



Everyday Terrorism:

How Fear Works in Domestic Abuse

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Summary

Aim

This report presents the findings of research conducted in 2012 by the Centre for Social Justice and Community Action at Durham University in collaboration with Scottish Womens Aid. While there have been improvements in recognition of the harm that domestic abuse causes, it is still quite poorly understood in wider society and among some service providers. A question still commonly asked is: why don't people who are being abused in intimate relationships simply leave? In answer to this, this research focuses on the fear that is experienced by adults suffering domestic abuse. It aims to explore the multi-faceted nature and effects of fear.

Methodology

The methodology included a wide-ranging literature review of existing research on fear, domestic abuse and national/international terrorism, and 18 in-depth qualitative interviews with 16 survivors of domestic abuse. They included women and men who are heterosexual, gay and lesbian, as well as migrant and non-migrant women.

The research investigated:

- how fear operates both in the immediate moment of abusive incidents and in the long term,
- the ways in which domestic abuse entraps people through fear,
- how children are implicated in this process,
- how people being abused resist and manage both abuse and fear,
- how fear relates to other emotions,
- the role of emotions in resistance and the long process by which some of those who are abused become survivors.

Key findings

The research suggests that domestic abuse can be considered a form of everyday terrorism. It creates long-lasting fear and trauma, which reinforce the abuser's control over the abused person. It affects vastly greater numbers of people than global terrorism, and it has impacts on many aspects of society as well as on the individual.

The frequency and prolonged nature of domestic abuse, the psychological aspects of this control, and the setting in which domestic abuse takes place all help to explain these higher levels of fear and trauma.

The research demonstrates that:

1. Fear in situations of domestic abuse is distinctive:
 - Being abused in a domestic setting, by an intimate partner, shapes the nature of the immediate fear during violent incidents. It also leads to chronic fear which builds up over the long term and leads to significant trauma and negative effects on health and wellbeing.
 - The social and physical entrapment and isolation which often accompanies abuse reinforce these fears, and make help-seeking more difficult.
 - Fear is often a key reason for not leaving, and this fear is rational and justified.
2. The psychological and emotional control that result from fear are a key way in which domestic abuse 'works':
 - Keeping another person in a state of chronic fear does not require physical violence to be used all of the time, or at all.
 - Using and playing on fear is common by abusers, and is made possible because of their intimate knowledge of the person they are abusing.

- Abusers tell powerful stories about the abuse to the person they are abusing, often saying it is the fault of the person being abused. Many interviewees experience a state of 'doublethink' as a result.
 - Gender roles within intimate relationships – in other words, who it is who usually does the domestic and emotional work - make abuse easier to perpetrate and harder to escape.
 - Other social inequalities, especially those of sexual orientation, income, class, ethnicity, migrant status and disability, can also increase fear of domestic abuse and its effects.
 - All of these factors explain why it is so difficult for people who are abused to leave.
3. Concern for children is central to the fears of many people who experience domestic abuse:
- Children are sometimes victimised by the abusive parent, and frequently witness abuse.
 - Children are sometimes deliberately used in one parent's abuse of another.
 - Children are often a key reason for the parent being abused not leaving, as well as eventually being a key reason for leaving. This apparently contradictory situation is explained by the complex and risky nature of the decision to leave.
4. People experiencing domestic abuse are not passive victims, but take many actions to improve their security:
- Considerable strength and courage are required to live with domestic abuse, and these emotions are experienced alongside fear.
 - Those interviewed tried to resist and manage abuse and fear in different ways.
 - While love of their partner turned to dislike or hate once abuse became established, many still feel some sense of duty and responsibility and some try to 'fix' the abuse. Humiliation and shame at being abused are also powerful emotions for some.
 - All interviewees describe a critical moment, a major or minor event which precipitates an emotional shift in fear/strength which had been building for a long time. Often this helped them to eventually separate from the abusive partner.
5. After separation, fear often continues. Recovery and restoration are long processes:
- Abuse often continues after separation, and leads to continuing or heightened fear.
 - Trauma, an effect of chronic fear, may fully surface only after separation from the abuser.
 - All interviewees also describe positive outcomes of separation for themselves and their children.

Introduction

“Domestic abuse is the mental, physical and/or sexual abuse by a partner or ex-partner. In most cases, it is experienced by women and children, and is perpetrated by men. Domestic abuse is often serious and sustained and can be life threatening.” (Scottish Womens Aid, 2008)

Domestic abuse is a widespread, everyday phenomenon in higher and lower income countries alike, that cuts across boundaries of class, age, race, ethnicity and sexual orientation (McCue, 2008). A widely cited review of European studies suggests that around one in four women experience domestic abuse over their lifetime, and between 6-10% in any given year (Council of Europe, 2002). Domestic abuse does not only consist of acts of violence, although these are often present. It also commonly includes a range of tactics including threats, isolation, and undermining self confidence and self esteem. The severity of its impacts rest on the common operation of fear, terror and control (Dobash and Dobash, 1979; Johnson 2008; Stark, 2007). Domestic abuse is marked by its repeated and long-term nature: a large UK study showed that the average number of incidents per year was 20 for women and seven for men (Walby and Allen, 2004).

The overall theme of this report is to draw a parallel between domestic abuse and terrorism (see also Hammer 2002; Herman 1997; Johnson 2008; Phillips 2008). Framing domestic abuse as ‘everyday terrorism’ helps to understand how fear works. It highlights the frequency and severity of domestic abuse, the serious effects of the fear that it invokes, and the control that this fear makes possible (Dobash and Dobash 1992; Stark 2007). Drawing this parallel also muddies the boundaries between forms of violence that are usually framed as public, political and spectacular, and forms of violence that are usually framed as private, apolitical and mundane.

Terrorism at national and global scales is more widely recognised as an attempt to impose order and control through violence and fear (Flint and Radil, 2009; Goodwin, 2006; Onuf, 2009):

Terrorism is violence used in order to create fear; but it is aimed at creating fear in order that the fear, in turn, will...accomplish whatever it is that the terrorist really desires (Fromkin, 1975, 692-3).

Recent terrorist attacks on the west are increasingly global in scale, spectacular in nature, and designed to maximise fear (Flint and Radil, 2009). Indeed, having these wider effects on public and state fears is seen as the main intention in the current ‘fourth wave’ of terrorism (Rapoport, 2004). Interestingly, however, evidence from research on recent instances of global terrorism suggests that while incidents cause great trauma for those caught up in them, they are relatively ineffective at creating wider fear (Pain 2010; Rapin 2009).

Domestic abuse, on the other hand, directly terrorises people who are abused and their children; it is a way in which abusers exert psychological and emotional control, and it often leads to changes to behaviour among those who are abused. Most of all, domestic abuse, like global terrorism, can be seen as part of a desire to gain or enforce particular forms of political control. Its effects reinforce the social and political structures that produce it. In the case of domestic abuse, the most important of these is gender inequality, and this report also discusses inequalities of social class, sexual orientation, ethnicity, migrant status, and disability. So domestic abuse, and the corrosive effects of the fears of those who suffer it, are not simply an issue of individual or family conflict – they relate to, and is sustained by, social inequalities at the level of society.

Domestic abuse, then, can be considered a more effective form of terrorism – it routinely creates long-lasting fear and trauma, and affects vastly greater numbers of people than global terrorism. As the accounts of those interviewed for this research show, the frequency, prolonged nature and setting in which domestic abuse takes place all help to explain and justify these higher levels of fear and trauma. Naming domestic abuse ‘terrorism’ is not to suggest that the two forms of violence are the

same, but they have a shared basis as attempts to exert fear and control.

