

Information for Participants

Title of the research project: “How do men with an eating disorder understand their own experiences?”

The research aims to collect written accounts from UK males about their experience of having an eating disorder. These written accounts will then be read, re-read and understood against current eating disorders research. The ‘stories’ will be interpreted and re-interpreted until I am able to provide an in-depth written exploration of how men understand their own issues with food, weight, body shape and exercise. It is these personal accounts that I am most interested in, rather than scientific reports or professional opinions about eating disorders.

You are being invited to contribute to this project. If you are considering taking part, before you decide, I would like to give you some information about why the research is being carried out, what I hope it will achieve and what it will involve if you participate. I am undertaking this research project as part of my doctoral study. The understanding I have gained will be used when I write my own thesis, and possibly afterwards in published work. When I write about the research, I will make sure that I do not use names or make accounts traceable to you. I may use extracts from the written piece you send me, and describe the process of agreeing the meaning with you.

Who am I?

- My name is Russell Delderfield and I’m 34 years old, male and a UK resident (from the north of England).
- I have an eating disorder.
- I strongly believe that eating disorders are not just like the things we see and hear in the press or on TV. They are not confined to women. They affect a wide range of the population. I also believe that not enough is done to understand eating disorders in males.
- I work at the University of Bradford and I’m also studying for a higher degree by research – a PhD.
- I have completed a diploma in Research Methods to allow me to fully understand how to carry out social research in a responsible and effective way.

Why carry out this research?

- To give a voice to men who want to tell their story of their disordered eating in a meaningful way.
- To understand men’s experiences of disordered eating in a detailed way – something which has not been done yet.
- To compare and contrast different men’s understanding of how their eating disorder developed and why.
- To improve professional understanding of how men come to experience eating disorders.
- To contribute to change, hopefully, in the way male eating disorders are perceived by medical professionals, health services and the media.

Who can take part in the research?

- You should be a male of any race, sexual orientation, religious belief or family background **over eighteen years old** who identifies as having experienced or as currently experiencing issues with an eating disorder.
- It is ok if you do not have an official diagnosis of 'eating disorder' but still believe yourself to have issues around food, eating (over-controlling or loss of control or problems with exercise addiction).
- You should be a British citizen – this is because my study is particularly concerned with understanding UK males' experiences.

What else do you need to be able to take part?

- In the first instance, you need an email address and access to a computer.
- To be able to write your account ('story') in any version of Microsoft Office Word*.
- To choose a pseudonym (false name) that I will use to identify you, rather than using your real name.

*If you fit the criteria and wish to contribute but do not have easy access to a computer or feel uncomfortable about your IT skills then hand-written accounts are also acceptable – they can be sent to me at the address below. If you decide to do this then please provide a return address. Addresses are not viewable by anyone but me and will not be kept with your contribution so that they cannot be matched.

What am I asking you to contribute?

- A written account of your early development of problems with or around food, the way this developed over time and where you are now – your 'story', in other words.
- You can include in the story anything which you feel is important or relevant in telling your story.
- Include things in your story because they matter to you, not just because you think I might want to know. I am not trying to 'prove' a theory about men and eating disorders; this means you can tell me what's important to you. I want to explore your own understanding.
- The story of your eating disorder can be completely in your own words. I am not making any judgments about your writing 'ability' so I'm not worried about grammar or spelling, for instance.
- The story can be as long or as short as you like. There is no limit on how few or how many words or pages of text you can send.

What will happen to your story once you've sent it to me – what will I do with your story?

- Initially I will study your story and document my understanding of it.
- Your participation can end at this point – with submission of the story OR
- At this point I will share my written interpretations of your experiences with you and you can comment on what I've understood about your experiences so that I can further shape my understanding. You can 'correct' how I've interpreted your account or offer more information to clarify things.
- My project is flexibly designed, so it is possible that I might summarise my understanding and feed this back to you for further comments (if you've shown me on your consent form

that you don't mind this happening.) Despite this flexibility your story will only be used for the purposes described here.

- Eventually, at the end of the project, I will write up my interpretations and submit them for my PhD degree assessment. I may also publish my findings and understandings along with accounts so that I can spread the message about what men with eating disorders are going through and hopefully influence future research and health service provision.
- Once my research has been written up for my degree or for publication your original stories and any related material and information will be destroyed.

How will I respect the fact that you are offering to share a very personal experience?

- Any story you sent will be kept in a secured password protected folder on the University of Bradford's secure server.
- I can offer conditional confidentiality. This means that I will not be talking about your experiences outside of my work activities. I will discuss what's happening in my research with my supervisors (qualified experienced senior researchers who are overseeing my PhD work to make sure it is carried out accurately, rigorously and ethically from beginning to end.)
- When I do talk about any stories I am working with I will only refer to you by the false name you have chosen (or I have allocated, if you have not picked one for yourself). Any real identifying information you allow me to have will not be kept with your story – it will be separated.
- Any other features in the story you submit, such as the name of a place or a school or workplace, for example will be changed.
- I will provide a copy of the written-up research report to all participants who let me know they would like to see the finished version.
- If you choose to submit your story but to have no further involvement, I will respect this and will not try to persuade you to be more involved with the project.
- But if you want to have updates and information about what's happening you will be able to check the website for general updates on progress or contact me for more info.
- If you want to have the chance to read my understanding and interpretations of your story then I will respect this and send these to you for comments.
- If you ask for changes to be made to your submitted story or my understanding and interpretations then this will be respected. This includes if you have already sent me your story – if you decide you'd like to add something more, then I will let you do this, up to the cut-off date.
- I have put my research project through a stringent approval procedure at the University of Bradford to ensure I am researching ethically.
- **Finally, if you submit a story and, at a later time before the cut off date, decide you'd rather not be involved then just let me know that you want to completely withdraw. Your participation in the research will end immediately and I will not use your story in my research at all.**

What if you want to take part but you are concerned about the effect writing your story might have on you?

- On the website are several sources of support for you to access if writing your story brings back some difficult memories or if it heightens any current sense of pain you are experiencing. I strongly recommend that you do not stay isolated but contact some of the services mentioned to get peer or professional support.
- The project has been through stringent approval procedures in the University before I've been allowed to ask for participants. This has been done to try to minimise any difficult effects that may or may not occur if someone decides to take part.
- Don't forget, up until the final cut-off date, you can send your story at any time you want during the coming months. So, take your time. You can decide when and how much you write. You can decide how much detail or depth to include and when, or even if, you send it to me after it's written.

Thanks for considering taking part in my research. If you want further information or want to talk about some of the things you have read on the website or in this document then don't hesitate to contact me on the information given below.

Russell

Russell Delderfield
r.delderfield1@bradford.ac.uk
01274 236794

Department of Social Sciences and Humanities
School of Social and International Studies
University of Bradford
Richmond Road
Bradford
West Yorkshire
BD7 1DP

If you have any concerns about the research project or the interactions you may have with me as the researcher and wish to discuss these with someone, I am directly supervised by two senior researchers and I am happy to provide (and am bound by my ethical code to provide) their details should you decide you need them.