different experiments were carried out, results being rated as Highly Positive for one, Positive for four, and Relatively Significant for one. The most successful one involved tapping Marta's knee and making it jerk, while Silvia began to swing the same leg so insistently that her father, who had no idea what was going on downstairs, had to hold it down.

Silvia blinked when a bright light was shone into Marta's eye, and held her nose moving her head "negatively" when Marta was asked to sniff a strong perfume. Both twins reacted in the same way to a ventriloquist's doll and

selected identical coloured discs—some thought concordance may have been at work here. The test rated the least successful involved both being asked to “select” six picture cards numbered 1 to 6. The order of Marta’s choices was 4,3,1,2,5,6 while Silvia’s was 3,4,2,1,5,6. She guessed the first two of three pairs correctly but in reverse order, suggesting some kind of mirror-image effect at work.

Both twins were filmed and tape-recorded throughout the experiments. The resulting film, edited to show their simultaneous actions, would be of considerable value in establishing telepathy as an observable phenomenon. Unfortunately, this author was told in 1998 that it was “not available”.

Although not reported in the kind of detail expected nowadays, the Spanish experiment gave an idea of what researchers might find if they go and look for it. If ever an experiment called for replication, this is it. (Gavilán Fontanet, 1976).

TWINS AND THE MEDIA

It has evidently been left to the popular media to step in where scientists have been reluctant to tread. Twins receive extensive media coverage, much of it devoted to discussion of the relative effects of genetics, environment and upbringing, which are not relevant here. The subject of telepathy is occasionally raised, discussed briefly and swept aside as if it were taboo. A typical example is found in a *Newsweek* cover story which featured the annual twin get-together at the town of Twinsburg, Ohio, and the massive twin study programme at the University of Minnesota which began in 1980.

There, pairs of twins are flown in from all over the world to be asked a total of 15,000 questions by a team of 17 researchers, most of them psychologists, and studied in exhaustive detail from head to toe-nail. They are not, however, tested for or even questioned about psi. According to *Newsweek*, psychologists have heard “dozens” of accounts of “ESP events” from twins over the years, usually involving injuries, births and deaths. Research co-director Nancy Segal is quoted as saying that she does not doubt the reality of such events, “since the stories are too numerous to be total fabrications. But she is reluctant to label them paranormal.” (She seems equally reluctant to investigate them.) She complains that “we never hear of cases where one twin is sure the other is lying dead in the gutter, and he isn’t”. This may, of course, be because there are no such cases. (See the Lewis case below).

The five *Newsweek* reporters were apparently as reluctant as the researchers to look into these widely reported “events”. One of them was told by a man named Donald Keith that he could make his brother phone him just by concentrating, a claim that should have been relatively easy to put to the test. (Begley et al., 1987).

The general attitude of the conventional twin researcher is well summarised in this statement:—

To date, there is no evidence whatsoever to support the idea that any form of parapsychological phenomena are involved in the twin bond. Admittedly, very few studies have been done but the results have all been negative — there is not the slightest scintilla of a suggestion that twins have some way of communicating with each other that brings on coincidences. Or, at least, if there is, the twins themselves know nothing about it.

The author of the popular book from which this extract is taken mentions only two of these studies (without giving their references), neither of which seems to have been designed to look for the type of telepathy most often reported by twins. (Watson, 1984, p.200).

Twins are often featured in television programmes, usually as one might expect in a superficial manner. The question of psi is rarely mentioned—indeed, one recent programme went out of its way to announce, in the *Radio Times* (3 February 1997):—

Identical twins have always fascinated: can they communicate telepathically, do they feel each other's pain? . . . The answers to these questions are not answered [sic] in Rebecca Frayn's documentary, and in fact one of the six sets of twins featured dismiss [sic] them as ridiculous.

Also not answered was the question of whether the pair in question were really identical, since one was a lesbian and the other was not. The dismissal of psi came in these words: "Oh, get real. The possibilities of that are remote, even with all the big scientific stuff. If it was that possible a phenomenon it would have been picked up by now, so why ask this daft question?" Absence of proof, at least on Channel 4, equals proof of absence. Fortunately, the other channels have taken a less blinkered approach.

A few days later, an articulate young man named Marcus Lewis described, on the BBC2 programme hosted by Esther Rantzen (12 February 1997), how he had telephoned his mother in the middle of the night to ask her if his brother Alex was all right. She sleepily assured him that he was, as far as she knew, but about twenty minutes later she received another call—from the hospital to which Alex had been taken after a motorcycle accident. (He may well have been "lying in the gutter" at the exact time of Marcus's call). Both twins gave a more detailed account of this incident in the BBC2 programme *Mysteries with Carol Vorderman* (2 December 1997). More evidence for community of sensation was provided by twins on the ITV Carlton programmes *Strange But True?* (12 September 1997) and *Twins—the Divided Self* (3 December 1997), and on Channel 5's *Oprah Winfrey Show* (16 June 1998). Clearly, there is plenty of it around.