However, there are huge differences in recognition of, and levels of response to, ‘private’ and ‘public’ forms of violence. Because of the intimate nature of domestic abuse, the costs associated with it are less visible and so less well recognised. But, for example, domestic abuse has been estimated to cost the Scottish economy £2.3 billion (Scottish Government 2009). At this point in time, there is a growing imbalance in resourcing that the two terrorisms receive, and this urgently needs to be addressed (see also Phillips 2008). Indeed, the current context in western countries has seen brutal cuts to the provision of services for those being abused and for survivors (Baird, 2012; Fine 2012; Scottish Womens Aid, 2011; Towers and Walby 2012; Women’s Aid, 2012), as well as re-emerging political contestations over domestic abuse (Doll 2012) - all in stark comparison to the resourcing and attention given to global security issues (Phillips, 2008). The 2011 Scottish Womens Aid census showed that on the one census day, refuge space could not be found for 20 women and 15 children and young people, or one in three of those requesting it.

While there have been improvements in recognition of the harm that domestic abuse causes, it is still quite poorly understood in wider society. A question still commonly asked is: why don’t people who are being abused in intimate relationships simply leave? In answer to this, the research reported here focuses on the fear that is experienced by those suffering it. There has been relatively little in-depth research on exactly how this fear feels, or how it works in different situations of abuse. This report concentrates on how fear operates both in the immediate moment of abusive incidents and in the long term; how abuse entraps people through fear; how children are implicated and used in this process; how those suffering fear of abuse resist and manage both abuse and fear; how fear relates to other emotions; and the role of fear, strength and resistance in the long process by which some of those who are abused become survivors.

Methodology

The methodology for the research included:

- (i) A wide-ranging literature review of existing research on fear, domestic abuse and national/international terrorism (see Pain 2012),
- (ii) Qualitative interviews.

Between January and June 2012, 18 in-depth qualitative interviews were conducted with 16 survivors of domestic abuse, who documented experiences of abuse in 18 intimate relationships. All except three were living in Edinburgh or Fife at the time of the interview. They were recruited through organisations that provide services to people experiencing domestic abuse, and personal contacts.

The sample included 14 women and 2 men. One woman and one man talked about same-sex relationships. Interviewees ranged in age from 25 to 65, and came from varied social class backgrounds. 13 interviewees were from white ethnic backgrounds, and three had ethnic minority backgrounds and had migrated to Scotland as adults. All but three of those interviewed had young children at the time of the abuse.

The interviews were conducted by Rachel Pain and lasted between one and three hours. They were lightly structured and in-depth, allowing for a balance between the interviewer’s questions and the interviewee’s preferences in telling their stories, and allowed new themes to emerge. The topics included the early days of the relationship, the onset and development of abuse, the interviewees’ feelings about the abuse, their responses to the abuse, how they came out of the relationship, and what happened subsequently.

Interviews were transcribed and subject to standard qualitative analysis procedures. Any names and places mentioned were changed to preserve anonymity, and interviewees were offered the option of choosing a pseudonym for themselves.

1. The feeling of fear

This section describes the feeling of fear in domestic abuse, both during abusive incidents and in the longer term between their occurrence. It outlines how physical and social entrapment can reinforce these fears. It explains why the prospect of leaving often creates further fear, however much the person being abused may want to leave.

1.1 Terror: fear in the moment

This sub-section identifies the fear experienced during incidents of physical violence. The abuse experienced by interviewees comprised a combination of some or all of physical, sexual, psychological and emotional abuse. However, almost all had suffered some physical violence as part of the abuse, and while this was often described as ‘not the worst part’ of the abuse in comparison to less visible aspects (Williamson 2010, and Section 2), it invoked a great deal of fear.

All of the women and men interviewed describe traumatic feelings of fear during violence and just after it. Domestic abuse often becomes far more routine than, for example, abuse between strangers on the street; but incidents of violence remain a shock, often experienced as coming ‘out of the blue’. Interviewees describe both physical shock, and a feeling of betrayal of the expectation of trust and care in intimate relationships which they describe as the hardest to come to terms with. While people who are abused adopt skills of precaution and management to try and maintain security for themselves and their children, domestic abuse is not something that you “get used to”. The fear and trauma that interviewees talk about continue, and often intensify, over months or years.

Jennifer: With him he would just blow, right, and it could be out of the blue, the first thing is shock, you know, and it's like it's a physical shock, I mean it's like you know you are walking down the street and you see someone hit by a bus or you know something terrible happens. It's like you stand there and you can't believe, you cannot believe that this is happening.

Meghan: He had his hands round my neck there and he just basically he was punching me about, and then he sort of got up off of me, and he was like “are you afraid?” and I was like I thought “what the hell do I say?”...but I mean I was, I just was physically shaking because you just dinnae ken what's going to happen next.

Candy: I would actually physically start shaking or stutter because I was trying to say something to him... and he would laugh about that, he would be like you know “what are you shaking at?” and then just start laughing, and then because he saw that side he knew that anything he did would just frighten me.

Kate: The feelings you know I remember when he was sort of screaming at me and we were in the middle of one of these scenes which were so horrifying, he would you know I would have these, I would feel the cascade of hormones you know, this kind of heat it was hot or cold or something but I could just feel it moving through me you know as your body kind of tries to cope... it's such a sort of intensity of stress hormones and I remember just thinking this is so toxic for my body and then I was pregnant of course too...the sort of physical sensation of anger and fear and distress and how intense that was.

All of the interviewees describe this mix of physical and psychological reactions. Fear in the moment of violence is an affective bodily experience, at the same time as it is a cognitive one: panic has to be suppressed, as the mind is working fast to try to plan how to halt or minimise the damage of the incident:

Jennifer: There's this sort of rational part of your head that starts doing a commentary on the situation you know, and one of the immediate things for me is "where are the children?", right so and if the children are in the same room then I need to get Philip out of that room, I have to do whatever I can to get him out of the room and away from the children, and you know if the children are downstairs then I need to get Philip into the bedroom and I need to really work on quietening him down, and then I also I need to go downstairs, I need to reassure the children.

Because of this need to manage and cope in the immediate moment, especially where children are present (Section 3), sometimes the full psychological trauma caused by particular incidents is not fully experienced until after the relationship has ended (see Section 5). Nonetheless, the immediate responses of those abused, like Jennifer, are highly rational.

Consciousness of what is happening on the part of the abuser also seems to be commonplace from the interviewees' accounts. As Candy's description (above) illustrates, although abusers may appear to be out of control, and they may explain abuse in this way afterwards, they are often able to draw back if someone else is present (though they rarely do this if it is only children who are present – Section 3) or to taunt the person they are abusing. In this way, fear is not an unintentional effect of abuse, but something that abusers may recognise, play on and use:

Kim: When I was defending myself he'll come to me and hug me... I didn't understand at that time because then he will fight and then he will come to calm me down and hug me...I was just so confused.

Rachel: So did he calm down at the moment when you defended yourself?

Kim: Yes, yes...like he was having this smile...because he was winning.

People who are being abused often feel great humiliation at the powerlessness of their position, and this is the case whether the abuse is physical, sexual, psychological, emotional or a combination. For a number of the women interviewed, the shock and effects on self esteem were also greater as – in contrast to common images of those who suffer domestic abuse as weak - they saw themselves as strong women:

Kim: I felt hopeless, shocked, again like powerless... I was this woman in control of her own life, I thought so, and here he was treating me as someone with no importance.....I wasn't prepared because I was scared, yes, far away from everybody.

1.2 Chronic fear: "Treading on eggshells"

This sub-section returns to abuse in all its forms. The majority of those interviewed suffered abuse for many years. Over time, domestic abuse creates an emotional and psychological state quite unique amongst crimes: chronic fear. Judith Herman's (1997) classic account of trauma links the experiences of survivors of violent atrocities including torture, concentration camps and family violence. She argues that complex trauma arises from a setting from which escape is difficult, and a perpetrator who may appear 'normal'.

Interviewees talk about their feelings of fear in between incidents (which may take place daily, or may be weeks apart). As time goes on, this chronic fear escalates, as they come to inhabit an almost constant dread of abuse and develop detailed precautions to try and ensure their security. Several used the metaphor of treading on eggshells to describe this state:

Ellie: When he came home from his work I was treading on eggshells and everything ... I felt terrible, I felt sick every time he came in from his work...is he going to be pleased or is he going to come in in a bad mood? Am I going to get battered the night again or, everything's just going through your mind and

your stomach goes absolutely, you feel sick.

