A jointly funded project by the European Social Fund and
Manchester Metropolitan University

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND MINORITISATION
- supporting women to independence

Janet Batsleer
Erica Burman
Khatidja Chantler
Hindene Shirley McIntosh
Kamal Pantling
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1 INTRODUCTION

Erica Burman

This research study, 'From Domestic Violence to Independence', was jointly funded by the European Social Fund (ESF) and the Manchester Metropolitan University (MMU), from September 2001 to July 2002. Its key aim was to identify, model and evaluate support for African, African-Caribbean, Irish, Jewish and South Asian women surviving domestic violence, with a specific focus on Manchester. It was conducted by a culturally diverse team, across several departments and was based in the Women's Studies Research Centre of MMU.

To our knowledge, no previous research has explored the intersections of (what we here call) minoritisation and domestic violence in terms of our dual focus. We explore this, firstly, in terms of investigating whether specific aspects of women's positions and relationships are relevant to the accessibility of services; and, secondly, in relation to the range of cultural backgrounds and minority cultures that form our concern here. Thus while some previous research has focused on black women and interventions around domestic violence (e.g. Mama, 1989; Bhattacharjee, 1997; Patel, 2000), and some other (largely unpublished) work is now emerging around Irish women (e.g. Prendergast, 1995), we are not aware of any work that has attempted to explore women's positions and accounts of service engagement from different minority group backgrounds alongside each other that span the conventional 'black/white' divide. In this sense, this study arises from a desire to develop feminist antiracist strategy (in elaborating strategies for working across and between communities) as well as in relation to improving the accessibility and quality of provision around domestic violence. Crucially, this research is about the intersection of both.

In this report we present some preliminary findings from the research. In this Introduction we outline our reasons for focusing on minoritised women, and in particular why we have focused on these four backgrounds or heritages, in relation to domestic violence. Secondly we highlight the local context for this study, in terms of the cultural composition of Manchester and in terms of currently available statistics on domestic violence. This frames our introduction to the study itself, including its aims and objectives, the constitution of the research team, and the rationale for our interest in group work. We then present some further information on the conduct of the study: how our approach was implemented in terms of the model and design of the study, an outline of the different phases of the research, how we addressed the

ethical considerations necessarily involved in work of this kind, and finally the limitations of the study, both in terms of the work we have been able to do, and the claims we would want to make from this.

1.1 Why these groups?

This research focused specifically on the experiences and positions of African, African-Caribbean, South Asian, Jewish and Irish women surviving domestic violence. In focusing on any racialised or minoritised group we do not imply that this is the only group in which domestic violence occurs. Nor that domestic violence is any more or less prevalent within those communities (although there is currently much debate about how domestic violence in general connects with issues of poverty, in which class position might well intersect with the position of being from a minoritised cultural background, see Haaken, 2002). Rather, our concern was to explore what an attention to minoritised positioning might contribute to improvements in service design and delivery.

Clearly identifying any individual on the basis of cultural or racialised membership is problematic, and potentially indulges prevailing racist stereotypes. It is relevant to note at the outset therefore that in this study we did not assume that self-identification within one or more of the minoritised groupings topicalised within this study implied a homogeneity of experience; nor that representation of that minoritised identification lay with official or public community leaders. Our perspective was that all communities are internally diverse, as well as integrally connected to others (so that we cannot assume singular membership of any particular category). Rather within and between African, African-Caribbean, Irish and Jewish identifications, in addition to minoritised status, there are inequalities structured around gender, class, disability and sexual orientation (to name just some key examples).

There are of course differences in the (self)representations of the 4 minoritised communities who form the focus of this study. For while South Asian, African and African-Caribbean and Irish peoples carry 'nationality' labels that relate to countries of emigration and histories of exile (albeit each spanning very diverse cultural heritages), these are limiting in the sense that they can be read as implying some essential cultural heritage as originating from those countries, rather than as arising from the ways in which people bearing those heritages are treated in this country. In particular there are key occlusions of religious identification (e.g. Muslim vs. Hindu), which in other contexts figure as major categorizations that both unite and divide across those racialised labels. Arguably all such descriptions have their relevance (as

reflections of minoritised status) and limitations. For example, to what extent are Irish people oppressed in Britain as (largely) Catholics or as specifically Irish, and is it possible to disentangle the two issues? Similarly although the category Jewish is typically interpreted as a religious identification, it is as much a cultural as a religious practice with a long tradition of secular cultural and political activity. The same argument could perhaps be applied to the interpretation and application of 'Muslim' identification, which could be understood as a signifier of a minoritised culture as much as a specifically religious classification. Yet Jews and until recently Irish people did not feature in ethnic monitoring procedures, thus making Jewish people more invisible. Indeed it is only recently 1994 that the Committee for Racial Equality has recognized Irish as a minority ethnic group for the purposes of ethnic monitoring (c.f. CRE, 1997).

So, given that we could have focused on issues for women from many other and more minoritised groups, why these four in particular?

This study arose from a previous study exploring service responses to South Asian women who had attempted suicide or self-harmed (Chantler et al, 2001). In this we documented that domestic violence was a key precursor to South Asian women's suicide attempts. Given the issues we identified there of institutional neglect and exclusion from services on the basis of greater priority being accorded women's racialised (as South Asian) over gendered positioning, a further exploration of how issues of representations of culture and gender enter into the structure of services around domestic violence for these and other minoritised groups of women seemed merited.

While the category 'black' has traditionally been used to highlight common political cause between people of African, African-Caribbean and South Asian descent, this has been criticized as being at the expense of overlooking key cultural differences as well as differences arising from racialised positioning within contemporary British racist contexts. Racism towards black people has longstanding origins (in European colonialism and imperialism) as well as current repetitions within the contemporary political scene. Notwithstanding actual differences of classification (let alone self-identifications) 'colour' is typically used as an immediate basis for categorization, and as the Macpherson Report (1999) indicated, with key deleterious consequences.

As already indicated, our aim in researching women's experiences across the 'black'/ 'white' divide, therefore, far from devaluing the structuring significance of racism (in its state, institutional and personal forms), also includes the attempt to highlight some of the more subtle ways racialised assumptions interact with gendered representations. While (usually) 'passing' as 'white', Irish and Jewish people are also

longstanding cultural minorities within Britain with long histories of being subject to persecution (and while at least for Jews this is sometimes seen as structured around a religious identification, we would argue that these positions are racialised in significant ways) (Cohen, 1984; Curtis, 1984; Hillyard, 1983; O'Flynn et al. 1993; O'Shea, 1989). Moreover for both people of Irish and Jewish descent there are ambiguities about visibility and invisibility that produce particularly slippery forms of stereotyping, and makes claims of stigmatising racialisation incontestable. As one Irish woman in our study commented:

'Both my names are very distinctively Irish and apparently I look Irish. I'm supposed to look very very Irish and sometimes even before I'd open my mouth or say what my name was, people would ask if I was Irish and I'd think yes. By the same rule, if you challenged it, people would say they couldn't tell I was Irish.... I think that's been one of the hardest challenges, to say we're not invisible. I think that's what hurts me more than anything. Because they can choose, they say they didn't know I was Irish.'

We therefore use the term 'minoritised' here as encompassing the position of African, African-Caribbean, Jewish and Irish people in Britain (specifically Manchester) today, as drawing attention to commonalities produced through experiences of cultural marginsalisation and oppression. We do so without aiming to resolve such longstanding debates as whether Jews and Irish people are subject to racism, or whether there is a specifically organised form of racism directed towards these particular groups, or rather that this is another form of oppression. Hence in this report we shift between different usages, though often indicating some qualification e.g. 'anti-Irish racism'. Our preference for the (admittedly rather unwieldy) term 'minoritisation' is because the current epithet in policy parlance, 'minority ethnic', runs the risk of treating that minority status as something inherent to that particular group, rather than understanding it as the outcome of a *process* of being *positioned as* a minority. The complementary term 'majoritisation' is used in this report to indicate the positions of the culturally dominant as an outcome of historical, cultural and economic processes whose legacies remain powerful. In this we draw on discussions that speak of 'racialisation', rather than 'race' or 'racism' (Yuval Davis and Anthias, 1993; Hesse, 2000; Werbner and Modood, 1997).

The focus of this study therefore not only arises from the personal commitments and identifications of the research team, but also from a feminist anti-racist perspective that sees racialised and national identifications as also interacting in gender-specific ways (Brewer, 1993; Yuval-Davis, 1997). In addition to the specific ways in which racialised stereotypes shift across racialised categories (to link Irish and African-Caribbean, or Jewish and South Asian, peoples, for example), we want to challenge

the notion that only 'black' peoples are 'raced' or have 'ethnicity'. Hence 'whiteness' should also be regarded as a 'colour', that is, as having culture, history and diversity. This study therefore follows from calls both to 'colour in' 'whiteness' ((charles), 1992) and to build alliances across communities which are historically divided by relations of racial and class privilege/subjugation.

Within Manchester, there are relevant historical links to be made that join the histories and struggles of different minoritised communities. Irish people were the earliest documented racialised group of migrants to Manchester in the mid-nineteenth century, succeeded by Jews, then especially in the post war period by African-Caribbean, African and South Asian groups. It may be significant that the first anti-immigration legislation in this country was passed to limit the immigration of Jews from Eastern Europe, whose increasing presence elicited much of the racist sentiments (including being seen as a drain on public resources, taking away jobs from English nationals, and a threat to racial - and even sexual - purity) that characterize current forms of racism towards black people (Cohen, 1984, 1987, 1988, 2001). It should also be noted that this is also a story of class struggle, for this common class identification is also one useful way to link and build alliances across the traditional black/white divide - one that historically has been absent from recent equal opportunities discourse and policy (MacDonald et al, 1989). At the very least this history, as also reflected in the accounts of the women survivors of domestic violence documented here, shows that issues of refugee status and asylum seeking are certainly not only 'black' issues, either historically or currently. Yet as our previous study (Chantler et al, 2001) also made clear, state practices around immigration control and legislation directly enter into the violence that women are subjected to, and reduce their options for leaving violent relationships. In this sense questions of refuge and asylum are linked in many, and complex, ways.

Moreover, our focus on these four groups arises as much from the need to attend to difference as to similarity. More specifically in terms of the gender specificities, particular issues arise for women from the different background or heritage groups when facing domestic violence. While we are cautious about providing a 'multicultural awareness' list, certain aspects of religion, custom or practice emerge that are relevant to understanding the issues faced by women surviving domestic violence. As we will show, ignorance or devaluation of the significance of these issues informs women's difficulties in accessing and engaging with mainstream services around domestic violence.

1.2 Local context

The study was conducted with a key focus on Manchester. The local context is clearly influenced by national policy and priorities, the most visible of which is the Crime and Disorder Reduction Strategy. The Crime and Disorder Partnership's three year strategy (2002-2005) identifies reducing domestic violence as one of its key priorities. It has seven key aims: identifying victims and improving reporting and recording of domestic violence, targeting repeat incidents, supporting victims, protecting children, pro-active intervention with perpetrators, diversity, improving overall quality, and improving co-ordination of services. We note with interest that our research study is mentioned in the Domestic Violence Action Plan (2002/2003) under diversity. While we believe this study will indeed contribute to understandings of diversity, it also presents useful pointers for the other aims of the action plan. We therefore remain hopeful that the recommendations of our study will be taken up by the Domestic Violence Theme Group as part of the Crime Reduction Strategy as well as by partner agencies.

In terms of local domestic violence provision, the Domestic Violence Help Line plays a key role, particularly as a first port of call to women needing support. In terms of specialist i.e. domestic violence support services, there are currently 6 refuges in Manchester. Two of these focus on supporting black women and children, four of the refuges offer mixed provision. There is also a city-wide domestic violence inter-agency forum.

Statistics provided by the Manchester Domestic Violence Helpline show that a total of 7448 callers contacted the service from April 2000 to March 2002. Callers are invited to self-identify for ethnic monitoring purposes. It is interesting to note that 'Jewish' does not form a category on the statistics available. This would seem to indicate either that Jewish women do not contact the Helpline, or are reluctant to identify as Jewish; or else that they are classified as 'other'. Apart from those who self-identify as white British, the next largest category is of women who identify as Asian. In terms of a further breakdown of women's additional needs (where these are known), mental health issues form the biggest category, followed by substance misuse and then language needs. Numbers relating to immigration issues, asylum and 'no recourse to public funds' are also noted.

1.3 Partners

This study was conceived and planned in consultation with three key local

organizations, Saheli (refuge for Asian women) and Hosla (their outreach service), a Black women's refuge in Manchester and the Manchester-based Women's Electronic Village Hall (providers of training around information and communication technologies for women, with a specific remit to focus on marginalized groups of women). Manchester Early Years and Play were generous in their donation of venues and childcare for the groupwork. Moreover, while these organizations have remained key partners, others have emerged in the course of this Study. These include: Jewish Women's Aid, 42nd Street, Voices and Choices of the Zion Centre, and Chrysalis.

A large steering group was formed to support and comment on the process of the study. Membership of the steering group (listed at the beginning of this report) included representatives from statutory and voluntary sector services, drawn from both general health and welfare services and culturally-specific services relating to the four minoritised communities who form the focus of this study (where these existed). This was in addition to representatives from both generic and from culturally specific domestic violence services (where these existed). We are grateful to the steering group for their dedication and commitment to this study, and for their openness and willingness to engage in critical and constructive debate with us and with each other.

