

Understandings of Men's Depression in Published Research,
News Media Portrayals, and Men's Accounts of Their Experiences

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A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

School of Population Health and School of Medicine

The University of Adelaide

February, 2015

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Abstract

Within the next two decades, depression is predicted to become the leading cause of disease burden in developed countries, and the second leading cause of disease burden globally. There is a relatively large body of research on women's experiences of depression, but research on men's depression, and their experiences with depression, has been fragmented. The aim of this dissertation is to contribute to the understanding of depression in men through the triangulation of three diverse sources of data that deal with men's experiences of depression. These data sources are: existing published research studies, media portrayals, and in-depth interviews with men.

Applying a systematic review methodology, the first study explores current knowledge about the factors associated with depressive symptoms in men. These factors include social and demographic factors, occupational factors, health behavioural factors, and psychological or cognitive factors. I discuss the relevance of these findings in relation to diathesis-stress models of depression, and to theories of pathoplasticity which describe an individual's vulnerability to potential stressors.

In the second study, I extend the theory that 'softer' masculinities are becoming increasingly valued in modern society, through an investigation of how depressed men are positioned by particular discourses in news media articles. I explore news media portrayals of men's communication about their depression in relation to theories of stigma and masculinity. The findings of this study highlight the role media can play in reproducing or challenging such stigma.

The third and final study addresses the limited research on men's subjectivities of distress. I add to the body of knowledge about men's discourses of depression by exploring how men draw on medical understandings of depression and how they talk about the broader social contexts of their experiences. The focus of this study is to explore the understandings of depression experienced by a group of Australian men

with high depressive symptoms. This study utilises a thematic analytic framework to provide an overview of men's subjectivities of depression. The findings of this study provide more depth to knowledge of men's understandings of depression.

This dissertation has several theoretical contributions and implications for clinical practice, public health services, and policy makers. The findings provide health practitioners and the public health sector with comprehensive knowledge about the relevant factors associated with men's depression. This dissertation also presents an overview of factors discussed by a group of men with depression. This provides an understanding of how men make sense of their condition. The research findings highlight how discourses of men's depression can work to dispel or reproduce stigma around men's mental health concerns. These findings are particularly relevant to policy makers for their debate and development of the gender equality in mental health outcomes.

Declaration

I certify that this work contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text. In addition, I certify that no part of this work will, in the future, be used in a submission for any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution without the prior approval of the University of Adelaide and where applicable, any partner institution responsible for the joint-award of this degree.

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Brett Scholz

16 October 2014

Acknowledgements

If they don't say that it takes a village to write a dissertation, I very much think that they should. It gives me great pleasure to write out my gratitude to my whole village. Thank you:

First, to Shona Crabb, who has been a fantastic supervisor and friend. Even before this project, I admired Shona's research and criticality, but she exceeded my expectations and I have learned so much from her. It has been a pleasure working with Shona throughout the entire process, and I look forward to more collaborations with her.

To Gary Wittert, whose supervision has taught me very much. Thank you for providing me with many opportunities for academic growth. Ignoring the fact that these acknowledgements lack brevity, I believe that I have become a better writer thanks to your considered guidance.

To each of my offices and officemates throughout the process. I am lucky to have had several 'homes' during my PhD. Each of which has been supportive and interesting. First, the Discipline of Psychiatry at the University of Adelaide provided me with a community environment full of assistance and space to develop. The team - Amaya, Felicity, Katie, Sofia, Sonia, and Tracy: thank you for listening to every difficulty and success and for every laksa and manooshi shared. Second, the Discipline of Public Health at the University of Adelaide has been very helpful to me to have the opportunity to make new contacts, and see how another academic setting works. Third, it would be remiss of me to leave out the Research School of Management at the Australian National University for always being welcoming and generously providing me with workspace every time I needed one.

To Ann Francis and Liz Westwood for making the process easier than it would have been without your friendly support.

To the groups that have enriched my academic experience: the Discourse and Social Psychology unit at The University of Adelaide, and the Discourse Analysis Group at the Australian National University provided the opportunity to surround myself with some like-minded individuals; the International Society for Critical Psychology reminded me of the importance of staying critical in research and life; the Fay Gale Centre for Research on Gender and the Centre for Research on Men and Masculinities provided comfort which comes from knowing that others in your field want to see you succeed.

To the Florey Adelaide Male Ageing Study team for seeing the value that I could bring to their study and allowing me to take advantage of the value they brought to me, and in particular to Sean Martin for his practical assistance with the data collection process.

To Maureen Bell from the Barr Smith Library, whose assistance in preparing searches for my systematic review got the ball rolling on the overall project.