Kate: Being exposed intimately to a crazy person is very scary...I was always on eggshells. I mean I remember thinking this was like living in a house where, you know, say I'm walking around a room and there are particular points on the floor where I'm going to get an electric shock, and I never could know where those spots were.

Emma: It feels like everything goes out of control and you're trying to pull everything back into, you know, like all these wee eggs into this one wee basket to try and keep it in tight so that it doesn't fly off the handle again, do you know what I mean? So you're constantly on edge. So I'm not eating properly... and that's how I lived.

All of those interviewed took sometimes elaborate precautions, and changed many aspects of their behaviour to try and avoid abuse. This is not to say that they did not resist the abuse (Section 4). There is also a feeling among those interviewed, with hindsight, that while they felt vital at the time to security, precautions are in one sense fruitless: they did not seem to increase security or reduce fear. Margie likens the feeling of chronic anxiety to a coiled spring; again a lot of effort is put into trying to predict what might trigger abusive behaviour, and taking action to avoid abuse:

Margie: It would come out of nowhere you know I'd be... like a spring coiled up, that's how I felt the whole time in the chest because I didn't know when something like this was going to happen... It was a tightness the whole time inside my chest. I was never relaxed, I was always tense that something could happen.

Candy: It's just to feel that fear before someone comes in, and then you know be really on edge the whole time that he's actually around until the time that he's fast asleep in bed, it's just I don't know how to describe it, it's really it's just it's horrible, you've got a knot in your stomach the whole time and you just you know you're like "oh my God is this going to make him go or is this going to make him go?"

As is well documented, this state of chronic fear and associated stress has serious impacts on physical and mental health (Herman 1997; Lundgren *et al* 2002; Scottish Womens Aid 2010b, 2010c). Interviewees reported a whole range of symptoms while experiencing abusive including anxiety, depression, sleep problems, low self esteem, self-harming and thoughts of suicide (see also Section 5):

Petunia: I ended up with stomach ulcers because I was internalising all of this... like I noticed if somebody tapped me on the shoulder, I practically just, I didn't realise I was on fight or flight all the time, I couldn't just unwind.

Cheryl: I felt as if it was like, to be honest I felt as if I'd been like sometimes, as in it wasnae worth living any more.

1.3 Entrapment: physical and social isolation

Reinforcing this state of chronic fear, domestic abuse is often marked by the gradual withdrawal of those suffering it from spaces outside the home, and from family and friends (Bowstead 2011; Warrington, 2001). This varies considerably between abusive situations, depending on circumstances and the form of the abuse taking place. However, most interviewees in this study say that they were physically entrapped to some degree: prevented by the abuser from going out, or contacting friends, or having their movements and interactions subject to great scrutiny (Stark 2007):

Bobbie: I ended up isolating myself from all my friends, never went out or anything, because it didnae matter where I went he was on the phone eh, "when are you coming back?" and he was really controlling over me.

Candy: He stopped me talking to my family, I wasn't allowed to go out of the house, I wasn't allowed to meet anybody, you know I had no contact with anyone outside the house at all... He had a mobile and I had one to begin with when I was with him but he broke it so I didn't have any other phone....I was basically a prisoner.

Margie: After we'd moved over here he kept me a prisoner...he wouldn't let me go out because if I went out I'd spend money.

Petunia: It was actually one of her family members who shocked me into realising how much I'd changed... and it was then that I realised how much I had kowtowed to keep the peace... I didn't really believe in myself that it was wrong to speak to people, but I did alter my behaviour.

Entrapment is a result of fear, because of the threat of abuse when the abusers 'rules' are broken. It also compounds chronic fear - physical and social isolation heighten the self-doubt that often results from abuse (Section 2), and it also means that getting support from family and friends is less likely. None of the interviewees told anyone about the abuse when it began, and several went for many years without divulging it to anyone. Entrapment, then, like fear, is both a physical and a psychological state.

Cheryl: I just needed somebody to, I felt as if I needed something physical to remove me from the situation... I used to lie in my bed at night and like actually think "how can I actually get out of here?" like, do you know what I mean, it's just it's a horrible situation to be in.

Contact with formal support agencies is also made more difficult by physical and social isolation (Ptacek 1999). For some of those interviewed, it was workers in these agencies who were the first people they told about the abuse (see Taylor *et al*, 2012). However, again, abusers may directly or indirectly intervene, using fear to make any help-seeking behaviour fraught with difficulty:

Nina: Once I also phoned the health visitor just because I was so worried about my baby, I thought "if he harms the baby what will I do?" But when I phoned the health visitor he was there standing next to me, and then he was shouting, saying "now you know what I am really like, you are going to see what I'll do to you" and things like that. So I got so scared that I phoned the health visitor and said "please don't come to my house, everything's fine now".

1.4 Fear of leaving: "If I'm scared of him now..."

Fear is the main reason why people being abused do not leave. Some of those interviewed desperately wanted to leave, sometimes for years before they were eventually able to. There is still little understanding in wider society of the psychological and emotional dimensions of domestic abuse, and why, as a result, it is so difficult for people who are abused to leave (Humphreys and Joseph, 2004; Stark, 2007). A majority of women being abused fear that they or their children will be killed if they leave, and indeed violence often continues or escalates after separation (Humphreys and Thiara, 2002). Leaving, then, is a frightening prospect (see also Sections 4 and 5):

Meghan: I says I really need to get out, I says I need some fresh air and he says "well" he says "the only way you'll get out of here" he says "if I have some assurances that you're coming back".... So he opened the door and I was like "oh my God", I couldnae walk, my legs were just jelly and shaking ken inside uncontrollably, but I thought "no I cannae let him see that I'm like that, I have to get away from here".

Jennifer: The person who's standing in the way of me is the person that I'm the most scared of, and if I'm scared of him now what's he going to be like when he knows I want to leave him. So it's probably the most the biggest challenge in my life and the most frightening thing that I've ever done.

Kate: I was just kind of “OK, I’ve just got to figure out how to do this, now what’s the best way to do this that minimises the risk for me and the kids”.

Many people suffering domestic abuse never leave because of these fears, which are well justified. This does not mean they are weak, as it also takes great courage and strength to cope with and manage abuse long-term (Hammer 2002; Jones 1994).

2. How fear works

This section explains how thinking about domestic abuse as ‘everyday terrorism’ helps to understand the role of fear. It outlines the psychological, social and political processes by which fear works to control people being abused. It explains how a toxic mix - of abuser’s powerful stories about the abuse and about the person being abused; the self-doubt that is often instilled in the abused person; and, in some cases, lack of support from others - works to sustain this control through fear. The section describes how gender relations, as a political form, still provides a powerful backdrop to domestic abuse that make it easier to perpetrate and more difficult to escape from. It explains how other forms of social inequality may also reinforce the effects of fear.

2.1 Fear and control

Fear is not just a by-product of domestic abuse; it is a key element that keeps it going. Domestic abuse works through what Stark (2007) has called ‘coercive control’; abusers employ a range of tactics and behaviours that may include physical, sexual, psychological and emotional abuse, that together entrap abused people in the situation. As is discussed later in this section, this does not take place in a social vacuum, but in a society where there are still strong expectations about behaviour and roles in relationships, especially around gender. These underpin the responses of those being abused, and make it easier for abusers to continue their abuse without being effectively challenged.

Many writers on domestic abuse document and analyse the control that results from it (Dobash and Dobash 1979, 1992; Stark 2007; Williamson 2010). The emotional dimensions of abuse intensify this control, although they may also provide resources for those who are abused to manage and resist it (Section 4). In this way, it is useful to think about domestic abuse as a form of terrorism. Like global terrorism, it is the threat of everyday terrorism, not just the instances of abuse, that maintains fear:

Kate: Yes I was scared of him yes very, very, I mean you know being exposed intimately to a crazy person is very scary, and somebody doesn’t have to be persistently or continually violent, physically violent in order to you know be a very violent presence. And once they’ve established that they’re willing to be violent then they really, you know, have you under their thumb because you just never know when it can happen.

