

## Silence and Insults: The ‘Macho’ way of Expressing Closeness and Depth

A study conducted by the School of Health Sciences and Psychology, Federation University of Australia and the College of Arts, Victoria University (VU) in 2013 found that a common theme in male-male friendships was the use of insults, silence and interrogation to convey closeness and depth of friendship.

The study aimed to “explore the ways in which young white, heterosexual, working/middle-class men from rural Victoria reflect on their close male friendships,” it explains.

“Guided by theoretical tools offered by discursive theory.”

A theory that discusses human discourse and expressions in the format of language – highlighting how such language infers the existence of human knowledge.

For instance when analysing the data the study found that although men do not directly express their emotions they in-directly ‘signify meaning’ which includes gratitude, intimacy/closeness, concern, dominance and masculinity with the use of insults, silence and interrogation.

Author of *The Girl Who Escaped ISIS* and popular Instagram influencer, Farida Khalaf (Instagram handle: Farida D.), believes men are actually missing out.

“Toxic masculinity prevents men from enjoying a healthy lifestyle,” she said.

“It expects men to be emotionless, violent and constantly avoid doing anything woman-related out of fear of being seen as feminine.”

She provides a brief overview on the topic in one of her recent posts titled [“What is Toxic Masculinity?”](#)

Men that encourage the use of what the study refers to as ‘Hegemonic Masculinity’ can actually be missing out when it comes to forming friendships “characterized by softness, warmth, cooperation and equality,” as stated within the study.

They are often stuck being dictated by ‘masculine’ social conventions and forced to ‘demonstrate’ their “hardness, toughness, coolness, competitiveness, dominance and control.”

Lecturer in Psychology and researcher Peter Richard Gill from the College of Arts VU believes Hegemonic Masculinity can be an issue, however “if social values say that it’s frowned upon for a man to openly say ‘I like you, you’re a good friend’, ‘I enjoy your company’ or ‘I love you’,” he explains.

“If there’s another way to say it that’s safer and avoids embarrassment or ridicule, that’s a good thing,” he continues.

“Functionally it’s the same, is it ideal? - No... It’s making the best of a bad situation.”

So hegemonic masculinity isn’t going anywhere and it may still be beneficial for men to utilize in expressing emotion with their close male friends, although it doesn’t easily allow real discussions into each other’s emotional wellbeing.

## **Social Media Text**

### **Post 1**

Do men ever express their emotions? Have read of my story and have a watch of my interview with researcher Peter Richard Gill, where we discuss the use of 'Hegemonic Masculinity' or 'Toxic Masculinity' and the nuances of male expression.

### **Post 2**

What are men missing out on when it comes to their close male-male friendships? Have a read of my article breaking down a small Australian study on the use of insults, interrogation and silence to convey meaning in close male-male friendships.