

ABSTRACT:

The purpose of this study is to explore in a rich and textured way the experience of being a twin, from a Gestalt perspective. In this study the author reviews previous research on twins, exploring in particular the literature that has concentrated on the experience of being a twin. She finds that research has been written by twins, those closely involved with twins and psychoanalysts and therapists of other disciplines who have worked with twins. The author uses the phenomenological method to interview five female twins, all from a counselling, psychotherapeutic or psychology background. A variety of experiences are found to contribute to the essence of what it means to be a twin. The connection between these different experiences is found to involve the experience of being in relationship with another, at the same stage of development, over time. How this relationship is experienced and the impact of this unique relationship is explored within six themes. Within each theme the participants are found to have different experiences. The main conclusion reached is that individual experiencing of the twin relationship is important and this is crucial for therapists to bear in mind if twins' experiences are not to be generalised. Implications for Gestalt therapy theory are drawn and links with previous research are made. What becomes apparent from this research is that while the psychoanalytic literature is informative and useful, twins seem to be described therein as being prone to face pathological issues concerning identity and individuation due to their being a twin. In this research, the author is concerned to achieve a balance between arguing that being a twin leads to a unique set of experiences that therapists will do well to bear in mind when working with twins. However, this should not invite therapists to work prescriptively with twins or to assume to know that all twins will struggle with the same issues.