Jennifer: He had got what he wanted by doing that. And OK he’d only have to do it occasionally, but then I was living with this constant watchfulness, anxiety, you know, self-regulation, and I would do anything to make sure that couldn’t happen. But at the same time there was nothing I could do to make sure it couldn’t happen, because it was so random.

2.2 The abuser’s voice

Most of all, fear is often reinforced by what the abuser tells the person they are abusing about the abuse. Many abusers construct a particular story to explain the abuse, which often shifts part or all of the responsibility away from them (Hearn 1996). It is very common for abusers to either refuse to discuss the abuse, or to deny it is abusive. In this way, the fears of the person being abused are identified as irrational, over-emotional and not justified by what is actually happening. Many of the abusers of the people interviewed for this research had told them that the abuse was their own fault, and that they should change in some way if they wanted it to stop. All of those interviewed

gave examples of these stories. Within these stories, abusers use their intimate knowledge of the person they are abusing – her or his psychological makeup, often playing on traits such as a caring nature, or self-doubt. Some abusers apologised and promised to change their ways from time to time, but this was never upheld and further abuse followed. The psychology of experiencing long-term abuse and chronic fear (Section 1), where people who are abused suffer low self esteem and depression alongside social isolation, means that it can be easier for abusers to influence with their powerful stories about the responsibility lying with the abused person:

Nina: I was shocked, I was so scared but most of all he made me feel it was all my fault, it was me, I didn't know anything, I wasn't behaving right.

Cheryl: It was like really difficult to get out of because you start to feel as if you are in this world on your own as if nobody else is round about you...I used to think I was such a bad person...he used to say "oh you've two kids and no-one will go near you" and just and that, and you start to actually believe it and you go "well I may as well just stay with him".

Michael: He absolutely conned me for the next couple of weeks of saying "oh don't leave me, don't do this, don't do that, it's an illness, it's this, it's that"... now I know it was all just a big con to shut me up and stop me saying what he didn't want me to do which was go to the police.

Rachel: Did he ever try and change?

Bobbie: No, he always promised that he would...but he never ever changed.

2.3 Doublethink: "It made me feel like I was going crazy"

As a way of rationalising and coping with abuse, many interviewees report that they held contradictory thoughts or beliefs in their heads at once. On the one hand, they knew that the abuse was wrong; and on the other hand, they either tried to ignore this thought and make things work, or else partly or fully believed the abuser's justification of the abuse. This last dynamic is strongly affected by whether the person being abused has told people outside the relationship about the abuse, and what their reaction is – again, social support is a crucial element in resistance (Barrett and St Pierre 2011). Chronic fear for personal and their children's safety is a powerful force that reinforces this tendency to "doublethink". This state of contradictory thought maps onto the theory in transpersonal psychology that we all have subpersonalities within our overall personalities, that help in particular to cope with difficult situations. This psychological state is a survival strategy, a way of dealing with stress and the demands of everyday life; especially running a home and family, the effort of trying to avoid or manage abuse, keeping things 'normal' for the children, and quite often hiding abuse from others:

Candy: It was like "well wait a minute, this is not right" you know, but although I knew that I kept thinking "well maybe he's just having a hard time just now" or you know, and I wasn't very good at saying how I felt either, so I just went along with what he wanted.

Rachel: Did you always feel that she was responsible for her behaviour, or did you ever start to wonder well is it something about me?

Stephen: Oh constantly, oh constantly...for years I would be "what am I doing wrong? I must be doing something wrong" you know. Oh absolutely I would you know sort of agonise about that saying "I must be doing something that's you know getting under her skin".

Petunia: I almost couldn't believe it was happening... I felt there must be a way I could stop it... I seemed to think it must be me as well, there's something I'm doing wrong and there must be a way I can explain to her and make her believe me.

Rachel: What did you tell yourself when you asked yourself "why is this happening", what was your

answer at first?

Ellie: I hadn't got an answer, I kept saying "why is it happening to me, why does it always happen to me?" I'm going "what am I doing wrong?"

Kate: It made me feel like I was kind of going a bit crazy...this constant double standard...And it really made me feel like I was living in a sort of, I don't know, some kind of distorted world..." am I missing something here?" you know, because he would say "well I don't know what you are talking about...I'm a very reasonable person" and you know, it just sort of has some bizarre power when somebody says that....Part of me was trying at times all these sort of intellectual gymnastics to try to see things, see it from his point of view and try to sort of say "well maybe there's some way I can look at this that makes it you know less reprehensible". So we rationalise it in all sorts of ways don't we, we try to, but I did know that it was wrong obviously that what he was doing was really wrong. I mean I had a lot of self-doubt but I also know that he was crazy.

All of the interviewees described this fluctuating self-doubt at the time of the abuse, and many also described their internalisation of the reasons for the abuse, as well as feeling some degree of responsibility for preventing it. As Williamson (2010) discusses, it is negotiating this 'unreality' created by the abuser that has severe impacts on psychological wellbeing and notions of self. Doublethink is heavily reinforced (and perhaps created) by the abuser's authoritative voice and justification for the abuse (Section 2.2). Fear as a feeling does not exist in a social vacuum. Our own feelings are affected by the feelings of those around us, and our presumptions about the way that others feel. This may also include family and friends, service providers, or how society more generally regards our situation. In this way, emotions can be understood as relational (Bondi 2005). In the case of domestic abuse, fear is profoundly affected by people close to the abused person and wider society - especially important are the reactions of friends and family, if they know about the abuse, as well as the responses of professionals such as police, doctors, Women's Aid and so on (Barrett and St Pierre 2011; Humphreys and Joseph 2004).

In several cases, interviewees are also very clear that doublethink is reinforced by the reaction they received when they told family or friends about the abuse. Often these relatives' homes were the only place they felt they could have gone to escape the abuse:

Cheryl: My mum like kind of basically kind of, not pushed me to go back, but she was just like "oh he seems more calmer now" and, but I knew different... So obviously it's like to a certain extent I felt as if like in a sense I'd nobody.

Kim: My family all they could say or do, it's you know just "oh yes, yes, he's bad, he's crazy" you know. Well they were unsupportive ... I have three sisters, not one of them could tell me "you didn't do anything wrong", so it didn't help because again, no support at all.

Nina: My grandmother, aunt, everybody kept saying "you have to try your best, your marriage is not a joke" you know, and I didn't have the courage to say "it's not all my fault".

Others, who received sympathetic responses from family and friends, were able to leave much sooner.

2.4 Doing the emotional housework

The tendency for those abused to take on some level of responsibility for abuse and internalise it is common (Herman 1997). One striking finding, from the accounts given to the research, is the close parallels between the emotional labour and management of abusers that women who are abused often do, and housework that many were also responsible for. In several cases, housework that was not done 'well enough' was used by abusers as an excuse for abuse (see also Stark 2007; Williamson 2010). Emma's case provides an extreme example:

Emma: When George wasn't around, if it was me and the kids, we would let the dog sit with us in the living room...he knew the dog's bed's been through here, "why has the dog's bed been through here?" and it was like "how the hell do you know the dog's bed's been through here? I've just fucking hoovered do you know what I mean, I have hoovered, how do you know the dog's bed's through there?" and he would go up off the carpet and he'd be picking bits off the carpet right, hair, you know what I mean. He's the only person I know that has OCD and doesn't do anything in the house, didn't do any of the cleaning...He used to hide stuff, he used to hide bits of paper behind the back of the toilet you know... "you've not cleaned underneath the bed for two weeks, I know because that plate's been sitting there for two weeks because I put that plate there", and then there's another hiding [beating].