1.4 Who 'we' are: The research team

It is important to recognize the location of this research within a multicultural team of researchers, based in a University, including English and Christian women as well as women who share histories and identities with the women who formed the focus for the project. As indicated in the multiple authorship of this report, as a research team we brought different experiences, as well as professional trainings, institutional positions and cultural heritages to this research. The issues we faced of working across different cultural and institutional positions, as well as meanings of working in an all-women team, meant that we had to grapple with precisely those questions of the negotiations around both practices of cultural 'matching' and intercultural work that lie at the heart of current service dilemmas (Aitken and Burman, 1999; Gowrisunkur et al, 2002; Burman et al, 1998). While not easy to deal with, but consistent with discussions of subjectivity and reflexivity in research (e.g. Berg and Smith, 1985; Hunt, 1996; Hollway, 1989: Maynard and Purvis, 1994; Wilkinson, 1988), we have attempted to use our experiences as resources to inform our analyses.

Hence our process inevitably reflected features of provider organisations' experiences of working around domestic violence, and also that of women who have experienced domestic violence. This is a difficult area of work, and questions of support and safety

for workers as well as users of services will figure as key topics in this report. This also connects with our consideration of the ethical dilemmas encountered within this research.

1.5 Aims and objectives of the study

In proposing the study we anticipated that key barriers for women facing domestic violence in terms of their access to services were emotional support and practical considerations such as childcare and transport issues. While domestic violence is a feature of many women's lives across all cultural communities (whether from dominant or minoritised backgrounds), we wanted to explore the extent to which women's minoritised status impacted on their access to and experiences of services.

More specifically, the study aimed:

- to identify and evaluate current service provision for minoritised women and their children facing domestic violence in the Manchester area;
- to identify barriers to accessing services and their intersections with structures of minoritisation;
- to highlight implications for service provision, delivery and practices, including for mainstream and specialist service providers, both in terms of a remit around domestic violence and cultural specificity;
- in particular, to identify the extent to which culturally specialist services around domestic violence (where they exist) fulfil the needs of women identifying with those cultural backgrounds; and correlatively the extent to which culturally-specific provision that is not currently available is indicated;
- to add to or prefigure possible service developments by assessing the demand for, and if wanted to set up, short-term support groups for women who have experienced domestic violence.

It defined as its objectives, that by the end of the study:

- the perspectives of representatives from relevant local organizations involved in providing services to women experiencing or escaping domestic violence will have been documented;
- the perspectives of approximately 25 women identifying as coming from an African, African-Caribbean, Jewish or Irish cultural background will have been documented, in relation to their service use in the context of having experienced domestic violence;
- strategies for improving minoritised women's access to services will have been identified, including:

  - the formulation of implications for provision of culturally-specific and mainstream services;
- specific service providers in Manchester will have met for the duration of the study via the establishment of a steering group;
- assessment of the extent to which supported groupwork might be a viable support strategy for women making the transition from violent relationships to living independently;
- to provide evidence indicating directions for future service development according to preferred culturally-identified membership.

1.6 Group work

We should point out that our identification of group work as an area for development arose from our previous study (Chantler et al, 2001) in which supported self-help groups were identified by participants as a gap in provision that they would particularly have wanted. It was an also an area of development that was identified both in that study and in preliminary consultations for this study with provider organizations, who indicated that there was a demand for such provision, but did not have the resources to set these up. While Manchester does have a history of group work for women around the theme of domestic violence, at the time of developing and embarking on this project there were no groups in existence as far as we were aware, although Central Manchester Refuge were in the process of trying to generate some funding for this. Hence we should note that it is pleasing to see that at least one such group is now emerging, alongside the continuation of some of the groups that we initiated for the study.

We therefore saw this study as a way of exploring modes of access and provision for women surviving domestic violence that service providers might be able to build upon. Groups are traditionally regarded as resource-intensive and demanding to set up and run (although as a mode of treatment or intervention they are also considered cost-effective). It is also clear that not all users feel comfortable, or are suited to, working in groups. Further, we recognise that there are other arenas of group work that are not constituted with direct reference to domestic violence that may still address them successfully, especially because the direct link with domestic violence is often seen as stigmatising. However, we were concerned that the absence of explicitly convened arenas could collude with more general silencing around domestic violence. In general it is clear that groups can successfully work to address many of the difficulties that previous research on women surviving domestic violence (e.g. Wilcox, 2000) has identified as critical to their successful transitions to independent living. These

include: reducing isolation, forging links with other women, sharing practical advice and tips, gaining confidence and skills sharing. For women from minoritised backgrounds, a key question for exploration was whether (or not) women would feel more able or willing to access services, and join a group, when the service or group was convened around a shared cultural identity.

1.7 How the study was conducted

In this section we provide further information on the structure and process of the study:

1.7.1 Research approach, model and design

The study used qualitative research methods to document a range of perspectives generated by semi-structured interviews with service providers and users (e.g. Banister et al, 1994). Our framework for interpretation was constructionist (Burr, 1995), in the sense that we understood the different perspectives as each reflecting a relevant reality that was true for each participant. By this we mean we were not therefore concerned to evaluate, or distinguish between, perspectives that could be deemed 'right' or 'wrong', but rather to interpret the accounts generated by the interviews as all indicating relevant representations of the issues under investigation. However, the study was also informed by a feminist commitment, that we believe is broadly shared by the provider organizations involved in this study, that women's accounts of their experiences of services should be privileged in order to better understand what helps and hinders their access to and use of services (Harding, 1993; Henwood et al, 1998).

Beyond documenting what is happening, constructionist and feminist approaches to research also highlight how research itself has effects on what it observes (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994; Henwood et al, 1998). In this study we therefore aimed to structure the research process to draw upon (as well as reflect upon) research effects. So, for example, we explicitly retained an open membership of the steering group to be able to include new interested provider organizations who emerged in the course of the study. As a piece of action research we aimed to prefigure within our process and outcomes possible avenues for service development, which we review in the final sections of this report.

Research dealing with marginalized groups, such as black or minoritised women,

typically starts from a context in which only an *absence* of representation (in this case in terms of uptake of services) is known. Or else specific aspects of minoritised experience come to public attention only when they are identified as in some ways problematic. This dynamic of black or minoritised women's positions becoming visible only when being problematised has been described by Ann Phoenix (1987) as 'normalised absence/pathologised presence'. This absence and presence are each also inadequate in the ways they represent the intersection between gender and minoritisation. Thus we see this dynamic of 'normalised absence/pathologised presence' as particularly relevant to analysing the paradoxes of invisibility and visibility structuring both services around domestic violence and minoritised women's positions within these (see also Bhavnani, 1993).

As an open, qualitative inquiry we remained responsive to the patterns of representation of experience emerging within our material, and so at different stages in the research process we tried to take initiatives to redress particular absences of perspective without which our study could perpetuate. In particular, for reasons we discuss later - but that were also in part anticipated because of the absence of culturally-specifically organized domestic violence services - we had difficulties identifying Jewish and Irish women as participants. For these reasons we took the step of interviewing women users of the only Jewish women's refuge in Britain (indeed the only Jewish refuge in Europe), located in London, as well as documenting the perspective of a worker there. Further, owing to the small number of accounts generated from Irish-identified women users, at a late stage within the project we convened a focus group to interview Irish-identified workers around domestic violence, and thereby documented their account of working with a range of women, including Irish-identified women.

In addition to the ongoing effects of sensitization and networking that we hoped would occur as part of the research process, we aimed to harness the change effects produced through the research interventions more explicitly. In particular the consultation, convening and conduct of the groups constituted a piece of action research (Goodley and Parker 2000) which aimed to prefigure and inform service developments. From discussion with provider organizations we understood that our research intervention could offer a relatively low risk way of assessing what kind of service interventions that are not currently on offer might be regarded as useful and therefore worthy of further development. While there are inevitable tensions between research and practice-based interventions, our attempts to straddle these traditionally separate arenas were informed by our commitment to try and direct our research towards specific and practical changes for minoritised women surviving domestic violence.

1.7.2 What happened when: An outline of the research design and timetable

Put simply, the study was composed of 3 parts (which were broadly speaking consecutive but overlapped in the latter phases):

a) **documenting organizational perspectives.**
In this workers from a range of (voluntary, statutory, generic and culturally- specific) services involved in providing services to women and children experiencing domestic violence were interviewed. Organisations included in the study were: culturally-specific women's refuges, generic women's refuges (located in areas with high minority ethnic populations), social services, local authority (housing), homeless families, police, health visitors, drug and alcohol services, generic domestic violence services, culturally specific social services. To maintain some level of anonymity while distinguishing between the different services, we have identified them as follows:

- 'Statutory services/agencies', which include the police, health visitors, drug and alcohol services, social services, and homeless families;
- 'Culturally specific generalist services', which include Irish Community Care, and Manchester Jewish Federation;
- 'Generic domestic violence services', which include North Manchester Women's Refuge and the Domestic Violence Helpline;
- 'Culturally specific domestic violence services', which include; 1) Saheli, the Asian women's refuge in Manchester, 2) a black women's refuge in Manchester and 3) Jewish Women's Aid (which has a national helpline and a London-based refuge).

These interviews were structured according to a topic schedule which invited participants to discuss what they understood the issues minoritised women experiencing domestic violence were, and the extent to which their organization addressed these; their perceptions of the gaps and barriers to services faced by women from the specific minoritised groups identified in the study (African, African-Caribbean, South Asian, Irish and Jewish); and their view of commonalities and differences between these groups, and with women from majoritised backgrounds (see Appendices for more information and interview schedules). These interviews were (in almost all cases) audio-taped and transcribed. 11 organisational interviews were conducted by Shirley McIntosh, Kamal Pantling and Sophie Smailes between November 2001 and June 2002 (with the majority conducted in late 2001) and 1 interview by Joanna Pearl in June 2002. Secondary, less formal, interviews or fact-finding encounters were also carried out within this time, and although not audiotaped the information generated there informed our analyses.

b) **Documenting the perspectives of women who had experienced domestic violence.** In total 23 Women were interviewed individually (8 South Asian, 7 African or African-Caribbean), 3 Irish and 3 Jewish) by Shirley McIntosh, Kamal Pantling and Sophie Smailes between February and June 2002. In May 2002 Joanna Pearl also interviewed 3 women in London who had accessed Jewish Women's Aid. These interviews focused on which services women had attempted to access, what they had found useful, and what further support they could identify they would want (see Appendices). During these interviews, participants were also asked if they might be interested in joining a support group with other women who had experienced domestic violence and, if so, if they had a sense of who else (in terms of cultural background) they would want to be in a group with. These interviews were audiotaped and transcribed, except where the participants felt too uncomfortable about being potentially identifiable, and so in this case notes were taken during the interview and agreed with the participant. Where women indicated that they were interested in a group, further visits were made or other communication (phone calls followed up by letters of confirmation) to discuss the arrangements for this.

c) **Setting up, Convening and Conducting Support Groups.**
The final phase of the research was concerned with running short-term support groups. 3 groups were conducted: A mixed heritage group (consisting of African, South Asian and Irish women) (conducted by Janet Batsleer and Sophie Smailes), a South Asian specific group (run by Najman Zaman), and an African and African-Caribbean group of women (run by Shirley McIntosh and Angela Williamson). These groups ran between April and June 2002. Kamal Pantling also convened a focus group of Irish women working specifically around domestic violence services in June 2002. Issues raised within and by the groups are discussed in more detail in Chapter 8. It should be noted that, as a support rather than only research-based intervention, although group work process records were made and issues relating to the research themes noted we draw only on general issues arising from the groups so as to preserve the confidentiality of that work.

1.7.3 Ethical considerations

The study passed ethical scrutiny from the Ethics Committee of the Department of Psychology and Speech Pathology, the Manchester Metropolitan University, in which the study was administratively based. In addition to the usual practice of respecting all indications of withdrawal of consent to participate, all participants were offered anonymity and access to interview transcripts for checking, including the deleting of

material that they did not wish to be included for analysis. We have attempted to anonymise organizations as much as possible without losing some of the specificity of issues they engage with, since we recognize that these are precisely what are at issue as the topic of this study. Women survivors of domestic violence are identified in this study according to the ways they described themselves, except where this was deemed to make them too identifiable.

Obviously questions of avoiding harm and maintaining anonymity featured as primary ethical considerations in a study like this, especially in relation to the interviews with women who had experienced domestic violence. We attempted to limit the extent of disclosure of painful experiences by structuring the survivor interviews around which services women had accessed and why, but in many cases women did discuss much wider aspects of their experiences of violence. In anticipation of this, we had also ensured that women survivors we were interviewing were already connected up with some kind of service from which they were receiving support. We are particularly grateful to the organizations participating in our steering group for not only their support in identifying both individual women for interviewing but also networking with other organizations and giving us further inspiration. However as also noted later - especially in relation to women of Irish and Jewish identification - in the context of the lack of dedicated services around domestic violence, some participants were not identified through their involvement in a local culturally specific organization but via word of mouth networks between the women (some of whom were thereby linked into further provision via the research process). This obviously has implications for our topic in terms of how existing generalist community organizations are not adequately engaging with these women. In some cases we were able to connect such women with other networks of support and services via the research process.

Here too we might note how questions of language skill interacted with other issues governing access to services. Even though our research team knew a range of languages we still needed to work with interpreters for some interviews, and also had to deal with the dilemmas posed by service providers offering interpretation. Similar questions attended determining the venue for the interviews - for while many were conducted within places of work (for organizations), at refuges, or at women's homes, some women preferred to meet the researchers at another setting (usually the University) to preserve the anonymity of their addresses.

Key ethical dilemmas emerged in terms of the group work, in terms of trying to engage women in groups whose composition, form and structure was elaborated in negotiation with them. Here the short-term character of the groups we were able to convene posed particular ethical problems in wanting to offer women some space for support,

without raising expectations that this was anything other than the 6 (or in one case 8) week groups that we could offer. While we hoped (and this hope has to some extent been fulfilled) that there would be ways of sustaining any successful groups beyond the life of the research project, we were not in a position to guarantee this at the beginning of the groups. This meant careful framing and structuring of negotiations with participants to ensure that the process and level of engagement was appropriate to the kind of support on offer. In this, therefore, we were severely constrained by the rigid timescales set by our funding, so that it would clearly have been desirable and preferable to have been able to run the groups for much longer - both to assess the question of viability and to offer women a better group experience.

