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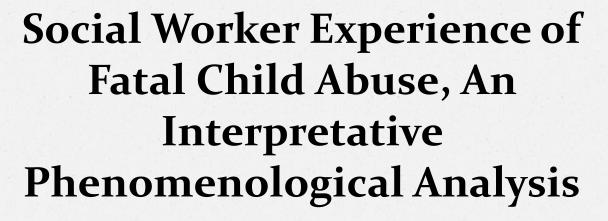
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Social Worker Experience of Fatal Child Abuse, An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

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Origins....

O Personal involvement, reflection

O CDRT

O Advanced Course in Child Death Management:

O A range of professionals including coroners, paediatricians, paediatric registrars and perinatal pathologists gave detailed insights into their roles and responsibilities in relation to child deaths.

O I reflected upon how "clinical" and emotionally detached the medical practitioners appeared, and how their analysis of events contrasted sharply with the often emotive and deeply moving insights given by "non-medical" personnel or parents who had experienced the loss of a child.

Context

O Differences in: role general: , children's nurse, A+E, paramedic

O Differences in SW role: Child Protection/Palliative care/older people

O Nature of role: owning the role of protector, knowing the child/family, potential long periods of involvement

O Media image and response

Broadly Speaking...

O I wanted to capture the "human" lived experiences of social workers

O The emotions, relationships, feelings, etc. before, at the time of and after the child's death.

O Intended to use the findings to inform and develop several area of professional practice

Method

O IPA

O 4 Semi-structured interviews with social workers who have been directly involved in cases of FCA.

O Recruitment strategy (did not work) (that's another story)

O All qualified SW's

O Anonymity

O No reward

O Accounts transcribed and analysed

O Developed into "Master" themes consisting of areas of convergence and polarity

Master Themes

O **Voices Unheard**: Initial involvement and assessment.

O **The Pain of Knowing**: Feelings and emotions upon hearing about the child's death

O **The Blame Game**: Experience of SCRs and Reviews

O **N.F.A:** Support and supervision post event

Voices Unheard

O *"We were picking up these concerns about this woman, she seemed quite brittle, babies were fed, they were well dressed... but...not a great deal of warmth I thought, not a nurturing mum, I'm not happy, she comes across as cold and steely and I asked for another placement for my baby. I was told "no".*

The Pain of Knowing

O *"I got a phone call from my manager to say I just thought I would let you know before you come into work tomorrow that Sarah is dead. Basically, mother's partner had smashed the baby against the wall and his skull was broken...and that's the circumstances of it."*

The Pain of Knowing

O *I had a phone call from the service manager and an email from the manager because they wanted to make sure I was ok, because it was horrendous, absolutely horrendous, he was just broken, he was just broken, he passed away...he died*

The Pain of Knowing

O *When he (The Coroner) sat and read out the child's injuries, You know it's a shame I wasn't a drinker, I didn't know what to do, didn't know where to go, I didn't want to go home, I didn't want to "put on" my colleagues anymore. I just took the dog for an incredibly long walk and cried for a long time?*

The Blame Game

O *Fascinating how the local authority became a self -protecting tool to look after itself.*

O *They were talking about the way in which they could get themselves out of it rather than learning from it...Blame was pinned believe me, it was pinned.*

O *Blame culture in an LA is alive and well and thrives like the cockroach*

Central Themes

O Disenfranchised Grief

O The Personification of Systemic Failure

Doka

O The concept of disenfranchised grief explores the psychological, organisation and cultural contexts in which grief occurs and examines how the "disenfranchisement" of the grief impacts upon individuals, social groups and the organisations in which they practice

Doka

O the relationship (to the deceased) is not recognized,

O the loss is not acknowledged,

O the griever is excluded from grieving rituals

O the circumstances of the death and the way individuals grieve

The Personification of Systemic Failure

O The interplay between intraneous factors, consisting of individual judgements, decisions and emotions associated with the event and extraneous factors, consisting of SCRs, managerial actions, the disenfranchisement of the social worker's grief and media and political responses to the event, have impacted upon the workers involved in a predominantly negative way.

Thank You