HARD TO TELL

Narrative Identity and Male Victims of Domestic Abuse

Aim of the study
The aim of this study was to pilot a method of interviewing male survivors of female perpetrated domestic abuse, to better understand how they talk about and make sense of their experiences, and incorporate them within their Narrative Identity.

This pilot and wider Hard to Tell study is part of research at the UEA Centre for Research on Children and Families to inform how we enable and support victims to understand and talk about their experiences. Overall this pilot indicated that the passing of time and the presence of direct therapeutic support is relevant to how men feel their experiences are transgressive, or taboo. This can feel their experiences are as Master Narratives (McLean et al., 2016).

Stereotypes of men as strong and invulnerable, and the widespread understanding of domestic abuse by men against women, can act as Master Narratives (McLean et al., 2017) causing male victims to feel their experiences are transgressive, or taboo. This can stop them from talking about their abuse.

Abuse that is not talked about can continue for longer, increasing the risk of harm and fatality. Children who see and hear abuse between their parents are at greater risk of harm and are more likely to enter abusive relationships when they grow up.

Why is this study important?
Research in the field of Narrative Identity Theory shows that how people talk about their experiences and tell their stories is important. Some ways of telling stories are linked to positive wellbeing, and others are linked with poorer mental health outcomes (Adler, Lodi-Smith, Phillippe, & Houle, 2016).

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Methodology
This study used a biographical narrative interview model, based upon the BNIM model (Wengraf, 2001) and the work of Jovchelovitch and Bauer (2000).

Four self identified male survivors of intimate partner violence were invited to tell their life story. The incremental validity of narrative identity in predicting well being and support victims to understand and talk about their experiences. Overall this pilot indicated that the passing of time and the presence of direct therapeutic support is relevant to how men feel their experiences are transgressive, or taboo. This can feel their experiences are as Master Narratives (McLean et al., 2016).

Next steps
This pilot study has demonstrated an applicable method for interviewing male survivors of intimate partner abuse, and evidenced a need for further research to understand how they are able to incorporate their experiences within an autobiographical narrative.

The PhD study will build upon these findings, interviewing a larger sample, to take a deeper look into how male victims can ‘position’ themselves within their narratives to coherently narrate their story. An additional follow up interview will also be considered to examine how the experience of the interview may impact upon participant’s narrative identity.

As a Social Work study further analysis will be directed towards practical insights to support the practical insights to support the...