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## **Identities of failure: Depression and gender identities**

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In this paper I am interested in the relationship between masculinity and depression. More specifically, I shall explore how men diagnosed with depressive episode (ICD-10 F32 or F33) construct themselves in gender terms and how they locate themselves in relation to the dominant model of masculinity. The data upon which the paper (anchored in the constructionist view of discourse) is based comes from 25 semi-structured interviews with men in non-residential care in two university psychiatry clinics in the south of Poland.

I shall show that depression is constructed as inherently interlinked with the informants' masculinity as well as, more generally, with the gender model itself. The illness is invariably constructed as an assault on masculinity – the social expectations of what it means to be a man, his role at work or the family. Thus, on the one hand, depression undermines masculinity and depressed men are constructed as lesser men, and, on the other, depression disturbs masculinity, making it impossible to execute it and thus for men in depression to be 'real men'. Depression introduces failure into ill men's identities.

In the process I shall not only argue that depression and its experience are gendered, but that they must be seen in relation to the socially dominant model of masculinity both in research as well as in clinical practice.