Similarly, doing emotional housework – in other words, working hard to try to counsel, manage and 'fix' the abuser – was very common amongst the women interviewed. This is a result of gendered social relations, where women still tend to take responsibility for men's comfort. Women's socially-given responsibility for emotional labour is a common response to the onset of abuse – we deploy our skills as caregivers, sometimes continuing for years before we question this. Using emotional and caring skills to try to counsel the abuser, manage them and end the abuse was also marked for interviewees who felt they had quite 'equal' relationships in terms of paid work and housework. Many said that initially they believed that if they tried hard, they could help the abuser to stop the abuse. This sometimes comes from women's confidence in themselves with regard to their caring natures and abilities, rather than low self esteem (inevitably, this confidence was badly eroded as time went on and these tactics were not successful):

Candy: He was laid off his work and then he just used to sit and drink all the time and then again I was excusing that, I was like "well you know he's obviously depressed, he's drinking"...you know I was too busy excusing it to actually think "no wait a minute, get out of this now before".

Jennifer: My reaction was to feel sorry for him because I thought "wow" you know "something must have really upset him for him to react like that, you know, something bad has happened to him"... There was a lot of what I call social work that I used to do with him as well, I was basically his carer in those situations right, he was attacking me...but my job that used to kick in when that was happening was "I have to, the way I'm going to stop this, the way I'm going to protect the children is I'm going to become his counsellor, I'm going to become his therapist and I'm going to calm him down and I'll say and do anything I have to to calm him down".

Nina: In hindsight, instead of recognising that "this is domestic abuse whatever is going on is wrong", I always thought I have to make everything OK, I have to make sure that the cooking's done, the house is clean then he won't get angry and things will be OK.

Rachel: I wonder why, you know, we don't recognise that at the time?

Nina: Just because we feel so guilty I think and so responsible, we feel if I make everything OK..."I am the one who understands everything so I should be behaving right".

Such responses, within intimate relationships which may have been reasonably good before the onset of abuse, are not caused by ignorance or a lack of knowledge of domestic abuse. The problem is applying a general understanding and knowledge of abuse to your own situation, and in the face of mixed emotions and the stories the abuser frequently tells. For example, two interviewees had a professional background that had involved considerable knowledge of domestic abuse and experience of working directly with abused people, and yet this did not initially help them to label or escape from the situation in their own relationships:

Michael: It was abusive without being, without knowing that it was abusive, you don't recognise it, and what's even, what was more painful at the time I guess for me was because I'd been, I'd worked with domestic violence projects and I'd worked with these kind of things and I knew about the signs, but you

just, it's one of those things that "it doesn't happen to me" when actually it does. But you don't realise it because they're so clever in the way that they kind of make it your fault.

Despite growing public understanding of domestic abuse, then, there are ingrained and often highly gendered ways of being in intimate relationships, and patterns of emotional work amongst couples, that play a key role in maintaining it.

2.5 Layers of constraint: social inequality and fear

Domestic abuse is endemic in all societies, cutting across social divides (McCue 2008). However, the ways in fear and control have effects. In particular, the social and economic positioning of people who are abused may provide them with greater or fewer opportunities and resources with which they can resist abuse, overcome fear, get support, and leave the situation (Solokoff and Dupont 2005). These differences are strongly underpinned by structural social inequalities, especially gender, sexual orientation, income, class, ethnicity, migrant status and disability, all of which structure a context where it is more or less difficult to leave (see Section 4). This situation, which again is a societal issue rather than an individual one, can be termed structural vulnerability – some groups of people are more at risk from and more affected by violence and abuse than others (Pain 1997; Stanko 1990; Walklate 2007; Young 1990).

Gender is the key form of social difference that underpins the distribution and experience of domestic abuse. Overall, domestic abuse by men against women is more frequent, more severe, has more serious consequences, and - importantly in relation to this report – it creates more fear (Dobash and Dobash, 2004; Hester, 2009; Walby and Allen 2004). Cultural expectations around the roles of women and men, financial inequalities between them, and the predominant forms of masculinity and femininity in different societies both create and sustain this form of abuse (Hammer 2002; Stark 2007). However, a smaller number of men do experience domestic abuse from female partners, and in some cases this can be very serious and invoke particular patterns of fear (Hester 2009; Hines and Douglas 2010). As Betsy Stanko has argued, gender is still a highly relevant framing in these cases: "gender thrives within [a] fluidity of privilege and exclusion. This does not mean that all men and all women have the same relationship to privilege and exclusion. Gender, quite simply, still matters and influences the way we speak, conceptualize, and challenge violence" (Stanko 2006: 551).

For men who experience domestic abuse, cultural expectations about masculinity and being a man may shape the experience of abuse and fear, one's own and others' recognition of it as abuse, the ease with which they may admit to being frightened and seek informal and formal support, and specific fears about losing contact with children (Section 3); few consider that they might take children with them if they leave. Stephen says that although his wife was frequently physically violent, he was never afraid for his life, but he talks about his extreme shock and humiliation that his wife could be violent and controlling within marriage:

Stephen: Even now the problem with male victims still is unacknowledged in many quarters you know, just I mean I get looks blank incomprehension... I didn't have fear of being physically damaged seriously you know it was more, it was more a feeling of just being completely lost in this nightmare you know from which there was no escape, because but by that time I would have gone happily singing and dancing down the road to get away from her you know, but I couldn't bear to leave my children behind.

Sexual orientation is also a crucial factor in understanding both fear and the outcomes of abuse. Heterosexuality might be viewed as a key risk factor associated with domestic abuse, given that the vast majority of cases occur within heterosexual relationships and tend to reflect normative expectations about those relationships in some ways (see for example 2.4 in this section of the report). More precisely, however, we can understand the risks of domestic abuse, which are linked to both gender and sexuality, as arising from heteronormativity. Heteronormativity is the social framework, predominant in all societies, which produces and normalizes certain patterns of gender

relations, desires and roles within sexual and intimate relationships.

Equally, in same-sex partner abuse, it is not homosexuality that is the risk factor, but heteronormativity, because the predominant and 'compulsory' (Rich 1980) nature of heterosexuality positions those who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or queer as deviant and marginalised. Homophobia amongst wider society also structures the responses of others. There is growing evidence of abuse in same-sex relationships and additional issues concerning the nature of abuse and the process of seeking help (Donovan *et al.*, 2006; LGBT Domestic Abuse 2012; Whiting, 2007):

Michael: I think that's what's sometimes missing at the beginning, "oh this is two gay men, they've had a bit of a", well it was described to me by Victim Support they said that what, how the police look at two gay men "they've had a bit of a tiff, one's making a load of stories up to attack the other", and it absolutely wasn't the case and the evidence was just in abundance...the agencies I worked with I've got to say were absolutely terrible.

Petunia: It's difficult to have any legal protection and the second time I was abused it was rape so I found it difficult initially to even go to rape counselling...Because I was having to talk about something which isn't even seen as a crime...There was added pressure because you had to out yourself...It's like it's facing all these taboos within society and within my own brain as well that women don't do that to each other.

The relationship of social class and domestic abuse is difficult to determine, given that most of these crimes are unreported, and income affects the form of help-seeking behaviour and the ease of leaving (Walby and Allen, 2004). Nonetheless, poverty and material conditions are implicated both in producing domestic abuse and in the severity of the effects of fear, and provide one reason why it is not tackled to the extent it might be (Hammer, 2002; Fine, 2012; Fine *et al.*, 1998). A key aspect of entrapment is economic – for women who do not work outside the home, work part time or earn low wages, it is far more difficult to consider leaving than for women who earn independent high salaries. Very few women, of course, are high earners, especially those with young children. Of the women interviewed for this research, women from middle class backgrounds remained in the relationship for just as long as other women. Fear of economic hardship, especially where children are present, complicates decisions to leave.

Being in an ethnic minority, and/or having migrant status, also typically increases the fear and entrapment associated with being abused (hooks, 2000; Mama, 1996; Menjivar and Salcido 2002; Sokoloff and Dupont, 2005). Three women in the sample originated in other countries, and had come to Scotland either to marry or shortly after getting married. Some other women come as economic migrants, already married. Many of their experiences of domestic abuse are similar to those of the other women in the sample. However, they also faced significant additional risk factors. When the domestic abuse began, their isolation from family and friends was a significant problem for each of them, reinforcing their fear and working to compound the abuse. For Kim, complicated issues around her husband's visa kept her in the relationship for longer than she otherwise would have stayed, and she reported that he and his family deliberately used this to keep her with him. Titilope also felt responsible for her husband's status while he was applying for leave to remain in Scotland, and did not want to jeopardise her own application by reporting abuse. She also did not have access to the same state support that Scottish women have when they suffer domestic abuse, such as housing and knowledge about other services, leading to a number of unsuccessful attempts to leave her husband before she finally managed it. Such experiences are common (Menjivar and Salcido 2002). All three interviewees from migrant backgrounds had found the support of a specialised service for black and minority ethnic women experiencing domestic abuse to be vital.

