

Summary of Modena Presentation 4 May 2017:
Modena: David Morran, University of Stirling, Scotland.

This presentation begins by noting that many of the existing studies which examined the effectiveness of programmes for domestic violence perpetrators have focused (understandably) on *outcomes* but have been less concerned with how the *processes* of personal change are initiated, accomplished and sustained. One of the most comprehensive investigations conducted thus far into the outcomes of perpetrator programmes, (Gondolf, 2002) followed 840 male participants and their partners over a four-year period. While Gondolf's study focused on whether men's violent behaviour stopped or decreased as a consequence of programme participation, it shed little light on the wider dynamics in men's lives which impacted positively or negatively on their behaviour and capacity to change. While other studies have considered what men have actually learned in programmes (Dobash *et al.* 1996) little attention has been paid to the wider context of their lives and the 'journeys' by which men desist from violent or abusive behaviour once formal completion of the programme has been achieved.

Inspired to address the question of what constitutes change as far as men who attend (and complete) perpetrator programmes and influenced by the wider criminological literature on desistance from 'offending' behavior, David Morran, a former facilitator in one of the first UK perpetrator programmes dealing with men's gender-based violence to partners, and currently an academic in Scotland, conducted a study to examine the processes and practices and changes in behavior and attitudes by which men move away from violence and abuse to live positive and non-violent lives.

This presentation provides an account of a small study initiated by David who contacted a number of programmes in the UK and asked them to identify men for whom they had 'considerable evidence' that these men had 'successfully completed' the programme concerned and who could now be considered non-violent and non-abusive. The study was based on a series of in-depth interviews with men (with supportive evidence from programmes and partners) which examined what men learned from programmes (and from other aspects of their lives) and how they have gone about the processes of becoming non-violent and non-abusive.

The study indicated that men who desist learn a great deal from programmes. They learn a number of skills associated with realizing that they have choice and responsibility over their use of violence. These skills are essential for living non-violently and non-abusively in the present. Programmes based on a gender-based understanding of interpersonal violence do much more than teach skills however, they provide important places in which men learn about their attitudes and behaviour to partners, and to women more generally. They enable men to examine the various personal, family and structural issues which have resulted in an understanding and practice of 'manhood' which has underpinned their violence and abuse in the past and which must be addressed in the present and future. The presentation focuses on the various issues which men identify as underlying their past use of violence, of how they have changed, of the processes involved in that change, of what has been accomplished and what still has to be accomplished. The question of how men are supported after they 'finish' programmes is explored in detail.

References:

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