

## DOCTORAL THESIS

### The process of reality negotiations in finding hope for people who have encountered depression: a collaborative narrative research

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## Abstract

The aim of this research is to reveal the reality negotiation process for finding hope in people who have Depression. In the traditional, modern and medical models of depression, and biological, psychological, social or even contextual perspectives, it is considered that people who are affected by depression are stigmatized in a sick role with different kinds of dysfunctions or deficiencies. They are not considered to have much hope. Their reality is singular and absolute which prevent the use of personal agency to make choices, take action and narrate preferences and experiences to address their problems. In the school of positive psychology, there is a theory that focuses on pathways to hope which aim at positivity as people have the ability for reality negotiation. The postmodern and humanistic views have allowed people to start to see that even though one may be affected by mental illnesses, one will still have his/her expert knowledge, unique experiences, and strategies through narratives of hope.

This research is collaborative narrative research. Twelve individuals, males and females of different ages and backgrounds, have been invited to take part in semi-structured in-depth narrative interviews. They have also been invited to provide feedback and reflections during the interview process. They are given the opportunity to comment on their own verbatim and review the script at a second interview for further storytelling and reflection. When these individuals are given the space and time to narrate their accounts of negotiating depression, the hope that is previously hidden will then emerge. Throughout the conversation, they reconstruct their preferred self by revisiting the negotiation process. They have the agency to perform their preferred life and self-strategies and over techniques to manage life problems and compete with the power of dominant discourses within the mainstream context. It is shown that they have to lead their life with hopeful stories that are applicable to their future life circumstances. A theory is consequently formulated based on the findings of the process of reality negotiation in finding hope. Recommendations are provided in light of the current situation of mental health services in the Hong Kong Chinese cultural context, which include recommendations on the allocation of resources and human resources that are oriented towards the expertise of the persons who are facing depression. It is based on their knowledge and experience found by the everyday stories of the persons through collaboration with them.

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