1.7.4 Limitations

Clearly as an 11 month study based in one city, there are limitations on our claims. Rather than claiming generalisability we would highlight this research as offering a case study or 'thick description' of a particular context of service provision and practice. Even within this, there were inevitable omissions due to lack of time and resources, so we cannot claim comprehensive representation even within the Manchester area. Indeed, as already indicated, for specific purposes we went outside our local brief to generate accounts that would otherwise have been missing from our study. However, since women escaping domestic violence frequently move quite large distances to ensure their safety, we did not consider this as significantly altering our sample. Indeed women from minoritised backgrounds - who are therefore much more identifiable both within and outside their communities - frequently move cities when taking refuge.

Secondly, even though we were attempting to research previously marginalized perspectives, there were inevitably some perspectives that were too marginal even for us to access. We were aware of some women who were identified to us as potential participants whose personal circumstances were too acute and distressing either for them to feel able to participate, or for us to feel that we could offer them anything useful (e.g. in relation to the groupwork). (On the other hand it should be noted that the groups were able to work with a great deal of distress and some very current concerns.) Further, just as services have identified Bangladeshi women as particularly under-represented within services, so too we found ourselves unable to provide adequate (intepreter and context) conditions to take up some offers of participation (although here too it should be noted that Bangla-speaking women did participate in 1 of the groups, with the groups working across languages).

Third, we are particularly aware that notwithstanding our focus on barriers and gaps in services, we have not specifically addressed the issues facing disabled women. Yet women who have experienced domestic violence may suffer both immediate and long term physical consequences of violence. While services typically focus on physical violence at the level of initial involvement, there is little acknowledgement of how this (and the emotional abuse experienced) may have enduring and far-reaching consequences (Campbell, and Soeken, 1999; Landenburger, 1989). In another recent local study, at least half of the (more than 50) women interviewed about reasons for distress talked about domestic violence as a key factor (ReSisters, 2002). Mental health responses, in focusing on women's difficulties rather than contextual cases of distress tend to reinforce an individualist approach that sees the difficulties as arising from problematic characteristics rather than responses to traumatic experiences. Moreover we know of instances where women have been refused refuge places on the basis of having mental health needs, indicating that this is a major area of exclusion from both generic and specialist services around domestic violence. In terms of this study, while its short-lived nature prevented us from following women's trajectories across services and over time, since several of our participants had left their violent relationships more than a decade before it is clear from our own, and other, material that this continued to have major lasting effects with practical, physical and emotional consequences. We should also note that many of the survivors had more recently left violent relationships so our study included women spanning a range of 'distance' from violence.

Fourth, while we identify some key issues regarding the ways in which children figure in organizational and survivor perspectives, including the material and emotional difficulties they face (including sometimes also being abused themselves) as part of the family violence, we must highlight that our analysis is based on what adults have said about children. We did not interview children as participants within the research. While this is clearly a vital and important area for inquiry (posing many further ethical questions), our focus here is on how other people's concerns for and relationships with children enter into women's positions and experiences in surviving domestic violence contexts.

Fifth, we should also make clear that we did not set out to investigate domestic violence arising within same sex couples. While this was not explicitly excluded from our research, since policies and practices around domestic violence are principally formulated within the context of assumptions around heterosexual relationships it is not surprising that they did not emerge. However, as discussed more fully in the next chapter, our inquiry was informed by more open definitions of domestic violence which included same sex partners as well as a range of family members.

Sixth, in terms of other areas not addressed by this study, we should point out that we have not focused on characteristics, or perspectives, of perpetrators. This is not to suggest that these are not important or relevant areas of investigation in relation to services around domestic violence for minoritised women, but rather than these were not our primary focus here. Hence although we are able to make some relevant inferences - for example about the ways in which services or national policies, for example around immigration and 'no recourse to public funds' replicate or tie in with abusers' strategies - clearly this area would merit further, more direct investigation.

Seventh, since our focus was on service provision and delivery, rather than documenting survivors' experiences, our study cannot make prefigurative claims beyond these. So, for example, since we did not enquire about civil remedies, although such approaches may well be important areas for development. Likewise we did not specifically investigate women's experiences of court systems. Although some indicative information was generated about this, a systematic investigation would have required a more specific remit. Moreover our view is that considerable work has been done in this area (MacLeod and Saraga, 1989; Smart, 1989; Stanko, 1985), albeit without the specific focus on minoritisation. Rather this study documents contributory factors that might lead up to (or fail to lead up to) such court cases.

1.7.5 Some reminders and guidance

Before moving to our presentation of the research, some points of clarification should be noted.

1.7.5.1 How we analysed the material

We have already described the assumptions informing the design and conduct of this study. These also extend to the analysis of the material. Our thematic analysis of the corpus of material broadly aimed to organise and synthesise key themes and issues emerging from the accounts generated from service users and providers. Some further interpretive assumptions should be noted. Firstly, although cultural or minoritised identification was discussed with participants at the beginning of each interview, (as further discussed in Chapters 5 and 7) we were not always able to use self-descriptors out of concern for compromising our commitments to anonymity.

Secondly, we should point out that in our use of and commentary upon quotations from participants we have not attempted to present every instance that illustrates

each point, but rather we have selected indicative examples. This has implications for the ways readers may interpret the allocation of racialised/cultural labels indicating the particular minoritised status of the participant or the service specification. Where readily available we have attempted to provide instances from a range of (provider and cultural) backgrounds, but in the interests of space and the limited time available for analysis, absence of this should not necessarily be interpreted as meaning there were no such examples. Correspondingly we should reiterate that it was not our aim to make comparisons across minoritised communities. Nor was it our key purpose to analyze the extent to which particular themes/areas arise for specific groups. Rather we aimed to generate a broad picture of the range of perspectives - including attending to both commonalities and differences between and within the accounts. We do so to inform prevailing policies and practices for the resourcing of domestic violence work, in ways that take experiences of minoritisation seriously. Hence while we can comment on some major differences within the minoritised groups topicalised within this study, and speculate about some reasons for this emerging from the study, this was not our main focus. Thus we would neither claim to offer an exhaustive needs analysis relating to the 4 minoritised groups highlighted here, nor that these issues will necessarily generalize to women from other minoritised groups - although we would imagine many of them to be of relevance. We see this study is merely a beginning, which will hopefully prompt further work in this area.

1.7.5.2 Authorship

This is a co-authored report, in the sense that it was produced as the work of a research team, with all members active in both common and different ways in the generation, analysis and presentation of the account available here. Individual (combinations of) names are associated with specific chapters reflect which members of the team took primary responsibility for coordinating and drafting those parts. In accordance with academic convention, unless presented otherwise, alphabetical ordering of second names indicates equal contribution. We are grateful to members of the steering group for their prompt and careful reading of drafts and for supplying relevant information.

1.7.5.3 Recurring themes: The general and the particular

We have arrived at the structure of this report out of our intensive engagement with the research material and process. The structure of this report (outlined below) aims to reflect both the general issues emerging from the study and key themes that inform policy and provider engagement. We are aware that many of the issues we discuss are

common to all women facing domestic violence and we would want to draw attention to those generalities. But beyond this we also want to highlight how the particular positions accorded minoritised women give rise to specific orientations, if not additional difficulties, in relation to those general issues. This focus challenges the dynamic of homogenized absence/pathologised presence discussed earlier.

Second, we anticipate that some readers may find our account repetitive, in the sense that some common issues are addressed in different chapters. This occurs for two reasons. Firstly, the lack of a unique 'place' or location for the far-reaching character of many of the issues identified does, we believe, indicate something of the enormity of the tasks posed for minoritised women surviving domestic violence. Precisely because of the complexity of interaction between provision around both domestic violence and minoritisation, there is ample scope for specialist allocation (whether around the 'specialisms' of culturally specific provision or domestic violence) to function as a way of disowning more general responsibilities. Indeed, because of the limited ways thus far generic services have largely been able to grapple with 'specialist' issues around both minoritisation and domestic violence, it is clear that the acknowledged practice of referring on to more specialized or expert resources can unwittingly give rise to significant service exclusions. We have therefore erred on the side of over-inclusion to highlight the pervasive and widespread character of many of the service needs and policy implications emerging from the research. As an indicator of this it is worth noting that while the same issues arise across the report, they are addressed in different ways, and so (apart from Chapter 6 on impacts on children and Chapter 9 on 'What Works' which collects together examples of good practice) there is little duplication of transcript material. Similarly we aware that some readers may want to focus on some chapter areas more than others, and so while we would hope that readers will want to engage with the whole report we have tried to write these chapters so that they can be read independently.

1.7.6 Outline of the report

Finally we offer some summary anticipation of what lies ahead. Chapter 2 sets the context for the study, both in terms of national and local policy around domestic violence and its intersections with prevailing structures of racialisation. Here general themes of working and researching around violence, both domestic and public, are noted, as well as the ways minoritised women figure within this.

Chapters 3-9 present the body of our study material. In Chapter 3 we discuss the meanings accorded domestic violence by both providers and survivors, and indicate

how the experience of minoritisation enters into this. The variety of perspectives discussed offers more nuanced understandings of domestic violence and makes visible some of the 'informal' ways in which it is understood and responded to.

Chapters 4 and 5 deal with barriers to services. In Chapter 4 we consider structural and material obstacles facing minoritised women trying to access support in relation to domestic violence. While many of these are common to all women, we highlight additional obstacles encountered by some minoritised women that intersect with the general resource and provision difficulties in particularly exclusionary ways.

Chapter 5 attempts to grapple with and evaluate the complex ways 'cultural' identifications figure within provider and survivor accounts of services. As well as indicating how particular representations of 'culture' and 'community' identification can work to limit the perceived demands for or upon statutory services, we focus also on perceptions of how or whether minoritised women are regarded as engaging with culturally-specific services.

Chapter 6 deals with policy and practice implications for children where their mothers are facing domestic violence. This is clearly a key area of statutory concern, and often is what prompts service intervention. In this chapter we also highlight additional ways whereby women's minoritised status intensifies both their regulation as mothers, and how this enters into how children are used as tools to perpetuate the abuse.

Chapter 7 is concerned with identifying processes and policies that enable women's transitions from violent relationships to independence, and draws on the material to argue that we need to extend or re-evaluate notions of independence to interdependence in order to acknowledge and build on, rather than disqualify, minoritised women's strengths. The analysis indicates the need for a reappraisal of the frequent refrain of 'why doesn't she leave?' that services bring to domestic violence, alongside indications that minoritised women may also encounter alternative and competing community-based pressures to stay.

Chapter 8 marks the shift in our analysis from problems to positive indications. We consider strategies emerging from our study of interventions that support women effectively. Here we draw on the accounts of survivors and providers, but also we highlight some indications emerging from the process and practice of the three support groups set up as part of the study.

This is followed in Chapter 9 by some more detailed (if brief) consideration of what women have found helpful in enabling them to make key moves in their lives from

contexts of violence to independence. This ranges from the informal support of family, friends, neighbours and even strangers, to specific acknowledgement of helpful professional interventions. The overwhelming message emerging here is that there is much that people, as individuals, communities and professionals can, and do, do to challenge domestic violence and support women. This not only mitigates the rather negative and depressing accounts presented earlier, but also offers indications of strategies that can be built upon and developed for future service planning and development.

Chapter 10 presents some preliminary conclusions and recommendations from the study that address both the general context of intervention, including what is involved in formulating an anti-racist and gender-sensitive service practice around domestic violence and minoritised women, and offers some indicative suggestions for service development to specific professional groups.

Hence we offer this account of the research as indicative rather than definitive or exhaustive. We should emphasise that in this study we have generated a large corpus of material that we have been able only to analyse in fairly limited ways for the purposes of this initial report. However our account here is offered as a resource to support developments for change. We hope that in some small way this project contributes to providing a more complex picture of domestic violence and minoritisation that can inform the design and delivery of more appropriate services.

2 SITUATING THE STUDY: CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND

Khatidja Chantler

Introduction

In this chapter, we begin by outlining the arguments for seeing domestic violence as a human rights issue. We then identify key policy initiatives from the national context, that impact on domestic violence and minoritisation. Next we consider some of the dilemmas of researching 'race', culture, gender, class and domestic violence, including the difficulties and limitations of terms that reflect what we are attempting to research. We also indicate the ways in which political contexts, including 'identity politics' influence policy, practice and research. Finally, we locate domestic violence and minoritisation within notions of 'public/private space', highlighting the need to work at the inter-sections of oppressions, as well as to attend to the difficulties posed by idealised notions of woman and community.

2.1 The context of domestic violence and minoritisation

Violence and aggression are inherent in all social relations. Much politics and law is concerned with limiting the destructive impact of human aggression. The legitimacy of violence shifts historically and from society to society. What was once legitimate ceases to be so: a good example of this is the recent acknowledgement of rape in marriage as a crime in UK law. What is legitimate in one society may be illegitimate in another: for example, harassment on the grounds of religion is not defined as a crime in current UK anti-discrimination legislation. Human rights agendas have often been mobilised as a method of limiting the impact of violence against citizens in the public sphere, and there has been increasing recognition of those rights extending to the sphere of family life. Freedom from torture by states and Governments was enshrined in the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights, and the freedom from torture within the family, which domestic violence often is, has now increasingly been recognised as a human rights issue. So, a key feminist strategy has been to argue for women's inclusion in the category of 'human' and, therefore, women's right to personal autonomy, bodily integrity and freedom from violence and coercion (Bunch, 1990).

This approach moves us away from a 'norms' and 'deviance' model towards an understanding of a continuum of violence in human societies, linked to the uses and abuse of power and control. Violence in the private sphere can be seen as an ongoing and global crisis which particular individuals enter at particular moments in their own lives, but which has an impact more widely that the life of an individual. In this research we have been exploring its impact on women, who are most often the victims.

