

## **Abstract.**

This study is a qualitative investigation using co-operation and heuristic search to explore the phenomenology of inclusion, and to further understand and validate the philosophy and theory behind it. Inclusion is defined as it is understood by the Gestalt and Dialogical approaches to psychotherapy.

The study had two purposes. Firstly to gather empirical evidence that would add clarity and support to the theories and philosophy behind the Gestalt therapy practice of inclusion. And secondly to develop and use an approach to research that would respect those that were involved, direct awareness of co-researchers to the phenomena under investigation and be scientifically rigorous.

In the service of both these aims other approaches to psychotherapy and counselling were investigated.

The conclusions to this study are in two sections. Firstly the findings with reference to the therapy relationship. The results do appear to support the theory and philosophy behind the practice of inclusion. In addition it appeared that the focus on affect attunement as the primary phenomena of inclusion was justified.

Secondly, the findings with reference to the research process. All co-researchers reported increased understanding of inclusion both through the activities of the data collection and the process of being involved in the research. In addition they felt that the composite descriptions of their experience accurately reflected their sense of inclusion. These findings validated the choice of research methodology.