

RESEARCH CONNECTION

Representing men's infertilities

By Jonathan A. Allan, PhD



Why this research is important

Men's experiences of infertility are understudied. *Men, Masculinities, and Infertilities* considers the ways in which “men have compelling experiences in the procreative realm that deserve more attention” ([Marsiglio, Lohan, & Culley 2013](#), p. 1012). To these ends, this project studies how stories are told about men's infertility.

How the research was conducted

While many studies of infertility have been done from the perspective of the biomedical sciences and sociology, this study draws on the humanities, most especially literary and cultural studies, to understand representations of men's infertility. To these ends, a diverse range of texts are considered and how they think about and discuss

What you need to know

Infertility has long been imagined as a “woman's issue,” despite the realization that couples experience infertility together. Missing from many discussions of infertility is men's experience of their own infertility.

Men, Masculinities, and Infertilities provides a study of representations of men's infertility, drawing on diverse examples from literature, film, memoirs, and popular culture.

Men, Masculinities, and Infertilities is published Open Access by Routledge.

infertility, from the lived experience of the memoir to dystopian and infertile futures.

What the researcher found

Over the course of researching *Men, Masculinities, and Infertilities*, it became clear that these stories were, as Marsiglio and colleagues note, “compelling” and that they “deserve more attention.” To these ends, attention was paid to how these stories are told and what elements capture attention; for example, in the mid to late twentieth century, the focus turned to the sperm cell rather than the person. Infertility is written at a microscopic level; for instance, we might say the “boys don't swim,” rather than a person being infertile. This might seem a subtle change,

but it is an important one because it allows for an explanation that is less about fault and more about a medical condition. As well, in the twenty-first century, there has been a growing and increasing anxiety about sperm quality, sperm motility (movement), sperm morphology (size and shape). These anxieties become part of dystopian imaginations of the future, a future that is rarely all that distant.

How this research can be used

While this project is about representations of men's experiences of infertility, these stories can provide an entry point for discussions of infertility amongst men, women, and couples dealing with infertility. In addition, this book provides examples of stories about infertility from a range of genres, with various modes of storytelling, including anecdotes, humour, and memoirs, as well as television and film.

Broadly speaking, this book is part of an ongoing interest in men's experiences of the procreative realm. Hopefully, this book can be used to engage men in the procreative realm.

About the researcher

Jonathan A. Allan is Canada Research Chair in Men and Masculinities and Professor of English, Drama, and Creative Writing at Brandon University.

He is the author of *Men, Masculinities, and Infertilities* (Routledge, 2022), *Men, Masculinities, and Popular Romance* (Routledge, 2019) and *Reading from Behind: A Cultural Analysis of the Anus* (University of Regina Press and Zed Books, 2016). His current project is titled *Snip Snap: A Cultural Analysis of Vasectomy*.

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