Another feminist strategy has emphasised the need for an ethic of care to be joined to an ethic of justice; protection from neglect as well as freedom from oppression are essential to human, and therefore female, flourishing (Gilligan, 1982; Bowden, 1997). This emphasis on care recognises the importance of connectedness in the life of the individual and sees mutual interdependency as the space of human well-being and of flourishing.

There are many kinds of violence exerted over women in both the private and the public domain. Women's experiences of violence, and the racialisation of it in contemporary UK society has been a focus for this project. Part of the impact of racialisation can be to obscure things which women in fact experience in common (as a homogenised absence); it can also be to promote certain false but powerful stereotypes of particular groups of women (pathologised presence) which render their specific experiences and locations silent and invisible. The stereotype replaces the reality, and prevents and mystifies understanding of the impact of differences of histories of migration, different religious traditions, different experiences of racism and of the UK State. This project is concerned with exploring how to work in the presence of these discourses, understanding and countering their impact. It is also concerned with the widely shared impact of discourses of blame, shame and secrecy, which clearly provide a common thread in women's experience of domestic violence, although they may be constructed differently by different communities.

Chandra Mohanty uses the term 'politics of location' to refer to 'the historical, geographical, cultural, psychic and imaginative boundaries which provide ground for political definition and self-definition' (1992: 74). So in relation to the communities which form the focus of this research it is important not to see these boundaries in stereotypical ways which refer only to supposedly reified 'cultural differences.'

2.2 National context

In many respects it can be argued that domestic violence is at long last being recognised as a serious priority within government policy. Legislation such as the Crime and

Disorder Act 1998, Protection from Harassment Act 1997, and the Family Law Act, 1996, all signal a national level commitment to tackle Domestic Violence. The impact of domestic violence on children is also increasingly being recognised by key agencies including the Police and Social Services. We comment on some of these interventions in our Chapter 6.

However, this picture needs to be tempered by the consideration of four key factors which are working in opposition to the commitment to tackle domestic violence. First, there is also legislation, namely immigration and asylum legislation, which exacerbates women's distress in situations of domestic violence and severely curtails their options when they have no recourse to public funds (Chantler et al, 2001). Second, organisations supporting women and children surviving (including leaving) contexts of domestic violence have traditionally been under-funded and this situation does not appear to be changing. Third, there has also been a vociferous backlash against single parents which has focussed on them as benefit 'scroungers'. Getting women back into the labour market is also a central plank of current government policy, as evidenced for example in the New Deal initiative, but this pays insufficient attention to affordable and consistent childcare, the low wages on offer to black and working class women, and racism and sexism in workplaces. Nor does it acknowledge issues of emotional support, particularly for those women surviving domestic violence. Fourth, although we acknowledge that there are many commonalities in the experiences of women escaping domestic violence, there appears to be little research or policy development which relates to the specific concerns of minoritised women (e.g. Policing and Reducing Crime Briefing Notes (Research Series), 2000).

2.3 The extent of domestic violence

It is generally accepted that the level of reporting to the police (and other agencies) of domestic violence is underestimated. The British Crime Survey (BCS) is a national survey which asks a large representative sample of adults directly about their experiences of crime, regardless of whether or not it was reported to, or recorded by the police. The BCS 1996, is generally regarded as providing the best estimate of domestic violence for England and Wales as it included a computer-assisted self-interviewing questionnaire about domestic violence. The key findings were published by Mirlees-Black and Byron in 1999. In terms of speaking out about domestic violence, they found that victims most frequently told of their assaults to informal supporters (family, friends or a neighbour), followed by the police, and then medical staff. Their study also shows that women are significantly more impacted by domestic violence than men: women experienced more injuries, more frightening threats and more multiple

assaults. Additionally, the Criminal Statistics for England and Wales in 1997, showed that 47% of female homicide victims were killed by present or former partners, compared to 8% of men. The 1996 BCS also revealed that the under 25's were at the greatest risk of domestic violence, as were those in financial hardship. Women who were currently separated from a partner they had been living with were particularly at high risk. It also found no significant differences in risk levels for women between ethnic groups. However, the study does have significant limitations which would suggest that it is skewed towards understatement of domestic violence in general and perhaps minoritised women in particular. For it omits information relating to sexual violence and explicitly excludes survey respondents living in temporary accommodation, including refuges (Walby and Mayhill, 2000). Neither did it attempt to include emotional or financial abuse.

The 2001 BCS also included a self-completed module on domestic violence, rape, sexual assault and stalking. The results of this module are due to be published in 2003.

2.4 Homogenising domestic violence

The literature on domestic violence literature emphasises that domestic violence happens across all ethnic and class groups. Whilst this is important, in terms of bringing the issues in to the mainstream, and shifting the debate from the domain of the private and 'other' (traditionally black and working class women) into the public sphere, we also need to attend to what may be hidden by such a homogenising approach (see Williams Crenshaw, 1994; and Haaken, forthcoming). What tends to get missed are the classed and 'raced' dimensions of abuse, as well as the experiences of disabled women. Rather than overlooking these, this research attempts to address issues of 'race' and class specifically, and we will show how failure to attend to such dimensions in fact works to exclude minoritised women from access to services. It also reinforces the institutional neglect and marginalisation of the most vulnerable women.

2.5 Difficulties of researching 'race'/culture, gender, class and domestic violence

Our investigation of what gets in the way, when women are escaping domestic violence has been complex. This is because we are attempting to represent the voices of many in a way which provides some overall picture of the whole. In doing so, we recognize that we could be in danger of replicating stereotypical and monolithic discourses used to explain, and subsequently respond to, minoritised women's experiences of domestic

violence. The risks are that we ignore the specificity of each woman's circumstances and positions and portray them instead as 'in some way representative of the group to which they belong, or more correctly, the group to which we have assigned them, and ...in a way we would never do in the case of someone supposedly from the majority culture' (Gordon 1996 pp 241-242). So, while this study presents findings generated from organisational perspectives and the women's perspectives, we must recognise not only the enormous diversity within each group but also the fluidity of representations of ethnicity and cultural, national, racialised and religious identifications (Marshall et al 1998).

Thus to undertake a research study that seeks to work with particular groups (African, African-Caribbean, Irish, Jewish and South Asian women) based on racialised and gendered identities presents many challenges. Central to these challenges are concerns about the essentialising of such identities, rather than envisioning them as dynamic, fluid, and contextually and relationally constructed.

As already indicated, we will draw on Phoenix's (1987) analysis of the dynamic of normalised absence/pathologised presence to discuss the position of minoritised women in relation to services around domestic violence. Drawing on this, we see the invisibility of the experiences of minoritised women in the majority of helping agencies as a normalised absence, a failure to attend to the specificities of their positions, which is reflected also in their representations at wider social and political levels. Hence a focus on minoritisation is in itself a challenge to the homogenising of policy and practice, but brings with it the dangers of a pathologised presence.

The second challenge, therefore, concerns how such racialised and gendered identities are represented. We recognise the power inherent in research processes to (re)produce 'knowledge' based on negative stereotypes of marginalised groups (Bhavnani, 1991). Combined with an exploration of domestic violence, itself an uncomfortable and sensitive topic, we hope that readers do not link such gender oppression simply with minoritised communities, but recognise the corresponding oppression of women from majoritised groups. A failure to do so will not only pathologise minoritised women but also their cultures, and so run the risk of silencing them even more for fear of fuelling further racism.

2.6 Political contexts

We argue that political contexts are crucial in shaping what can and cannot be spoken about and (or researched) and that this presents further challenges for our study.

Indeed we have already drawn attention to some of the contradictions in government policies in responding to domestic violence. In particular, we want to emphasise the current hostile climate and debate around immigration and asylum as having serious and detrimental consequences for those women subject to them and who are also escaping domestic violence. In Chapter 3, we illustrate how the wider political climate in relation to Northern Ireland, Israel and Palestine, September 11th etc all influence women's help-seeking attempts. Hence when an incident occurs in these contexts, particular communities/nations become demonised which has the effect of silencing women experiencing domestic violence from those communities.

2.7 Single issue politics

A focus on single-issues has both advantages and disadvantages and whilst it is beyond the scope of this introduction to explore these in detail, nevertheless we are acutely aware of our engagement with 'identities' in our research topic. These identities include: as women, cultural and racial identifications, identities linked to experiences of domestic violence, identities linked to particular professional practices, and so on.

Identity politics can serve to bring into sharp relief processes and experiences which may otherwise be overlooked and marginalised, to bring what are often considered personal and isolated issues into the public domain. On the other hand, there have also been robust criticisms of such approaches (e.g. Bondi, 1993; Warner, 1996; 2000a). Firstly, it has been suggested that identity politics do not engage well with diversity within the group, thus masking intra-group differences based on power inequalities. Secondly, identity politics tend to see categories as rigid and fixed, thus denying the possibilities of multiple and shifting identities. Thirdly, the lack of analysis, policy and practice at the intersections of, for example, gender and 'race' tend exclude black women from strategies and practices designed to ameliorate conditions for women (normally white women) or black people (normally black men) (see Burman et al, 1998; Chantler, 2002).

All these issues are especially pertinent to considerations of domestic violence, as there is a corresponding danger that domestic violence is seen through a particular lens; 'race' and culture, or gender, or class. We should note that the domestic violence literature is remarkably silent in relation to disabled women, thus making them a particularly invisible group. On the whole, current literature on domestic violence privileges the lens of gender. Central as this is to our understandings of domestic violence, gender cannot be dislocated from issues of class or racialisation (Mama, 1989; Patel, 1997). The challenge for us in working with domestic violence and

minoritised women is to maintain some of the clarity of single-issue politics as well as to work at the intersections of multiple identities.

Despite the challenges posed by researching 'race', gender, class and domestic violence as outlined above, it is our belief that this study could be an impetus for constructive change and this has been our primary motivation in undertaking this work.

2.8 Difficulties with terminology

As a research team, we have been acutely aware of the dilemmas posed by the key terms we used within our study: 'independence', 'domestic violence' and minoritisation. In this section, we explore them more fully.

2.8.1 Minoritisation

We recognise that any term used to describe groups of people, for example 'black' or 'minority ethnic' has its limitations. In this study, the issues were further complicated as we were concerned with identities, histories and positions across the black/white divide. The term 'minority ethnic' was ruled out as it has somehow come to be associated with people of colour rather than also including white people from a minority ethnic group. To avoid the possibility of this interpretation, we decided on the term minoritisation for our study. We recognise that processes of minoritisation vary for different groups who have specific histories in terms of colonisation, immigration and racism, as well as different points of access into structures of privilege. Hence we use the term 'minoritisation' as an inclusive term which not only highlights relationships across structures of racialisation, but also reflects how these processes are based on unequal power relations.

2.8.2 Independence

Notions of 'independence' link strongly to autonomy and being in control, ideas historically associated both with 'maleness' and Western bourgeois liberalism (Hare-Mustin and Merecek, 1986). Furthermore, within government rhetoric, it is a particular kind of independence that is being promoted (to get off benefits, get paid employment whilst still retaining domestic responsibilities e.g. caring for dependent relatives). Contemporary eurocentric cultures value individuality, uniqueness and independence (incidentally thus also privileging male and middle class experience), which is often

linked with maturity (Broughton, 1988; Burman, 1995; Walkerdine, 1988). Many minoritised cultures have a more collectivist tradition with individual, family and community boundaries having a large measure of overlap. Within these contexts, inter-dependency is valued more than 'independence' and this may be particularly important in the context of domestic violence and how we respond to the needs of minoritised women.

So in recognising the limitations of 'independence', it should also be noted that this notion also informs certain forms of (liberal) feminisms. Thus through its circulation within prevailing culture, it has also influenced the Women's Aid and the refuge movement. However, as we discuss later, even where women conform to such a model of 'independence' and are in paid employment, if they have experiences of domestic violence paradoxically their very moves towards independence can prompt either an escalation of the violence and/or force them into a 'dependency' role if they want to access refuge accommodation. Hence it would seem that, if we base the evaluation on these gender and culturally skewed notions, whatever women do they are likely to be blamed for their actions.

Finally, we should consider the possibility that the increasing professionalisation and bureaucratisation of refuge provision privileges dominant discourses of independence. Many refuges were set up and run by women activists, fuelled by their politics and their desire not only to provide refuge accommodation, but also to be engaged in campaigning and lobbying work. Such an edge has been increasingly hard to maintain with refuges coming under the same sort of pressure as other voluntary sector organisations to provide a service rather than to campaign (Chantler et al, 2001). This pressure is exerted through funding regimes, monitoring and evaluation, health and safety requirements and so on. Coupled with this, through professionalisation as staff in refuges change from activists to professionals (e.g. social workers, community workers etc.), it can be more difficult to maintain the innovative, committed and radical edge that once characterised the refuge movement. We are not of course suggesting that professional workers and radical activists constitute mutually exclusive groups, but rather that we should be alert to the potential limits of certain aspects of professionalisation. Clearly, there is a danger that a shift from grass roots workers to professional workers may in itself privilege particular notions of independence.

2.8.3 Survivors of domestic violence

Also relevant to our explication of terminology, we should clarify that our descriptions of women's positions in relation to domestic violence. In general parlance there is

much talk of women 'escaping', 'fleeing' or 'leaving' violent relationships. We prefer to see women as survivors of, or as surviving, domestic violence, in the sense that 'leaving' needs to be thought of as a process, rather than only a specific action, and that the escape is also a long-fought for process that may only be temporary. Furthermore, as we clearly illustrate in Chapter 7, women show many strategies of resistance whilst in abusive relationships, and we would not wish to indicate in any way that 'escaping' is the best way for women to survive domestic violence. While we recognise that there are some criticisms also of the (over)use of the term 'survivor' (as both implying that women do survive, or alternatively that there merely survive) we use this term to highlight the active and continuous struggle and achievement that this involves. However in this report we too move between different formulations according to the precise focus and topic at issue, to highlight different aspects of these processes.