One interviewee was a wheelchair user, and she talked about the impact of disability on her ability to leave her violent partner. In addition, seeking formal support and rehousing was more problematic for her:

Sam: So I was thinking about it [leaving] for ages and there's meant to be a refuge coming up but it's even harder for someone like me cos there might only be there's normally like one space for a wheelchair... that's how bad it is and everyone's chasing for it.

A number of other interviewees had no disability at the onset of the abuse, but developed mental health conditions as a result of the abuse which made it even harder to leave.

A range of social inequalities, then, create structural vulnerability, which has a serious effect on people experiencing domestic abuse. These inequalities heighten the risk of domestic abuse for certain people, and mean that fear is more severe and more difficult to ameliorate; and in turn, domestic abuse reinforces these inequalities.

3. Fear for children

So far, this report has focused on abusers and people being abused. With the exception of two interviewees who had been in same sex relationships and one woman whose children were adult, all of the interviewees had young children at the time of separation from their abusive partner. This section of the report illustrates the ways in which children were absolutely central to the fears of people being abused. Many interviewees say that the children's safety and wellbeing was their main concern. The women interviewed describe their fear for children as the worst part of the abusive situation, even where the abuse was all directed at them.

As well as being a key part of the trauma of abuse for the parent, fear for children can be both a reason for not leaving and a reason for leaving. This apparently contradictory situation is poorly understood by those without knowledge or experience of abuse; it is underlain by complex, delicate and sometimes risky decision-making processes that are explained in the rest of the report. However, these fears for children are both rational and justified. There is growing recognition of the effects of domestic abuse on children (Hester *et al.*, 2006; Scottish Womens Aid 2010a). Children are now commonly described as direct or indirect victims of domestic partner abuse. They are also implicated in abuse and in the fears that it creates in more complex ways.

3.1 Children as victims and witnesses

As is well documented, and was the case for many of the interviewees who had children, abuse often starts in pregnancy and gets worse when the first child is newborn (Humphreys and Mullender 2000):

Bobbie: Well I was frightened eh, I was really frightened because obviously I had no bedroom window left, I'd no living room window left, the glass was in her Moses basket ken and then I ended up losing Tanya just for a couple of year, she was in foster care through it.

Kate: Terry came up to the bedroom again where I was with the baby and he grabbed the baby's crib, cot and was kind of he kind of threw it over and ripped the, there was a mobile, he ripped the mobile off... the baby was just screaming and I was crying and I was saying that you really you know "give me the baby back I've got to get him to sleep" and he was saying "I can't give him back to you, you're crying, you're not fit to hold him".

As children get older, they are frequently witnesses of abuse, and are terrorised themselves, with effects that sometimes are not fully revealed until later on (Hester *et al.*, 2006; McGee 1997; Scottish Womens Aid 2010a).

Candy: Jamie was seeing a lot of that as well, which was you know, I used to say you know "if you're going to hit me just don't do it in front of him".

Some interviewees reported that their partners physically or sexually abused their children. The nature of this violence varied, and it always caused great distress to their mother. One interviewee reported that her baby had died at the age of three months because of the violence from her partner.

3.2 The deliberate use of children in partner abuse

Although most literature concentrates on children as direct victims or witnesses, children are also more closely involved (McGee 1997). Interviewees gave examples of children being used by abusers directly as a way of exerting control and emotionally abusing the other parent. They felt that abusers were aware of this effect and that it was intentional. For many, this took place during the relationship, and for some it continued or escalated after they had left.

Kim: I understood when he was saying that to me when the visa, when he'll get his visa he maybe he will take my daughters away... I was scared of this, of him taking my daughter away.

Cheryl: He would try and brainwash them like he would try and say "your mum's this and that".

Stephen: She would say to me "you don't look at your daughters the way a father should"...the vilest you know cruellest thing she could possibly say, but you see it was as if she was always seeking the worst things she could, ways she could sort of treat me.

Jennifer: When he was angry, he never, ever responded to my appeals to stop, or be quieter, or talk later, because of the children...But if someone came to the door, or the phone went, he sometimes calmed right down and spoke to them. So I've come to think that he could have calmed down, could have protected the children from seeing and hearing that.

Candy: He'd accused my son of touching Katie just to try and get her off me so my son had to go through the police and be questioned and interviewed.... it was all malicious and he laughed about that as well.

3.3 Give me a reason

Eventually, children often become a key reason for leaving. Mothers experiencing domestic abuse are still often blamed for not protecting children sooner by simply walking out. However, as has been explained here, in most cases leaving abusive situations is extremely difficult (Stark 2007). The majority of women being abused fear that they or their children will be killed if they leave (Humphreys and Thiara, 2002). Leaving, then, is often a delicate balancing act, and getting to the point where women feel they can leave – or have no other option - is a long term process.

Cheryl: That's what made me walk away because I just, to be honest with you I don't know if I would still put myself through it if it was only me, but I knew I couldnae put my kids through it any more.

Ellie: I'm going "no, I need to get out of this because I've got two bairns to think about for their safety" and I goes "what happens if he turns on them?"

Bobbie: I just wanted really to be myself and keep my kids safe eh, and I couldnae do that while I was with him.

Jennifer: She watched him physically attack me, she had nightmares for a week, she couldn't sleep, she wanted to sleep with me... and because I suddenly saw this impact on her I was just like "right, that is it, you have to move out".

Nina: I thought you know “he could have killed me, who could look after my children?” So I had planned that night I had thought I am going to pack my bag...something inside me that said “no I have to improve life for my daughters, I have to give them a better chance”.

Emma: I'm standing up for myself and I'm standing up for my children at the end of the day.

4. Finding security: strength and fear

This section describes the emotional changes that take place leading up to and during survivors taking steps to end a situation of domestic abuse. It highlights the courage, strength and resistance among people who are abused, not just for those who manage to leave an abusive situation, but for those who remain. These emotions are not separate from fear, but are experienced alongside it.

This section does not focus solely on ‘leaving’ the relationship, as ending abuse is a complex and often incomplete process. A number of interviewees tried to leave the situation several times over many years. For many, the abuse continued after they had physically ‘left’ the abuser and their previous home. Moreover, while many interviewees had to leave their family homes to make themselves and their children safer (and this is still the general social expectation in cases of domestic abuse), a preferable and more just outcome is for them to remain at home without the abuser. For these reasons, the phrase ‘finding security’ is used, to better reflect the often long-term struggles for safety of those who are abused.

Although the focus here is on individual emotions and actions, it is important that resistance and survival are not individualised (made the responsibility of the person being abused). The research also demonstrates that many people around the abused person, and in wider society, have a vital role in creating a context where it is more or less possible for people being abused to leave. The role of informal social support, and services such as Womens Aid, were crucial for many survivors.

The findings strongly suggest that leaving takes huge courage and personal resources on the part of those who are being abused, and that this situation is often risky and sometimes life-threatening for survivors and their children.

4.1 Mixed feelings

While this report has largely focused on fear so far, emotions are not ‘single’ in the way they are felt or experienced. Fear always exists alongside other emotions, and is an inseparable part of them. As domestic abuse takes place in intimate relationships and a wider social and cultural context, these emotions can be highly complex. Fear itself changes and shifts over time, in response to the abusive situation, and especially in response to other people’s feelings and responses to it. Courage and strength are always present throughout abusive situations at the same time as fear, as well as a range of other emotions. In particular, interviewees talked about hate, anger, humiliation, shame, pride, strength and hope.

