

ABSTRACT

Adolescence is a time of physical and psychological change. Conceptualization of the adolescent girl's development, of her degree of disembedding and of the different selves she might embody in different contexts can help guide the focus of the therapeutic work. Through maturation the adolescent girl finds a balance between belonging and separating. This often leads her to starting a romantic relationship. Understanding how this romantic relationship is experienced by the adolescent girl helps therapists working with this client group and is the focus of this phenomenological study. Semi-structured interviews were carried out on eight Maltese adolescent girls and to help explore this phenomenon, a poem was also written by each participant. The literature review took into account different theories of love and adolescent psychology. There is a big gap in Gestalt literature regarding adolescence and even more so when it comes to romantic love and Gestalt theory. This study begins to address this gap by a series of findings that throw light on how romantic love is experienced by the adolescent girl. Three distinct areas of inter-related themes were identified, mainly the physical and emotional sensations involved, the social outcomes of the experience and some general ideas and expectations of adolescent girls experiencing romantic love. Recommendations for future research and implications for Gestalt therapy were also identified.