2.8.4 Domestic violence

Popular responses to women with experiences of domestic violence mainly focus on women's reactions. A particular response which also influences service provision is the focus on 'why doesn't she leave?'. This formulation of the problem fails to acknowledge the structural context of women's lives, invites woman-blaming and fails to acknowledge the many ways of resisting that women deploy when they are in abusive relationships (Mahoney, 1994). Furthermore, such an approach also assumes that the violence stops once a woman has left - despite evidence to the contrary (e.g. BCS, 1996). In Chapters 4 and 5 on 'Barriers', we illustrate some of the complexities associated with help-seeking and in Chapter 7 on 'Transitions to Independence', we discuss the various methods of resistance used by women whether they stay or leave abusive relationships, as well as the kinds of support that are perceived to be helpful/ unhelpful. The theme of support is further explored in the chapter 8.

In relation to minoritised women living with or escaping domestic violence, it is typically not just the 'why doesn't she leave the abusive relationship?' question that is posed, but also an implicit questioning of 'why doesn't she leave this oppressive culture/community?'. This representation of community purely as oppressive and suffocating is just as limiting as romanticised representations of community - neither is sufficient and both are present (perhaps because each is the polar opposite of the other). Constructions of community feature in all of the chapters, demonstrating the different and sometimes contradictory associations of community.

Different organisations have varying definitions, meanings and understandings of

domestic violence, and we discuss these and their implications for services in Chapter 3. For the purposes of our study, domestic violence was taken as meaning the physical, sexual, emotional, and financial abuse of women by their current or ex-partners and/ or extended family members. It seems to us that a wider definition that moves abuse away solely from an intimate partner to extended family may be more reflective of the experiences of minoritised women.

Although domestic violence is increasingly accepted by policy makers as an issue that requires *social* (as opposed to purely individual) responses, and signalling a gradual shift from private to public, Isabel Marcus (1994) makes a strong case for seeing domestic violence as 'domestic terrorism'. She draws some persuasive parallels between the two and argues that reframing domestic violence as terrorism is helpful to shift the focus from the 'victim' by examining structures of domination more thoroughly, thus inviting different questions e.g. rather than 'why didn't she leave' to ask instead: 'what structures does violence in the home reinforce?' (Marcus, 1994, p 34). Furthermore if 'domestic violence' came to be understood as akin to terrorism, more resources would perhaps be directed towards the protection of women and children surviving fleeing domestic violence. In this study we discuss the meanings of domestic violence (see Chapter 3) as held by agencies as well as survivors, and it will become clear that more nuanced and responsive analyses of the causes and consequences of domestic violence should situate this more clearly within other political climates and contexts.

2.9 Domestic violence and minority cultures

Historically, domestic violence has been seen as a 'private' matter which served to keep violence, particularly within marriage, hidden. As until recently enshrined in law, men's rights to privacy were respected at the expense of violence to women. Similar dynamics often operate when community leaders call upon their right to privacy in relation to cultural matters. Feminist analyses have played a pivotal role in bringing the abuse of women into public spheres (Sahgal and Yuval-Davis, 1992), and the challenge is now to bring 'cultural privacy' out in to the public domain. However, we recognise that this is a project frought with dangers, potentially eliciting accusations of cultural (eurocentric) imperialism and colonialism. Furthermore, just as the speaking of domestic violence has often led to victim-blaming, so highlighting domestic violence in cultural groupings can lead not only to woman-blaming, but also to culture-blaming.

At the same time, there are enormous pressures within domestic violence discourses

to present idealised notions of women to try and circumvent woman-blaming. However, as Haaken (2002) points out, such a representation fails to portray the complexities of women's lives. In particular women's aggression to others is often silenced for fear that any sign of 'badness' or negativity will jeopardise the hard earned recognition of the existence of domestic violence, and compromise claims of victimisation.

Such an analysis can also usefully be applied in relation to minoritised cultures. Idealised notions of 'culture', particularly within multicultural discourses, are frequently exacerbated by 'race' or cultural anxiety'. By this we refer to how the fear of being culturally insensitive or racist works to close down thinking and prevent engagement with issues of cultural specificities. This can mean that 'minority ethic cultures' are tolerated or romanticised because of the perceived need for 'cultural respect'. However, multicultural or cultural diversity models of dealing with difference have several drawbacks. First, configurations of communities or cultures are assumed to be static and 'hermetically sealed' rather than fluid, dynamic, open and evolving. Second, cultures are often seen as homogenous and, where diversity within cultures is acknowledged, this is seen primarily as based on differences in national identity, religion and language rather than shifts in cultural forms and relations produced through histories and interactions with a dominant culture. This model therefore leads to a continuous differentiation based on 'ethnicising' and exoticising cultures which serves to mask and ignore issues of power and structural inequalities such as racism, sexism and disablism. Third, the controlling, patriarchal, class-bound structures that exist *within* communities are over-looked for fear that criticism of a different culture will bring charges of being culturally insensitive or even racist. For many anti-racists, such scrutiny is not welcome either as it can so easily be used to fuel negative cultural and racial stereotypes. But we believe that such anxieties arise through a mistaken and over simplified analysis of how gender, culture and class relations interact, in particular in the context of majority/minority relations.

Furthermore, it should be acknowledged that the anti-racist movement itself has been slow to respond to the needs and concerns of minoritised women as this has been subsumed into what is assumed to be the bigger and more important project of anti-racism. Anti-racist struggles have more frequently aligned themselves to class based struggles than to gender oppression (e.g Sivanandan, 1982; 1990). Black women have frequently been at the forefront of challenging both feminist and anti-racist approaches as traditionally neither cause has adequately engaged with the different issues impacting on Black women. Such challenges have also been extended to domestic violence, where culturally specific (or specialist) refuges have been established by minoritised women. This ushers in the perennial tensions and dilemmas between mainstream

and specialist provision which we shall also be discussing throughout this report, and returning to in the Conclusions (Chapter10).

In expanding our understandings both in terms of gender and minoritisation, it is important that such representations move away from idealisation to look instead at what such a stance helps to keep hidden. This seems particularly pressing when we begin to look at the way resources have historically been directed towards the 'deserving' (e.g. the deserving poor). In the context of domestic violence and minoritisation, the 'deserving' equates with idealised and normative notions of woman or community.

Women, particularly mothers, are constituted as those with primary responsibility not only for 'home', but also for 'community' and 'culture' and the prevalence and implications of this is discussed in later chapters. This is of particular relevance to women living in contexts where they are part of a minority community as this generates increased pressures on them not only to reproduce and ensure cultural values and norms are transmitted through the generations, but to also to embody them personally (Yuval Davies, 1997). However, such idealised and 'deserving' images correspondingly construct representations of the 'undeserving'. Unless we are able to shift these approaches, we are in danger of replicating structures of domination which exclude the concerns of women who fail to pass the 'ideal standard'. Similarly, we will also continue to exclude the experiences, positions and interests of minoritised women, if their cultures continue to be idealised, homogenised and reified from current as well as historical relationships.

Having identified the key contextual issues that this research engages with, we now turn our attention, in the next chapter, to the various meanings and impacts of domestic violence.

3 MEANINGS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Khatidja Chantler and Sophie Smailes

Introduction

In this chapter we address the range of meanings attached to domestic violence and its intersections with minoritisation. We examine official definitions as well as workers' understandings of domestic violence as it is the combination of 'formal' and 'informal' understandings that characterise support interventions and practices. We also explore survivors' understandings, including some of the impacts of domestic violence. Through the organisational and survivor perspectives, we catch a view of the strategies employed by perpetrators to maintain power and control. The variety of perspectives discussed contributes to a more complex understanding of domestic violence and makes visible some of the 'informal', yet potent, ways in which domestic violence is understood and responded to.

3.1 Official definitions

Since April 1999, the Home Office definition of domestic violence has been as follows:

'The term domestic violence shall be understood to mean any violence between current or former partners in an intimate relationship, wherever and whenever it occurs. The violence may include physical, sexual, emotional or financial abuse.'

This definition is intended for data collection and statistical purposes for the Police at a national level. Local police forces (and other organisations) are entitled to come up with alternative definitions which reflect local needs. Local police forces can use their own definitions for local record-keeping.

In Manchester, the police force (as in many other police forces) have designed their own definition which is:

'Any incident of threatening behaviour, violence or abuse (psychological, physical, sexual, financial or emotional) between adults who are or have been intimate partners or family members, regardless of gender.'

An adult is a person 17 years and above, family members include mother, father, son, daughter, brother, sister, grandparent, in laws and step family. (Greater Manchester Police, 2000)

There are two key difference between the Home Office and the Manchester police's definition. Firstly, the local definition is wider and includes family members. This is important, particularly in the context of minoritised communities where extended family networks can play a significant role. Secondly, the local definition makes same sex relationships much more visible, and is therefore a much more inclusive definition. Definitions are important as they set the parameters (at least at a policy level) of what is included/excluded from counting as domestic violence and therefore influences service responses to domestic violence. It also signals to local communities and to women who may be experiencing domestic violence the sorts of issues that will be dealt with by the police and other organisations. Clearly, a wider definition that is explicitly inclusive of the experiences of diverse communities is to be welcomed.

However, many organisations have adopted the (less inclusive) Home Office definition. This includes the Department of Health (2000), and at a local level, the Crime and Disorder Reduction Strategy Domestic Violence Theme Group.

In contrast, on the ground, our interviews revealed workers working to a wider definition. While most accounts saw the meaning to be abuse by men to women, there was an acknowledgement of abuse as encompassing family members.

'any form of abuse, verbal, mental, emotional violence against women by a known man or relatives within immediate family e.g. mother-in-laws, sister-in-laws, extended family members.' (Statutory service)

'any violence by a known man; recognised partner, same sex, family even if not living together.' (Statutory service)

3.1.1 Emphasising physical violence

Whereas the definitions used by all organisations include sexual, emotional and financial abuse, in practice it is usually physical violence which is privileged. We negotiate meanings through contextual understandings informed by a patriarchal order of knowledge, which prioritises evidence and physical signs as not only proving that domestic violence happens but privileging it above and beyond the unseen and invisible aspects of domestic violence.

This emphasis on the physical arises particularly in the law and legal/criminal notions of violence which focus on arrest and evidence. However, as Malos (2000) argues, the criminal justice response is inadequate as the only response to domestic violence. The sort of 'evidence' that is most easily documented and witnessed is physical violence and whereas this is important, equally pressing is the necessity to document other forms of domestic violence. We should also note that the emphasis on physical violence extends to the sort of evidence required by the Home Office to 'prove' that you are a victim of domestic violence under the 'one year rule'. Given the (often legitimate) mistrust that exists between minoritised communities and the police, this presents additional issues for minoritised women seeking to access police support. Additionally, for women who do not speak English, and without proper access to translators, they may have little option other than emphasising physical violence as it speaks for itself.

Some of the organisations, including the police, spoke about the difficulties of only physical and sexual violence being considered a crime. We should note here that rape within marriage was only recognised very recently in England and Wales, giving credence to the argument that it is only when violence is brought into the public sphere and is committed by strangers that it is acknowledged or understood as being violence and, therefore, a crime. Despite acknowledging the hugely damaging effects of mental, emotional, financial and psychological abuse, the difficulty of recording the unseen is problematic:

'not just the physical side it can be very much the emotional very much the mental abuse as well that is difficult to record and difficult to measure.' (Culturally specific generalist service)

One organisation used the powerful term 'domestic terrorism' and likened women's and children's experiences to that of prisoners of war to convey the multi-dimensional aspects of abuse. So despite agencies' recognition of the role of emotional abuse and its effects, the current inability to 'measure' it leaves a serious omission in what 'really' counts as domestic violence.

3.1.2 Different agencies, different responses

Although it is perfectly understandable that different agencies (statutory and voluntary) have different ways of intervening in (or ignoring) domestic violence, it is also likely that the impact of such differences may not be particularly helpful to women and children surviving domestic violence. So just as the police's responsibility very much hinges on arrest and evidence, social services departments prioritise child protection

and housing departments' efforts are focussed on housing issues, so it is easy for domestic violence to come to be seen a) with a particular lens which can mean that the multi-dimensional nature of domestic violence is overlooked, or b) as the specific responsibility of women's refuges, thus abdicating responsibility (and for minoritised women, this typically comes to be seen as an issue for the Asian Women's refuge or the Black women's refuge).

'It's very difficult because we are a child protection agency essentially so we're coming from the angle of protecting the children so we have to go down, if the woman chooses to stay with the man and there is a fair amount of violence in that relationship when we'd go through a case conference route and the children would be registered and that would have to be the children are at risk of harm but that doesn't mean we cannot offer ongoing support and work with the family – so it is linked more with childcare then with the woman.' (Statutory service)

Furthermore, during the research process, our contacts with some of our primary and secondary contacts surprised us in 2 ways. Firstly, when approaching agencies that we thought would be dealing with domestic violence, for example a women's sexual violence project and a young people's mental health project, we were told that they did not work with issues of domestic violence. This indicates that understandings and meanings of domestic violence are not well understood or shared across agencies and while we recognise there may be helpful aspects to this (as in avoiding prescriptive diagnostic labels that can often function in exclusionary or pathologising ways), this in itself can maintain gaps in service provision. Secondly, in approaching culturally specific social care services, it became clear that the issue of domestic violence was frequently very hidden within these communities. This may reflect their connections with 'the establishment' within their communities which consequently conceals domestic violence. This was in contrast with culturally specific services which were explicitly working in the domestic violence field.