One common myth is that abused women remain in relationships in which they are abused because of love (Hammer 2002). None of the interviewees described feeling love or affection towards their partner once the abuse had become established. Some still felt a degree of care and responsibility (Section 2) – but increasingly, as time went on, most came to dislike and hate both their situation and the abuser:

Candy: You do love that person so much then you know he basically changes into a monster is how I can describe it, that love went quite quick after that.

Kate: I had felt “I hate you” so many times and “I’m going to leave you”, that’s what I used to think when he was you know screaming or berating me or threatening me and getting in my face you know screaming, I would be thinking “I hate you, I hate you and I’m going to leave you and I can’t wait”.

Nonetheless, responsibility and duty – mainstays of our expectations within intimate relationships - figure strongly. As Section 2 outlined, these are gendered, with many women taking on responsibility for trying to ‘fix’ abuse. Stephen, the heterosexual man in the sample, fell out of love with his fiancée during their engagement due to her bizarre behaviour. However, his sense of responsibility meant that he felt he had no option than to go through with the wedding and a long, abusive marriage. Humiliation, shame and pride also emerge as important forces within interviewees’ accounts:

Kate: It’s very humiliating to say “I’ve been a victim or I am a victim you know and I also stayed in that situation” and that’s something that many people don’t understand...I didn’t want to be judged, I didn’t want to be seen as that, I didn’t want to be seen as weak or you know emotionally unstable.

Petunia: It was like all the struggle that I’d gone through as well especially with my parents not being happy at all, it’s like you struggle that hard to be in a gay relationship and you’ll put up with things that you possibly shouldn’t... that’s why I wanted to talk to you as well, it’s actually helping me to say it and not be ashamed.

The report turns next to courage, strength and hope, which are always present at the same time as fear. The focus is how this combination works and shifts to play a key role in the process by which people who are being abused become survivors.

4.2 Strength and resisting domestic abuse

Throughout abuse, those who are being abused are not passive victims. Many contest violence in different ways. A few fight back physically (Hester, 2009), while all gather resources and develop numerous strategies to try to cope and deal with the abuse (Harne and Radford 2008, McCue, 2008; Williamson 2010). Many of these may be small acts of ‘quiet politics’ (Askins 2012) rather than large resistances; people being abused doing what they are able to do to challenge abuse, reduce fear and improve security in the situation they are in. Many undergo the long process of becoming survivors, eventually leaving the relationship and reconstructing their lives (Abrahams, 2010; Herman, 1997; Tamas 2011). The subject positions of abusers and abused may be multiple, messy and shifting (Tamas 2011). Power does not solely lie with the abuser - power and resistance are not coherent or stable, but entangled together (Sharp *et al.*, 2000). There is much to recognise and highlight in the agency and resistance of those being abused or at risk of abuse, as much as the ability or willingness of protectors such as the state to rescue them. Rhonda Hammer has suggested that:

We need both analyses of how men use violence to control women and analyses of how women have managed to exert power in extreme situations. This is all the more impressive because this exertion of power, resistance and agency emanates from such disadvantaged positions (Hammer, 2002: 124).

Fear and courage are not separate emotional states (Koskela, 1996; Panelli *et al.*, 2005), but are present at the same time, and are negotiated by people who are threatened by abuse in complex ways (Pain 1997). Fear itself is fluid and changes, and as well as being a central element in entrapment, it is also involved in the processes by which people who are abused become survivors.

Interviewees describe fear and strength co-existing in this way, the balance between them shifting, receding and recovering as time goes on; and eventually, for all of those in the sample, helping them to leave:

Margie: Having to be strong on one side and try and pretend there’s nothing wrong, and being controlled

and manipulated at the same time, try to be strong for the kids.

Kim: How do you say when you are trying your best...determined, I was determined.

Sam: It is actually thinking about doing it, and doing it [leaving]...It's two different things...But I just did it one day.

4.3 Critical moments

All of those interviewed describe a critical moment: an event when something happens that is accompanied by an emotional shift. Typically, at these key times, the balance between fear and strength alters, and this (immediately or eventually) helps them to improve their security. During this emotional shift, strength takes over, but it is often precipitated by fear which still always remains present. What interviewees describe is not a sudden change of heart, but the culmination of a gradual, long term change in perspective, emotions, and/or simply the ability to leave. While the support and encouragement of others – family, friends or a service worker or other professional – affects people's responses to these critical moments, they only result in a significant change in security if the emotional shift is also present. Nonetheless, what these other people tell the person being abused about the abuse is sometimes very important in the shift (see Section 2).

In most cases, the critical moment is triggered by a particular incident of abuse, and a sudden sense that it was too much. Children are often central in critical moments (see Section 3):

Kim: He described the way he was going to kill me in front of my daughter who was I believe three and a half or four...for him to scare my daughter this way because then she was crying, begging him to not kill me that was, you know, the alarm... I just called the police...I mean I was so, the change was so strong, I did say I wasn't even scared any more.

Cheryl: He started as in punching me and pulling my hair and everything and like, when the kids at that moment in time...I knew that I was out of there and I wasn't looking back... I was scared and I was anxious and I was distraught and everything like, I knew as soon as I was getting out that door I was running.

For a few, a major life event changes perspective and outlook on the abuser and the relationship:

Jennifer: Eighteen months before the marriage ended I was diagnosed with cancer ...and three Saturday mornings running he attacks me and you know at this time I had this big tumour in my abdomen...I started thinking "this is not a nice thing to do to your wife who is waiting for an operation for cancer". But then the other thing that happened during that period was...suddenly you are in the position where everybody's doing stuff for you... and then you know there was Philip standing next to these people, and I looked at them and I looked at him, and I thought "what a piece of shit" you know...and that was a huge change.

Or it may just be a very small incident or comment that is felt as the last straw after years of abuse:

Margie: When he accused me of not letting him get the full potential out of his bus pass I just snapped and inside me I just grabbed my mobile... I just rang up my son and said I'm leaving him tomorrow...I just suddenly thought I don't have to put up with this....I think I must have been subconsciously getting more and more angry that he wouldn't let me out...I think I just got so angry that the anger overrode being scared.

In each case, as Margie describes, feelings other than fear (such as strength, anger, determination) take over. This is not to say that fear subsides – it often remains present and even heightens, and leaving is always a risky and frightening experience.

For Ellie, the critical moment was not experienced until after leaving:

Ellie: When I was going down the town I had to take my alarm...just in case I seen him...it was a nightmare...He was across the other side with his girlfriend. And he made a point of leaving her and coming right in front of me and the bairns, and going past, and I'm going "you're a fucking arse" and I just kept walking...And I wasn't, I didn't panic, my hands weren't shaking...I thought to myself, I'm going "look I've put up with your crap for so long" I goes "you are not getting away with it now"...Then I seen him once after that and I just looked him straight in the eyes and I just kept walking, and I was fine after that one.

These moments are not single points in time, but rather the result of a long development of fighting fear, making judgments about risk and security, and juggling different feelings. Sometimes there are several critical moments before, during and after leaving(s). Again, these interviewees described impressive strength and courage, but so do those who stay:

Margie: I tried to leave him after we'd been married for seven years, I did leave him... I went by train I didn't take a car, and my dad gave me a cup of coffee, gave the kids something to drink...and drove us straight back. He said "you've made your bed you've got to lie in it"...So basically I went back and I had to make a decision that I'm just going to have to stick it out.

Margie stuck it out for another 30 years.

5. After separation: fear, trauma and restoration

5.1 Fear as a result of continuing abuse

After separation, abuse often continues or escalates (Harne and Redford 2008; Humphreys and Thiara, 2002). For interviewees, this ranged from serious physical or sexual assault to harassment and stalking, sometimes continuing for years. In several cases, interviewees described their abuser returning to the house they were living, whether or not they had an injunction or other legal measure to prevent this. In others, the abuser's ongoing contact with children provided the opportunity for him to abuse the interviewee:

Ellie: When he was on police bail...he kept coming down to the bottom of the street...I woke up in the morning and my bird table and everything was on fire and I says "no, I need to get out of here" I goes, "because he's going to put something through the door and it's just going to go up [in flames]".

