

## ABSTRACT

The research was concerned with men's subjective experiences of "being looked after" by men. From a Gestalt, relational perspective of "fathering", men's experiences of being nurtured, cared for and affirmed, were explored. The Gestalt concepts of field theory, contact and the self were outlined to provide a "map" for a later discussion of human growth and development.

The difficulties associated with male/male nurturing relationships were discussed in the context of male socialization. The work of a number of theorists that masculinity is a construction based on what is not "feminine" were reviewed, together with how shame acts powerfully to maintain a status quo in relations between men. The negative consequences on their sons of a father's "absence" were discussed and illustrated by examples of therapeutic work with men. Following structural changes in Western societies in the past 30 years, more recent research has concentrated on the effects of the fathers presence and this was discussed in relation to nurturance and affirmation.

Four men were interviewed as part of the research and using a qualitative, phenomenological method, the interview were transcribed and analysed. A number of themes emerged representing elements of the phenomenon. A structural description of being looked after was then presented and its implications for therapeutic work with men discussed. The dissertation concludes with the author's reflections on the research process, his personal learning and suggestions for future research.