It is also interesting to note that different workers in the same agency appeared to have different engagements with, responses to, and understandings of, domestic violence. Such personal commitments (or otherwise) to domestic violence can have an enormous impact on women approaching services. Whilst for us, as researchers, we were able to locate 'friendlier' workers in some agencies where we had initially had a hostile or silencing response, we remain acutely aware that minoritised women may well not be in a position to do likewise.

3.2 The potency of informal understandings of domestic violence

In this section, we draw on some of the informal understandings that workers attach to domestic violence and minoritisation. These understandings emerged in three key ways: a) meanings created by racial/cultural and class stereotypes, b) exaggerating domestic violence as a way to gain services, and c) the dominance of the cycles of abuse theory.

3.2.1 Domestic violence: Gendered, racial, cultural and class stereotypes

There are particular difficulties even in convincing agencies that a woman is in danger that combine not only an assumption that domestic violence is defined by women as being in physical danger (see later on the privileging of physical violence), but also that it arises from, or can be averted, through successful exhibition of the female role:

'It was ironic really because the local police station was less than 500 yards away from me, but I'd already phoned and they told me to cook my husband a nice meal and be grateful if he had me back. They asked me if had threatened to kill me, harm me, then how do you know he's going to. That was three hours before he tried to kill me, I was hostage in the house and he'd gone to get something from the car so there was a little window of opportunity to ring the police. They were only 500 yards down the road, and they refused to send anyone to me. I told them he'd actually locked me in the house, I couldn't get out. I couldn't believe it.' (Irish woman)

Further, in inviting organisations to discuss issues of domestic violence and minoritisation, we found that many workers had stereotypical constructions of all four of the communities in our study. When these enter into the ways that individual workers or services respond to members of particular communities, they clearly create barriers to fair and equitable services. While we discuss the forms of these more fully in Chapters 4 and 5, in this section, we present a summary of the key points.

In relation to Irish communities, stereotypes existed for instance, about Irish women where domestic violence was seen almost as way of life or because of alcohol:

'If you look at the different communities, like the Irish population, I would imagine there is quite a lot of alcohol abuse.' (Statutory service)

'It's almost accepted that that's what happens to women and there is a cultural history of violence with Irish women.' (Culturally specialist generalist service)

This pattern of eliding gender oppression with culture was also how South Asian communities were constructed in our previous study (Chantler et al, 2001).

The stereotype of South Asian women as passive:

'There is a lot of myths and stereotypes around about culture and around passivity as well.' (Generic domestic violence service)

Jewish communities are presented as secretive but also as self-contained and 'looking after their own' with supportive family and community networks:

'There is also a thing that the Jewish population have a Jewish school. They have their own Social Services set up, which tends to keep things very close to the chest". (Statutory service)

'The Jewish group particularly it's as if, it's sort of almost a close-knit community on its own and sort of you know look after [their own].' (Statutory service)

And African and African-Caribbean women were presented as 'strong':

'With the Afro Caribbean I must admit the only, as I say, the only people personally that I dealt with have been the younger women who have been very in the main I suppose ...very assertive you know and very sort of competent.' (Statutory service)

'I have in the past heard, had an agency worker say to me, well, it must be really bad for that woman to complain, because you know,Afro-Caribbean women are really, really strong, they're used to being beaten.' (Generic domestic violence service)

Cultural and gender stereotypes were then further refined by the use of class positionings which located domestic violence as occurring in particular sections of minoritised communities. Hence, within Irish communities, domestic violence was perceived as being more prevalent within the Traveller community and this was a view shared by some statutory and culturally specific organisations:

'There is quite a lot of domestic violence in the travelling community ...and there is a certain... being perfectly blunt...expectation of domestic violence...it goes on and people know that it goes and maybe a lot of it is around that community are quite marginalised and keep themselvesto themselves.' (Culturally specific generalist service)

Many organisational accounts, in their discussion of domestic violence and Jewish communities, seemed to imply that it was located mainly within the Orthodox

community. Interestingly, Jewish Women's Aid (the provider of the only Jewish refuge in Europe), reported that of the Jewish women who came to the refuge, roughly fifty percent were from the Orthodox communities and fifty percent identified as Reform, Progressive or secular.

And if education is read for class position in the following quote, then domestic violence is seen to be located with less educated or working class people.

'I think some of these Asian families, this is my opinion, some of the women that are suffering from domestic violence are often in families that are often not as educated as some other families.' (South Asian woman)

Also:

'Because you didn't tell anyone, my mother didn't know. I don't think she's believed it's happened now, but it doesn't happen to us... It just happens to people who, I know this sounds awful, but my mother's generation it just happens to people who are sort of lower – that's an awful thing to say I know. It doesn't happen to "normal" people, it just happens to people who she considers as low level, if you see what I mean.' (Jewish woman)

Although these quotations refer to South Asian and Jewish communities, domestic violence as class-related would appear to be a common assumption across cultures. This has particular implications for the constructions of minoritised communities who are disproportionately represented in lower socio-economic groupings.

Such stereotypical notions of 'race', culture and class mediated women's experiences of domestic violence. Women reported that they were not believed because of dominant communities (mis)understanding of their culture, where it was assumed that violence did not happen in their communities (e.g. Jewish, South Asian) because of the romanticised notion of extended, 'happy', supportive families and communities. Alternatively, communities were also portrayed whereby domestic violence did happen but it was part of the norm (e.g. Irish Travellers, African and African Caribbean, South Asian) or was seen as intrinsic to their cultural beliefs around gender, such that these communities were pathologised as being particularly aggressive in terms of their subjugation of women.

As we have illustrated, these stereotypes existed on a number of levels and intersected with one another to inform how meanings of domestic violence were interpreted. There was a clear contrast between official definitions and understandings and how the women and services actually could, and did, engage with them. The operation of

these stereotypes have the effect of normalising or making invisible domestic violence within minoritised communities.

3.2.2 'Using' domestic violence

Two key statutory agencies reported women 'crying domestic violence' in order to get services.

'[We are] aware that some women use that [domestic violence] as a means to actually get services because of the change in the culture towards domestic violence in recent years.' (Statutory service).

This claim was then associated in particular with Dutch Somali women:

'..there is that sort of question mark as whether they [Dutch Somali women] should be showing on here because there are other issues behind, although they arrive and they've quoted or they've said that it's domestic violence they're fleeing from we know in a few areas it hasn't been there's been other issues.' (Statutory service)

and another statutory agency's comments also tied into discourses of the 'genuine' versus 'bogus' claimant :

'There are abuses to the system which has skewed this domestic violence issue quite a lot recently and that's Dutch-Somalian women coming over here who are the second or third wives because of course they're polygamous, uhm, and they can only claim for one wife if they are resident in Holland so they send the other wife over here, she comes and claims domestic violence, she gets into one of the refuges or gets into one of the temporary accommodations but then she's not eligible for any funds and it's actually not helped the cause of many women here who are genuinely fleeing domestic violence or are genuinely here with their partner and then they split up here because of domestic violence and there has been a lot of that.'

Even if this is the case, the Dutch Somali women are only trying to get the support they need and should receive.

Moreover, survivors sometimes also evaluate other women's struggles as abusing the system:

'and the housing as well. It is frustrating. I do understand, you know, it is frustrating game

and at the end of the day some people do abuse it, you know what I mean. Like they'll come into a refuge, you know, get us, get the police, the help, everything you know ... and then turn around and go back.' (Caribbean/English woman)

Here the difficulties of leaving abusive relationships appear to be being underplayed, while instead it is felt that the system is being abused. Such constructions of domestic violence pathologise women and see them as being at fault rather than recognising the enormous barriers that women have to negotiate to get adequate support to leave violent relationships.

3.2.3 Cycles of abuse

Several agencies perceived participants in abusive relationships as being victims of their past individual histories.

'I've known children from families that have witnessed domestic violence have gone into abusive relationships themselves.' (Culturally specific generalist service)

and:

'...it's engaging in damaging relationships...based a lot on having grown up in a family where both alcohol and violence are the norm.' (Statutory service)

Within this framework, women are positioned as passive, as accepting of abuse with no hope for change. Men are also portrayed as being victims of having grown up in a violent household. Such a view is widespread in professional discourses, (Warner, 2000b, also see chapter 6) and the tenacious grip of this analysis requires challenging as it presents a strong rationale for non-intervention in domestic violence – after all what would be the point of intervention if nothing is going to change? When this is further combined with fears about being seen as culturally insensitive, then it is clear that appropriate and supportive interventions with minoritised women require an approach which is both gender sensitive and anti-racist.

The cycles of abuse theory can also be interpreted as excusing perpetrators' behaviour rather than placing the responsibility of violence where it belongs. Furthermore, many psychotherapeutic approaches lend themselves to 'victim-blaming' by insisting that women can make choices to leave abusive relationships. They also assert that women who stay in violent relationships are getting some of their needs met by maintaining their victim status (cf. Reder et al, 1993; Warner 2001). Apart from pathologising

women, such an individualistic analysis refuses to take into account that domestic violence exists on a number of complex societal levels (e.g. Pollack, 1997). These not only normalise and make acceptable certain aspects of violence (Edwards, 1987, Maynard 1993), but also make the ability to leave violent relationships dependent on the types of support available. Hence 'choices' to leave or stay are frequently determined by wider social and economic systems such as housing, income/benefit levels, immigration status, disablism, racism, sexism, and responses of helping agencies. This context was recognised as being crucial, especially by domestic violence services.

Not surprisingly, the widespread currency of the cycle of abuse theory was also found in some survivor accounts, as illustrated by:

'I'm sure as you know domestic violence doesn't happen in isolation. A woman who finds herself in that situation, it's usually because she has suffered abuse in the past and so it's something that's somewhat familiar.' (Jewish woman)

'My family is very loving and caring ...but the refuge mostly I see women come from a violent background ...actually they are more victim then me sometimes I feel. That then their reaction is also very violent too.' (South Asian woman)

However, some survivor accounts also presented challenges to the cycles of abuse theory:

'Because we always remember that [violence] and that's why I wanted to get away because I always remember meself and all of us [children]...and we're all in the house "daddy, daddy don't hit mummy, don't hit our mummy". I couldn't have my kids going through that you know what I mean.' (Irish woman)

Here we see how the cycle of abuse theory fails to reconcile that it is precisely because of the violence that people may have experienced or witnessed as children that they work towards ensuring that they do not remain in or repeat such experiences in adulthood – we discuss cycles of abuse further in Chapter 6.

3.3 Survivor perspectives

In addition to what we have already woven in above of survivor perspectives, we focus a little further on survivors' understandings as their engagement with the meanings of domestic violence was far more wide ranging and distressing. In re-telling such distress we do not seek to sensationalise their experiences, but rather to highlight

how many agencies' understandings of domestic violence appear to be sanitised and compartmentalised when juxtaposed with survivors' experiences. More specifically, we explore: the privileging of physical violence, the fear generated by domestic violence, distress experienced by women, and fighting back. We end this section by exploring how the wider political context impacts on women's representations both of their cultural locations and of domestic violence.

3.3.1 Privileging physical violence: Silencing other forms of abuse

The privileging of physical experience which dominates much of the police and the criminal justice approaches to domestic violence also has a hold in some of the survivor accounts. For many women a recognition that they are being abused is often only acknowledged when they are physically hit or abused. As much of the social context privileges physical violence, it is much harder even for women themselves to engage with other forms of behaviour as abusive – as well as for others to recognise non-physical forms of abuse and violence. So in the same breath as speaking of how they had no money, were kept in their homes by partners and families and were forced to have sex, women would say that the violence did not start until they were physically hit. Women also reported how hard it was to have other people accept that they were being abused where there was no physical evidence of violence. Furthermore, in addition to the privileging of physical violence, it should also be noted that public violence is more regularly privileged over private violence.

Survivors report:

'I was married nine years and the violence didn't start until later on. At first it was ... the mental abuse and then it got physical.' (South Asian woman)

'It's from a family and not my partner, so it's more mental and emotional abuse, blackmail ...my family didn't sort of believe that we could have that level of emotional blackmail, so they didn't really consider it domestic violence.' (South Asian woman)

and women spoke of

'getting battered, kicked around, hiding in the corner and crouching down, trying to save your face.' (Irish woman)

of how it meant they were always on edge, anticipating the abuse of being constantly under attack. The abuse was acknowledged to be multi-faceted to include:

'being tortured mentally ...it was a mental thing as well.' (Irish woman)

and having to be vigilant:

'I was always on guard. He could change like that, I never really felt comfortable.' (Irish woman)

The women, unlike many of the services (other than domestic violence agencies) could engage far more with the notion of being controlled, or it being a campaign of power and domination. Many of them spoke of trying to please their partners and families, somehow locating the source of blame and responsibility within themselves and their roles as wives, mothers and women.

'In a way I lived a life I didn't want to live. I pretended to keep ...my husband, I tried to just listen to him, just do as he told ...so they thought that she is under control, we can control her.' (South Asian woman)

The above speaker illustrates how being compliant is also a strategy for self-preservation and keeping herself safe. The ways in which women tried to negotiate their roles in terms of marriage and family were complex and they seemed to be aware that it was indeed about control. Conforming to type, obeying and control runs throughout much of the women's accounts of domestic violence, both implicitly and explicitly. This control often came from both the male partner and the family.

The interviews also indicated that women experienced domestic violence very clearly in terms of control and a negation of self.

