

## **Abstract**

A phenomenological enquiry, by means of semi-structured interviews, was adopted to explore the experience of client's self perception of being overweight and how that experience and perception might affect the therapeutic relationship. The notion of shame, specifically body shame, was discussed in addition to the concept of relating in Gestalt theory and practice. The suitability and appropriateness of a qualitative research methodology was presented.

The experiences in therapy, of the participant's who took part in the research, varied from weight being an overt issue in therapy to having a more covert association with other issues. The felt presence of the therapist, experienced in different ways by the participants, seemed to be an essential element to the development of the therapeutic relationship and the participants feeling of increased self acceptance. However, those participants who did not overtly discuss their experience of being overweight in therapy, felt that it would have been, at some point in the therapy, beneficial to do so. The extent of the therapist's own embodiment in this co-created situation was discussed further.