Candy: Then next thing I get court letters trying to get Katie off me again so he turned nasty. I tried to reason with him and he says "well I'll tell you what if you want me to let you go and move and stuff I'll come to the house and we'll have a chat about it"...He raped me and do you know my children were in the bedroom playing and I screamed "no", I shouted, I pushed him off...and I didn't report it because I was petrified. One I was scared that dismiss it and everything would be like "why did you let him in your home when you ran away from him in the first place?"...Secondly you know how hard it is for women to deal with rape and you know the way courts can be.

Because of this ongoing abuse, fear not only continues post-separation but may be heightened. This fear heightens the other insecurities and uncertainties that interviewees were facing (primarily over housing and money). Fear is sometimes a reason for returning to live with the abuser, as this may seem a more controllable and less frightening option:

Bobbie: It didnae matter how many times I locked my door or whatever he was at my door kicking it and everything...so and I always took him back... he kept coming back...and everything would be fine, it would be good for a couple of months and then it just went all pear shape again.

This feeling of being unable to escape from the abuser, even post-separation, was often the point at which some of the interviewees contacted support services (or had this done by others on their behalf); the only option being to move into a refuge:

Emma: The police had my locks changed...[they said] I would get rapid response and I goes to them "well how quick is rapid response?" and they went to me "seven minutes". I went "no fuck it by then I'll be dead"...

Rachel: You knew you were not going to be safe.

Emma: I wasnae going to be safe. My decision was if you're leaving somebody you have to leave everything, I lost everything, he ripped all my bairns clothes up, he ripped all my clothes up...all my photographs of all my children when they were younger when they were babies he ripped them all, burned them, he's took everything, absolutely everything that I had he's took basically you know. OK my worst mistake was leaving the house in the first place but I'm not left with any other option you know. ...I mean at the end of the day my man works the full length of Britain up and down Britain right?...So as far as I'm concerned if I want to be safe I need to remove myself out of Britain altogether.

5.2 Trauma: the effects of chronic fear

After separation, those interviewed described their emotions as mixed – some felt a great sense of relief, and sometimes a sense of peace. However, these feelings were often fleeting and mixed, as abuse often continues after separation (above). Survivors also have to deal with the effects of trauma, which sometimes only fully surface once they are out of the situation. After leaving, interviewees reported post-traumatic stress including panic attacks, nightmares, flashbacks, anxiety, depression, sleep problems and phobias, all of which are effects of the chronic fear associated with domestic abuse. These after-effects can take a long time to settle:

Emma: I feel a bit better now, I still look over my shoulders all the time, I don't really go out unless I've got somebody there with me. I've got antidepressants, I suffer from anxiety you know, how am I going to trust anybody in another relationship?

Candy: I think that relationship is where the agoraphobia has come from, because once I had gotten rid of him I then couldn't go out my door and couldn't figure out why you know, because I thought "oh yes I've got freedom again" and I actually didn't.

Michael: And the nightmares and things that went with that...you have a bad dream when you're actually getting up and you are like waking up and you're in some kind of daze and you are trying to get out of rooms...It's an absolute fear of noise and when you walk round a corner, when you're in the supermarket if you bump into somebody...came up behind me and put his hands on me shoulders and kind of went "hiya mate!" and I really felt like I was going to collapse, it's anything that's like noisy.

Ellie: I still panic a wee bit when I hear folk shouting outside, my heart goes ten to the dozen.

Meghan: I mean the flashbacks you get as well eh and that's what I couldnae cope with and terrified at night...The fear is I mean it just fills you with anxiety ken, nerves I mean I was terrified to go out ken on my own driving my car... What that does to your self-esteem it just kind of just totally knocks everything out of you and you just have nothing.

As well as these symptoms, for some there are effects on self-perception and self esteem that may influence how survivors react to new situations for many years:

Nina: Sometimes when someone says "oh that's you've really done well here" I get taken aback and I feel "oh is that me?" And also speaking up where I should be speaking up, sometimes I am not able to, although the person is not my husband or they are not going to shout at me like he used to, still just that habit of thinking and feeling "if I'm quiet everything will be OK".

5.3 Restoration: living with and past fear

In addition, survivors are adjusting to a new life. For some this means a new home, new schools for children and/or new employment; for all, it means financial worries, dealing with children's emotional issues which again may surface after separation, getting used to being single or establishing new relationships.

Again, while fear does not recede completely over time (and especially where abuse continues), strength emerges as a key emotion. Interviewees talk about positive as well as negative changes and personal issues, their pride in having changed their situation for themselves and their children, and sometimes having a new perspective on life (Herman 1997):

Meghan: I dinnae want to like sit in ken missing my life because of that one person eh? Because I mean he's not doing that ken, I mean he's definitely not missing his life after what he done, and no I wouldnae, I wouldnae give in to him.

Cheryl: If he actually came through here now I don't feel as if he'd have the same impact on me now... I wouldn't feel so threatened.

Michael: There's things that are they don't go away, you want them to but they're never going to go away but it's "how am I going to live with them now?"... I go out, I enjoy meself, I smile, I do the things you know, I get on with me job, me job's very, very important to me and so I feel as if I've, I have come out the other side but it's still there.

Rachel: When you are talking you sound like you are a really strong person, do you think you always were?
Ellie: No...that's just kind of developed after the abuse that he's done to me, and I've had to be strong for the bairns and what they have went through and it's just kicked off from there.

Kate: I think that I just you know I had been quite clear for a long time that this was his problem and not my problem you know, I didn't really have to sort of reconstruct my self-belief, and in fact in some ways I had more self-belief at the end of the marriage than I did at the beginning.

Other positive changes mentioned include feeling able to parent better, returning to college or retraining. Several survivors had taken up voluntary work as a direct result of their experiences and their desire to help others. Some had established new, much happier relationships (although two women had experienced a second relationship in which they were abused). Yet recovery from the chronic fear that accompanies abuse is a long process, and one that is never complete (Tamas 2011).

Cheryl: I feel more confident now...about life as well...I'm proud of myself like how far I've come and like that I done it on my own.

Stephen: No, no it never goes away, no.

Ellie: Move forward, dinnae go back the way, there's hope for the future and just forget about the past, just keep it in the past.

Conclusions

Key findings

Overall, this research suggests that domestic abuse can be considered a form of everyday terrorism. It creates long-lasting fear and trauma, which reinforce the abuser's control over the abused person. It affects vastly greater numbers of people than global terrorism, and it has impacts on many aspects of society as well as on the individual.

The frequency and prolonged nature of domestic abuse, the psychological aspects of this control, and the setting in which domestic abuse takes place all help to explain these higher levels of fear and trauma.

The research demonstrates that:

1. Fear in situations of domestic abuse is distinctive.
2. The psychological and emotional control that result from fear are a key way in which domestic abuse 'works'.
3. Concern for children is central to the fears of many people who experience domestic abuse.
4. People experiencing domestic abuse are not passive victims, but take many actions to improve their security.
5. After separation, fear often continues. Recovery and restoration are long processes.

Implications

The research has a number of implications for policy and practice:

- A key task for service providers and other agencies is to promote understanding amongst those who respond to domestic abuse about the nature and role of fear. Responses based on individual incidents are likely to be inadequate, as they do not recognise the risk, complexity and chronic fear of long term abuse.
- Positive and empathetic responses from informal social networks (friends, families and neighbours) and service providers are vital to those experiencing abuse: they make a significant difference to the capacity to resist and escape abuse. Wider social recognition of the nature of domestic abuse and the role of fear has an important role in informing these responses.
- More attention and understanding are needed to the additional problems faced by particular groups when experiencing domestic abuse, especially people in sexual and ethnic minorities, migrants and people with disabilities; and to the issue of male victimization. This should not be at the expense of budgets for or attention given to others suffering domestic abuse.
- Given that it is so widespread and has such severe effects, tackling domestic abuse is under-resourced. Recent cuts are having serious impacts on the ability to provide life-saving services.

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