'What a woman likes it doesn't matter ...it's what men want, if woman doesn't give, then they start a fight.' (South Asian woman)

That in fact women were being punished:

'If he had found out at any point [that she was planning to leave] he would have murdered the boys. He wouldn't have me because that would have been too painless, he had to make me suffer.' (Jewish woman)

Women also reported how their cultural identities were used as a tool of emotional abuse. This happened both in relationships where they were with partners of a different cultural grouping, and in relationships where they were from the same cultural group:

'He'd call me a foreigner, you blah, blah, blah. Every name under the sun. Jew bag, and blah, blah because he's not Jewish.' (Jewish woman)

and this survivor in talking of a relative:

'..her husband, he didn't beat her but my God she got mental torture and she got it all because she was Irish off her husband. No good scum. God help her. All her life....up to the time just before he died he give it to her and even when she told me some stories God I couldn't believe it.' (Irish woman)

An African-Caribbean woman in a relationship with a partner of the same cultural grouping, in addition to physical violence, spoke of her cultural identity being stolen from her through food. Her partner imposed a food regime that meant neither she or the children were able to eat Caribbean food. Furthermore, their diet was restricted to pig trotters for a number of years, whilst he ate whatever he wanted:

'I tell you, I know how to cook pig trotters, boil it, fry it, you name it I know how to cook pigs trotters, because we [speaker and children] never had no chicken, no beef, no that, no this, no nothing...that's what we lived on and what [name of perpetrator] used to do, he used to give me money on the Friday to go and buy him steak, chicken and whatever.'

And how she hungered for a traditional Caribbean dinner:

'...God, I tell you, it must have been two and a half years since me taste rice and peas... Miss X [violent partner's mother] used to say, "Miss [name of interviewee] do you want some rice and peas and chicken", and I used to say, oh yes Miss X going like this [licking her lips]...because the kids had never saw rice and peas, this is them [licking their lips].' (African-Caribbean woman)

and yet, the interviewee and her children were denied this meal by the perpetrator. The survivor reported that she eventually forgot how to shop for or to cook Caribbean food.

We also heard about how preparations for religious festivals were used as yet another tool of abuse:

'...a lot of women felt that their husbands in this case used Pesach as just another tier to overpowering and demand you know huge urm they wanted the house to be koshered and you know to such a high level that it was causing women not just physical stress but mental stress an awful lot of women reported that the demands were given by the husbands but he actually

did very little to contribute.' (Culturally specific domestic violence service)

In this section we have discussed the multi-dimensional understandings of domestic violence, highlighting the many ways in which in which emotional abuse in particular, is a central feature of domestic violence, alongside physical, sexual and financial control.

3.3.2 Domestic violence and fear

One of the most persistent and constant emotions discussed by both organisations and the women was the feeling of fear and its effects. This fear was expressed in an number of ways: a) the fear of contacting statutory agencies, b) the fear of failure as a woman, wife and mother and c) the fear of retribution if she left the relationship. Importantly, many of these fears are justified and the anticipation of these issues mediates meanings and actions taken in relation to domestic violence. Many of these fears are also experienced as barriers to women when they are in violent relationships, when leaving and post leaving. These are discussed further in our next chapter.

3.3.2.1 Statutory organisations

African and African Caribbean women in particular, spoke about the fear of getting the police involved in terms of their racist responses to African-Caribbean communities. So we heard accounts of women who had asked the police to intervene and either had their own records and activities questioned, or found that the focus would be on investigating the man's other criminal offences rather than protecting the woman or investigating the domestic violence. So meanings of domestic violence, for these women, were filtered through awareness that racist responses and understandings directed the police's understandings and subsequent behaviour - and this is in keeping with other literature (e.g. Maynard and Winn, 1997).

Interestingly, some statutory organisations appeared to locate this fear on them having a 'bad press' rather than recognising and responding to institutional racism as highlighted by the Macpherson report (1999).

'I think just the sheer fact we are the [name of statutory organisation] and culturally what that means to different people ... so there is a perhaps a perception that they don't trust us, from wherever that view comes from, either through previous experience or from what they've been told or how the media portray us ... so there is probably a lot of mistrust about us, some myths and stereotypes about what we might do, about their immigration status.' (Statutory organisation)

3.3.2.2 Fear of failure as a mother

Another statutory agency which generated a lot of fear across all communities was the Social Services Department. Although this example relates to Jewish families, similar anxieties were also raised by the other communities:

'I think a lot of Jewish families won't get Social Services involved in any shape or form because of the fear that the children will be removed and I think there is a massive view in the community that social workers remove children.' (Culturally specific generalist organisation)

Women spoke of the fear of having their children taken away, and if they were now single parents, of not being a good enough mother.

'because you're on your own then you get she must be going to beat them kids now.' (Irish woman)

Women reported increased vigilance from social services after they had left abusive relationships. This attention was focussed on the children without necessarily any corresponding concern for the woman's safety or protection – particularly highlighted by contact arrangements which we discuss in our Chapter 6. Secondly, the message was given that somehow by being on their own they are suddenly worse mothers than when with the abuser/s (yet when with the abusers they were often pitted against the children or had them taken away). So the dominant message around domestic violence is that women subject to domestic violence are inadequate mothers when it comes to protecting the children.

Women too engaged with this stereotype:

'if you're a frustrated mother ...emotionally weak ... you find her abusing the children.' (Black Caribbean woman)

We should also note, how fears that minoritised communities have of their children being taken in to care are justified, as there are proportionally more black children in the care system (Barn, 1993).

3.3.2.3 Fear of retribution

Women feared that leaving violent relationships did not mean an end to control and

violence. This fear is well founded as the 1996 BCS module on domestic violence illustrated that women who have left a violent relationship are at increased risk of further attacks (Mirless-Black and Byron, 1999). Having left an abusive relationship, there was a fear that the violence would increase and that this time it would come from no-where because without living with the perpetrator women cannot anticipate and prepare for the violence. So a worker described the following in relation to a woman who had left a violent relationship:

'a year down the line she leapt out of her skin when somebody flicked a paper bag behind her, because the waiting to be hit is almost worse than the hitting.' (Statutory organisation)

Although fear of being found and attacked are also concerns of women from dominant groups, for minoritised women this fear is compounded by the smallness of community networks and connections. Women reported not only moving town to feel safe, but also continents. Even so, anonymity was not always ensured as described by this South Asian survivor who had moved to Manchester from another city:

'...you can't trust your local shop keeper, you can't trust your local taxi driver, you can't trust anyone really because there are all big networks out there...I was getting a taxi...and the taxi driver goes, "oh you're the girl from [name of city] aren't you?" and I was just totally shocked by what he said.'

3.3.3 Domestic violence and distress

Throughout survivors' accounts as well as some of the organisational interviews, there is a recognition that one of the impacts of domestic violence is linked to distress. This is also evidenced in other research studies (Arnold, 1994; Chantler et al, 2001; Pembroke, 1994). Running through many of the accounts in this study was the notion that domestic violence does not end, so women spoke of being followed by their abusers, still attacked, finances being with-held – control still being carried out. In addition, the emotional impact of domestic violence should not be neglected either in the short or long term as evidenced by the following:

'Domestic violence is a continuum. Just because you have got over the initial crisis does not mean domestic violence still does not have an impact on your life and your children's lives because it does.' (Generic domestic violence service)

and how domestic violence meant that you are:

'stripped of your humanity, it strips you of your self esteem, your confidence ...so women don't feel they're worth anything ...they feel empty, they don't feel like a person ...they feel guilty, they feed depressed.' (Generic domestic violence service)

Many agencies highlighted issues of self-esteem and confidence, but some organisations and survivors spoke more graphically about the meanings and impacts of domestic violence:

'..but the impact long-term [of domestic violence] is much greater than what I ever anticipated. The one interesting thing that in the three years that I've worked with women who have suffered domestic violence, it has become so evident that I would say quite easily that 95% of them have developed eating disorders as a result of domestic violence..' (Culturally specific domestic violence service)

Survivors themselves talked of distress:

'you're just trying to keep your sanity for the sake of the kids and sometimes if it wasn't for the kids I would have been well gone now.' (Irish woman)

'I do get a lot of flashbacks of things...even though I've not been with him for 7 or 8 years.' (Irish woman)

and:

'[name of perpetrator] damaged me brain...mentally he damaged me, physically he damaged me.' (African-Caribbean woman)

also:

'..also I've got high levels of depression, when I'm depressed I don't know myself and I go outside in my night dress because I don't know what I'm doing. Because when I'm very upset I don't know, and I sit in my room and scream and cry like crazy. 3 or 4 times I've tried suicide, I don't want to go into details.' (South Asian woman)

Similarly:

'...and things got even worse and there was a lot of things going on between the [support] group and I ended up well I ended up being forced out to leave because I had a lot of problems in that I was overdosing etc etc. I had an absolute breakdown at that point...' (South Asian woman)

Yet when services address needs around domestic violence they generally deal with the immediate meanings, frequently concentrating on practical issues such as housing, benefits, schools, getting a woman registered with a doctor and so on. Essential as these are to supporting women and children fleeing domestic violence, alongside resource restrictions the way domestic violence is constructed means that the emotional needs of women and children are in danger of being overlooked. Furthermore, providing emotional support requires helpers to engage with difficult and painful material that they may not feel adequately trained for or supported to do. This point is perhaps particularly relevant to the position of refuge workers who were documented as most clearly providing support but also not as much as some women would have wanted (see Chapter 7). Doubtless this extends to other groups of workers too.

Lastly, when emotional distress was engaged with, it was often within a medicalised model where women are pathologised or given psychiatric labels as a way of giving the 'unacceptable' an acceptable or even comprehensible face:

'*..so women ended up going down the mental health route because they'd go to the doctors, they'd be classed as depressed, or they'd be out into a women's group [run] by the mental health system.*' (Generic domestic violence service)

Women also reported being given 'happy pills' as a way of medical services responding to emotional distress. When meanings around domestic violence include a recognition of emotional distress, services appear to focus on coping strategies. This can imply that somehow women are over-reacting and not coping – that in fact it is their responses which are problematic rather than the abuse itself. Coping strategies frequently attract stigmatising labels, so women come to be labelled, for example as hysterical, or as having 'somatisation disorder', or 'self-defeating personality disorder' or even 'borderline personality disorder' (Johnstone, 1997; Warshaw 1994).

In discussing issues of domestic violence and distress, it is not our intention to portray women as passive victims, but to highlight such distress to ensure that emotional needs, short and long-term, are recognised as an essential part of effective domestic violence services.

3.3.4 Fighting back

We also celebrate that women can and do fight back in many ways and this is discussed more fully in our chapter on transitions to independence (Chapter 7). However, fighting back, physically or psychologically also forms part of the meanings that women

(rather than agencies) attach to domestic violence as illustrated by:

'...I'm someone who has refused to be a victim... I felt in the beginning that I left because I wanted a break from all that [violence] and have a different life. So I decided not to be a victim, if he punched me, I punched him twice. But then not everyone does that, a lot of people are scared. They think they'll get killed. But that's what they [perpetrators] try to show you, they will kill you, it's like what they do to dogs. They frighten you so much you believe that they will kill you. In my case I didn't allow myself to be frightened. I said that if you kick me, I will kick you. You bleed the same way that I bleed, there's no difference.' (Jewish woman)

3.3.5 Political contexts, cultural locations and domestic violence

Many of the women whose experience has formed the focus of this study have made complex links between their experience of violence in the private sphere and wider social and political contexts. For some this includes the experience of leaving (or returning to) war zones, particularly Northern Ireland and Israel, or of their association with them in the minds of the public. The impact of the wider political context was seen to affect women in a number of ways.

A community's history of persecution may make it almost impossible for a woman to approach the 'authorities' for support:

'In the past Jewish people have experienced anti-Semitism ... this is only the second generation now with children after the Holocaust, our parents were victims of Germany for being Jewish. A Jewish woman to go to the police to say my husband is beating me, will not be done because she is going to a non Jewish person to persecute her husband so you do not condemn your husband to non Jewish person.' (Jewish woman)

Recent, present and historical political histories also impacted on Irish women who felt that:

'You don't know what you should be asking for or what you shouldn't be asking for because you don't know really what your rights are as someone in the country and a lot of the time it's because of people's prejudice because you hear it so often from people ... especially if there's anything going on with bombings or anything you didn't want to be heard then because everybody gets tarnished with the same brush.' (Irish woman)

and another Irish woman commented:

'Every Irish family has got a history of somebody they know who have been detained under the Anti-Terrorist Act. It's easy for people to spread gossip about you and be suspicious... Somebody's throw away comment and you get frightened... It's part of your culture, so you are fearful, and when there is something that happens, it does send women underground.'

Women spoke of how the present political climate reduced not only their choices in terms of accessing services but also their freedom to speak and move around. Interestingly, the Women's Domestic Violence Help line have reported a drop in the number of Muslim women contacting the Help line immediately after September 11th. We heard from one South Asian woman, whose daughter, after the September 11th bombing, was stopped and asked:

'do you have a bomb in your bag ... you should give us your bag to check.' (South Asian woman)

and that she found that she was sworn at and glared at, making it even more difficult to leave her home.

Women's freedom, which is often already severely circumscribed by their abuser/s, is further aggravated by responses they receive from the dominant community – their safety being compromised both inside and outside the home.

African-Caribbean, South Asian and Irish communities all have experiences and memories of racist treatment within the British state, which continues to make it difficult for women to access state and other services. As one agency put it:

'The difficulties in reporting because women in the community "know" how the police treat black people...and black men...they have difficulties.' (Black women's refuge)

Another clear example of how different political contexts impact on the women were the contrasting stories of two women who fled violence from their husbands, with their children. One of the husbands abducted the children and the woman has received no support whatsoever from the embassy of that country and very little help from this country:

'[name of country] is not a signatory to any convention, it's not ratifying the Hague and no human rights, little on child rights and I have even been refused Legal Aid because it's policy that there is no point.'

'I have asked the embassy to raise the matter to the foreign office ... but they have refused...

He said it is not in their interest at all to insist to be seen at the Embassy because he said if things are dealt with informally, amicably, it is more likely to have a positive outcome. And I think that this was one way of putting me down and denying me.' (African woman)

The other woman could also have lost her children but

*'The fact that Britain was not honouring the Hague convention in relation to ** because [name of country] hadn't honoured in relation to England and that was what saved us.'* (Jewish woman)

So the impact of the wider political context is varied, but the overall message is that women's freedom and choices are restricted even further, and that the negation of the woman echoes the abuse she is, or has been, experiencing at home. Inextricably linked with this are notions of citizenship and nationality, immigration, histories of racisms, entitlement (or lack of) to the public purse and other support.