Only two attempts appear to have been made to demonstrate twin telepathy actually taking place. In 1968, a mass experiment involving 85 twin pairs was carried out on the *David Frost Programme* (ITV, 17 January). There were two tests: in one the pairs were separated and the two groups divided by a curtain, one being asked to guess which card the other was viewing. Only two were correct, chance expectation being calculated at 1.6. In the other test, using somewhat modified Zener cards, 16 viewers chose the correct symbol, chance expectation being 13.2. This experiment was of limited value as offering evidence for what twins cannot do any better than anybody else, under conditions in which any kind of psi manifestation is very unlikely to occur. (Medhurst, 1968)

A programme in the second series of *The Paranormal World of Paul McKenna* (ITV Carlton, 24 June 1997) provided highly suggestive evidence for what they can do. Since this author was partly responsible for the experiment, readers might be interested to know how it came about.

I was hired by the series producer Mike Johnstone as consultant in the

earlier stages of planning. This involved attending a number of meetings with the producer, researchers and presenter, making a number of suggestions and discussing which would be most suitable. My most insistent suggestion was for an experiment with twins, which I believed would be the first of its kind ever shown, and I summarized the work of the Toronto group mentioned above, urging the production team to select their pair with the group's recommendations in mind.

Fortunately they did so, and one of the researchers engaged four pairs of twins from an agency and carried out a trial selection run in a London hotel. The basic set-up was that the sender was not told what was going to happen, but was just asked to sit and relax. The receiver, in a distant room, was accompanied by a researcher and connected to a multi-channel polygraph under the supervision of one of Britain's leading experts in lie detection, Jeremy Barrett.

The sender was then given a shock from a concealed device known as a rape alarm, which emits an extremely loud noise. Receivers were monitored for unusual response at the exact time of shock, and signs of this were found in three of the four pairs. The teenage girls Elaine and Evelyn Dove were the clear winners and were chosen to take part in the programme to be filmed with a studio audience later on. For the studio experiment, it was decided to create a visible source of shock, so a large pyramid was placed in front of the sender, who was seated facing the audience. The receiver was taken to a distant room accompanied by a cameraman and Jeremy Barrett, who again fitted and supervised his polygraph equipment.

Using his skills as a hypnotist, Paul McKenna then put the sender into a relaxed state, and after the receiver's polygraph had been showing a stable signal for some minutes, the pyramid then exploded loudly, emitting clouds of coloured smoke and frightening the sender out of her wits. At this exact moment the receiver's polygraph showed a sharp peak. "She certainly picked up something from somewhere," Mr Barrett commented. "Looks like a surprise."

While this experiment may or may not have demonstrated community of sensation for the first time in public, it must at the very least be regarded as a very simple experiment that deserves to be replicated.

CONCLUSIONS

In view of the abundance and consistency of anecdotal evidence for anomalous communication between identical twins, these would seem to be ideal subjects for the psi researcher. However, it seems from the limited number of experiments reported here that they have not done very well, with notable exceptions. This could be for three reasons:—

- 1 Twins, identical or not, are no more telepathy-prone than anybody else. Indeed, they may even be less so, as suggested by Charlesworth (1974), who speculated that because of their "immense need to individualise" they may "shut off psychic encroachment from each other". This remains a speculation.

- 2 Some identical twins, perhaps one pair in three or four, are highly psi-prone. Yet when tested in groups including non-identicals their positive results get lost in a morass of overall non-significance.

- 3 Researchers have been doing the wrong kind of experiments. They have

shown an inexcusable reluctance to find out what kind of psi effects twins actually report and to design experiments to reproduce those effects. The failure of the Minnesota team to take any interest in twin-psi is particularly disgraceful in view of the vast resources and abundance of subjects at its disposal, and its admission that the anecdotal evidence—some of which should be easily verifiable—is considerable.

Subjects for future experiments should be selected along the guidelines given by Sommer et al. (1961). Suitable kinds of experiments include those using ganzfeld and remote-viewing protocols, and those looking for what might more properly be called telekinesis, whereby the sender appears to do more than transmit an image and actually influences the physiology of the receiver (Duane & Behrendt, 1965, Gavilán Fontanet, 1979). This is the most commonly reported psi effect between identical twins, and it is rarely reported by anybody else other than close relations.

There is evidence, as mentioned above, that experimenter effects both positive and negative have influenced the results of experiments with twins. Indeed, they may well have influenced all psi experiments. As Sheldrake (1994, p. 191) has put it:—

Many scientists carry out experiments with strong expectations about the outcome, and with deep-rooted assumptions about what is and what is not possible. Can their expectations influence their results? The answer is yes.

Evidence in support of this uncompromising statement has recently been provided by two researchers with widely differing expectations who carried out identical experiments with the same subjects and obtained significantly different results (Wiseman & Schlitz, 1997). It is hoped that others will follow their example.

In the case of twin research, the general assumption seems to have been that evidence for telepathy is 'merely' anecdotal and that laboratory studies have failed to show any positive results. Experiments have been carried out, as described above, that lend support to this assumption. However, it could also be assumed that a positively motivated experimenter can obtain positive results, as seems to have been the case with Bohm (1984), Gavilán Fontanet (1975) and Robichon (1989). In future negative results should not be accepted as final unless they have been replicated by a 'sheep' experimenter.

Twin telepathy has been part of the folklore for at least 150 years, yet it has never been adequately investigated. It is high time that it was.

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I will be very grateful for any information on twin research not mentioned here, and even more so to anyone willing to sponsor, supervise or participate in experiments designed to settle the question of twin telepathy one way or the other.

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