To everyone who helped provide the opportunities I have had at other institutions to either present, visit, learn and engage: including a presentation of the first study of my dissertation to the Department of Psychiatry at The University of Hong Kong thanks to Antoinette Lee, a visit to the Department of Psychology at The University of Otago thanks to Gareth Treharne, presenting a pechakucha about my overall project at the conference of the International Society of Critical Health Psychology in Adelaide in 2011, presenting the second study of my dissertation at the Qualitative Health Research Conference in Montréal in 2012, the Centre for Research on Men and Masculinities conference in Woollongong in 2012, and the European Health Psychology Society conference in Bordeaux in 2013.

To the Spur Projects team and the Soften the Fck Up campaign for reminding me of the obligation we have to take our expertise to the streets to make a difference, and for the pleasure of working towards meaningful goals with passionate and intelligent people.

To the MBBS examination team for the extremely useful opportunities to subject(ify) myself to the experience of simulating mental health conditions for medical student exams. Being able to experience that 'other side of the chair' was a helpful way to connect with subjectivities of mental health concerns.

To friends/colleagues who have collaborated on publications not related to my PhD research: Damien Riggs, Vinh Lu, Pascale Quester, Chris Medlin, Sean Ford, Ines Eguiagaray, Caterina Giorgi, Dominique Szantyr, and Kate Romanowski. Thank you for your intellectual discussions and the reminder that there is important research to be done out there beyond the scope of this dissertation!

To my housemates throughout the last few years: Max, for never failing to lift my spirits with a laugh; Annie, for tea, food, fun; Rosie, for being a charming four-legged friend; James, for being thoughtful and helpful, and Robbie, for support towards the end of my PhD.

To my extended family – Ben and Tham, Ba, Me, Quang, and Huong for many meals and travels throughout this project (and fried shallots that I put on nearly every meal I ate while preparing my dissertation).

It strikes me as impossibly fortunate that I have shared this thesis with those who made its road a less lonely one. Completing a PhD is meaningless if you cannot look back on your experience and smile about the friends who played a part in the way it unfolded:

Alistair, for always making me feel welcome and for patiently listening to my stories regardless of whether I'm sharing something funny or something frustrating.

Corinne, for every dumpling and every bit of fun both in Adelaide and Canberra.

Dom, for being a friend and neighbour always ready for a chai or a run. I consider myself lucky to have been able to visit you several times in the first part of my PhD journey, and extremely lucky to live in the same apartment block for the second.

Em, for being such a good listener during many meals & walks throughout my research.

Esha, for every phone call we shared throughout the last few years from the quick 5 minute catch-ups to the hour-long chats that helped me get through, and for all of the valuable times and laughs we have been able to share in person.

Freya, for so many fun times throughout this process in both Canberra and Adelaide.
Thanks for coming to Australia!

Natalie, for having shown interest in my research throughout the whole journey. You never failed to ask how the project was going even when you were crazy busy yourself.

Rashi, for great times in Adelaide and Sydney, and for getting me into running which helped me through the PhD.

To Vinh, who has offered all kinds of support – practical, academic, musical, financial, emotional, itinerant, social, gastronomic. Indeed, you have been a wonderful friend to have along with me on this journey. I'm glad that we are able to continue to learn from each other, and look forward to many more journeys shared. Thank you for all your proofreading comments over the years from 'flaws everywhere' to 'a really nice flow of information' to 'so good!'

To Cate, Shania, Hermione, and Paul for reminding me why it is important to be critical, and showing me what to be critical of, and for every laugh.

To Dad and Mum for the unquestioning, unwavering support throughout this time, for the special memories of your visit to Canberra and Jindabyne, and for always having an open door and a seemingly bottomless pantry.

To my participants: I was moved by and am grateful to each of the men who shared their stories with me for the purpose of this research. If they had not been so generous with their time and their thoughts, then I would not have had such meaningful insights into their experiences. Thank you.

「裏に裏がある」といつも信じていて、裏を探しに論文を書きました。
色々な人に裏を見せて頂きました。有難う

"Let me tell you all what it's like being male, middle-class, and white: it's a bitch"
- Ben Folds

Works Published During Research Candidature

Works Within This Thesis

- Scholz, B.**, Crabb, S., & Wittert, G.W. (2014). “‘We’ve got to break down the shame’: Portrayals of men’s depression”, *Qualitative Health Research*, 24(12), 1648-1657.
- Scholz, B.**, Crabb, S., & Wittert, G.W. (2013). “Development of men’s depressive symptoms: A systematic review of prospective cohort studies”, *Journal of Men’s Health*, 10(3), 91-103.

Other Works

- Ford, S.P., **Scholz, B.**, & Lu, V.N. (in press) “Social Shedding: Identification and Health of Men’s Sheds Users”, *Health Psychology*.
- Scholz, B.**, & Riggs, D.W. (2013). Sperm donors’ accounts of lesbian recipients: Heterosexualisation as a tool for warranting claims to children’s ‘best interests’, *Psychology and Sexuality*, 5(3), 247-257.
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