3.4 Perpetrator's strategies for domestic violence

Further, through the women's and organisational perspectives we gain some insight into the methods men use to maintain control. Given the privileging of physical violence discussed above, it is interesting to note that perpetrators also use a range of non-physical strategies which are largely based on inviting service providers as well as state practices to collude with them.

We heard from women of how men would explain women's language difficulties as a source of hysteria. As so many services rely on family members as informal translators (see also Chapter 4), some men could further abuse this role by describing the women as someone who had mental health problems. One woman spoke of her abuser/husband stopping her having an abortion by going into the hospital, and saying that his wife was mentally unbalanced. Another woman spoke of her doctor, a friend of her husband's, stopping her getting treatment, replicating extended notions of control and power. Yet another woman reported the difficulty of getting legal help from within the community as her husband was perceived as a man of good standing. We also heard accounts of how deportation was used as a powerful weapon in controlling women.

Men were skilfully able to use multiple strategies, including many non-physical ones, in a way which emphasises the relevance of the feminist definition of domestic violence as a process of control and power. This is evidenced in our accounts via perpetrators

'using' children to 'get back' at the mother, accusations of bad mothering with ensuing threats to have the children removed, calling upon the sanctity of cultural/religious practices to control women, using male privilege to allege that women are mentally unstable, threatening to deport women if they did not behave, and scaring women into isolation for fear of receiving racist treatment from agencies.

This accentuates how very well-attuned these men are to the intersectionality of oppressions, so abusers will use whatever weapon at their disposal to oppress women – and furthermore invite a range of professionals and state agencies to collude with them. All these are strategies designed to keep women in abusive relationships. So perpetrators will use male privilege and domination, culture, racism, and notions of mothering simultaneously to maintain control. We have a lot to learn and emulate from abusers' astute understandings of the intersectionality of oppression - and it is a shame that organisational responses are not as equally integrated or sophisticated in terms of responding to the support needs of minoritised women and children fleeing domestic violence.

4 BARRIERS TO SERVICES AND SUCCESSFUL TRANSITIONS I: STRUCTURAL AND MATERIAL OBSTACLES

Erica Burman and Sophie Smailes

Introduction

This and the next chapter draws on the analysis of our research material, that is interviews with providers of services for women escaping domestic violence and women who have used (or attempted to use) such services. The interviews identified barriers to accessing support which minoritised women encounter in escaping domestic violence. As will be seen, the various forms of intersections between experiences of domestic violence and minoritisation give rise to particular barriers to successful access to services, and in some cases actual exclusion from service provision. The barriers we highlight here are structural as well as 'cultural', engaging broad national political as well as service agendas. These span the provision and delivery of both mainstream as well as specialist services, both in terms of the specificity (or otherwise) of services around domestic violence and around service engagement with questions of cultural specificity.

Indeed in many respects this chapter is concerned with the issue of entitlement to support, both as accorded to, as well as sometimes claimed by, minoritised women leaving violent relationships. This, as we will show, is structured in crucial ways around not only gender and cultural issues, but also indicates how current practices around their inter-relations produces particularly acute barriers emerging from both the local and national service context.

4.1 The ordinary and the extraordinary

Much of what emerges in this chapter is no surprise. Yet it is a challenge to attend to both the ordinary and general issues faced by women – including minoritised women - usually with children, leaving violent relationships, as well as to respond to the very particular and extraordinary issues faced by some minoritised women. In this we encounter again the pattern of representation that we have discussed in earlier chapters as a dynamic of 'normalised absence/pathologised presence'. For, typically, when discussing the needs of minoritised women these very general material issues become

overlooked in favour of cultural factors or issues.

Hence in this chapter we start by identifying as key barriers those that affect all women trying to escape domestic violence, but which pose particular problems for minoritised women. These include isolation; the benefit trap; the paradox of employment as a barrier; poverty; lack of childcare; transport; and housing. We should note here that these very basic general issues were also factors we encountered in engaging women as participants in the study, and we cannot emphasise enough their relevance and importance in providing the conditions whereby minoritised, as well as majoritised, women can successfully access support and services.

Having attended to these factors, we then move on to discuss further specific barriers faced by minoritised women. These include: immigration issues; no recourse to public funds; the threat of deportation; and then the issues posed by language – both in terms of first language provision within services and more subtle barriers elaborated through the meanings and associations of different languages and accents.

As this chapter focuses primarily on the reported difficulties women have in access to effective and responsive support it may present as a rather bleak picture. It should therefore be read alongside the later chapters on 'Supporting Women' (Chapter 8) and 'What Works' (Chapter 9).

4.2 Key parameters of the barriers: Isolation and limited entitlement

At the outset two main general points help frame our discussion in this chapter, and through which all the specific barriers identified here should be read. Firstly, all the barriers, such as poverty, housing, childcare and immigration difficulties and so on, both arise from and deepen women's structural isolation. Hence we need also to bear in mind how women surviving violent relationships have typically already been isolated. While perhaps already framed by dominant gendered discourses of domesticity, their isolation has both been part of their abuse, and also a way of maintaining the abuse.

As a strategy to maintain the abuse many women in our study had been forcibly imprisoned in the sense of being locked in the house by their husbands or partners, or not allowed out:

'I was like a prisoner that's how he used to keep me. I wasn't allowed to phone, I wasn't allowed to read my own letters and open them...I couldn't get out of the house, he was there 24 hours behind me ... I didn't know how to phone.' (South Asian woman)

A young African/African-Caribbean woman was not allowed to talk with other women who were under 40 to prevent her building friendships and so getting ideas about leaving.

This was in addition to being effectively unable to go out through not being allowed access to money or transport:

'When you wanted to visit your family, you couldn't visit your family, you couldn't go out, you could do absolutely nothing at all. You just lived your life in the house.' (African-Caribbean woman)

'He wouldn't give me any money ...I had to go on Social Security ...I had no money ...I couldn't believe it. And I had the phone cut off, I couldn't pay the phone bill, I couldn't phone nobody.' (Irish woman)

'I owed poll tax. He paid his own tax but he never paid mine.' (Irish woman)

One key effect of this is that that when and if women did manage to leave the relationship they were de-skilled in how to deal with money or basic services:

'First time me ever been on a train ...I don't know how to get a ticket and don't pay, it's like you've been in prison all them years and you've come out for the first time.' (African-Caribbean woman)

'Maybe they've never had the experiences of having money, budgeting themselves, somebody has always taken the lead.' (Statutory service)

'We've known people who haven't known what a pound coin is, even after being here after several years.' (Statutory service)

It is a challenge for services to recognise the role of isolation in producing barriers to women accessing sources of support, and so services need to find ways of avoiding replicating the abuse in terms of then excluding them further.

Moreover although we had little explicit discussion about this within our material, we should note how disability is clearly also a factor that further traps women within abusive relationships, both in the sense of making it more difficult for them to leave and in terms of their specific needs being less visible and so less likely to receive appropriate support.

The second broad issue that frames the discussion in this chapter builds on and links closely to the concerns of Chapter 3. This concerns constructions of women as victims, or how entitlement denies agency. It is a general feature of many welfare provisions that intervention is warranted only on the basis of claims of acute need (and no indication of 'culpability'). Indeed entitlement to support seems to be predicated on the erasure of indications of agency or independence on the part of the benefit seeker. Paradoxically (as also discussed in Chapter 7), it is precisely the forms of agency or independence proscribed by criteria for qualification for support that are regarded as in need of being fostered for women to gain financial (and emotional) independence. In the case of minoritised women escaping domestic violence, these expectations often worked to disempower and stigmatise them further. In Chapter 7 we highlight the strength and resistance women demonstrate in the context of surviving and leaving violent relationships, including their creativity, resilience and resourcefulness. Our point here is that for women who had endured the pain, shame and humiliation of domestic violence, the scrutiny and corresponding indignity of the procedures for accessing services and resources were reported to be particularly distressing, sometimes to the extent that women preferred to rescind their claims to entitlement than endure further humiliation.

This was the case for a woman with experiences of domestic violence who at the time of the conduct of the study was currently seeking asylum. Desperately in need of financial support, she described how her experience of being assessed for vouchers made her feel marginalised, degraded and de-humanised, to the point where she felt she would rather go hungry than collect her vouchers. It would therefore appear that to secure entitlement to benefits, it is almost a requirement that one should be passive and accepting of such treatment.

Thus notions of citizenship and entitlement inform responses to domestic violence. The most obvious example of this is immigration and no recourse to public funds where citizenship is considered in legal terms. At the heart of this and running throughout the accounts are notions of who does and does not belong, who is and is not entitled, and the privileging of certain peoples based on exclusionary notions of citizenship. Permeating this discourse is, firstly, the mythical norm which privileges white, male, middle class, heterosexual, able bodied etc. and 'others' all other permutations; and secondly, Victorian notions of the deserving and undeserving. This feeds into other prevailing and stereotypical discourses around gender, 'race', domestic violence, victimhood and so on – including who is considered deserving of citizenship and entitlements to services, but also in terms of more general social acceptance. Within our material we had examples of Irish women saying they did not know what they were entitled to (even though they had lived in this country a number of years),

arising through the difficulties in asking for services as someone *already positioned as* an undeserving citizen. The structure of proof around worthiness for entitlement to the benefits associated with citizenship for immigrants and political refugees seems to be organised in 2 ways: self-sufficiency as measured by jobs, money, and other independence of services; or else on 'compassionate' grounds of suffering where the compassion seems subject to rather uncompassionate criteria for evidence.

4.3 Employment as a barrier to services

This paradox over entitlement extended even to being able to access refuge accommodation. For while refuges rely upon recompense from public funding for room rentals, the prohibitively high rates that refuges need to charge in order to cover their costs effectively makes refuge provision inaccessible both to women who have 'no recourse to public funds' (see later) but also to women who are in paid employment. This includes women whose employment status would also entitle them to public support. Thus women who would benefit from the support offered by refuges cannot access them without effectively giving up any financial independence that they possess. As one woman put it:

'I could do things smoother, other than going into a refuge ... things became really bad and I had to move house, whether I has somewhere to stay or not.' (African woman)

It is important to appreciate therefore that working women remain invisible in terms of domestic violence services, and in particular refuges. Further their invisibility fuels the image of women leaving domestic violence and, in particular, of refugee women as being dependent on the state. As will be seen, this image is a matter of particular irony since many minoritised women are in fact disqualified from such resources, and so are absolutely excluded from support.

4.4 Poverty

In the midst of all the other complex questions surrounding experiences of minoritisation, it is hard to keep the very ordinary but critical matter of money in mind. Here clearly class position intersects with that of minoritisation in ways which overlap with other women, but intensify the barriers faced by minoritised women in particular ways. As indicated, there are currently disincentives for women in employment to seek out service support in the context of domestic violence. In addition many women have been forced (both for financial reasons and because of

having to move large distances to remain safe) to leave their jobs.

'I took on a part time job and it was a financial disaster. I went onto family credit and ended up on less money a week.' (Jewish woman)

A key and pervasive theme of women's narratives was the practical and financial repercussions of leaving. Not only were they leaving the homes that they had worked hard to make but they were also thereby facing poverty and hardship.

'An awful lot of women from the Jewish community that I've worked with, their fear is the financial impact of when they leave the marriage and I totally understand that to the outside world they are the perfect family they have a lovely house in [x], kids go to nice schools and they risk losing all that.' (Culturally specific domestic violence service)

The financial abuse encountered within the relationships often continued afterwards:

'My husband's case for maintenance, I won, but he doesn't pay, making excuses ...like court order like a joke, he's not paying me anything ...it's very hard to live alone in a home.' (South Asian woman)

'Domestic violence occurs while they are here and the partner has been claiming for them or has status and she doesn't, so they split up and she has no status so she is left here without any money, funds or support.' (Statutory service)

This highlights not only the position of women and the traditional location of capital, but also how 'race', culture and gender issues intersect. Traditionally women's access to, and control of, finances has often been very limited – corresponding with the modern western notion that femininity is concerned with the home or private sphere, and not with the public sphere. These roles are often intensified within minoritised communities, both as a result of migration (producing further isolation from communities of origin) and of aspirations towards upward class mobility, as was the case with Jewish migrants to Britain at the beginning of the twentieth century where there was pressure to prevent women working outside the home even if this was part of the culture, to conform to emerging middle class norms of the dominant culture (Burman, 1982). While such isolation may also be seen as protecting women from the racism of the majority culture, it has dramatic implications for women's economic positions.

'If women had enough money to support themselves and their children women would be leaving in even bigger droves.' (Jewish woman)

In this study, for many of the women interviewed, the act of leaving was imbued with huge significance in terms of them being materially worse off and having to learn new skills. The financial as well emotional demands of leaving home with children, and setting up a new home with nothing, were huge. The combination of setting up a new household, managing their finances and supporting their children, often with little or no support from the fathers was a frequently heard story.

'You know when you get your house you have to sort out the gas, electric, water. You've got to do everything yourself and when you've got kids with you, how do you do it? And when you've got no transport, no car, how do you get about?' (South Asian woman)

Moreover for many women this was the first time they had access to, and control over, their own money. Some women, from each of the four cultural groupings within this study, spoke of the newness of having to pay bills, of paying rent or mortgages, or working with a budget. Their previous experiences had been that their husbands had controlled all of this. Indeed through child custody and access agreements many of them continued to do so, even after the relationship had ended. So in terms of maintenance and child support many of the women found themselves in much the same situation regarding having no control of how much money they got from their men, if at all. Women spoke of how:

'He never sent me a penny, just books [for the children].' (Jewish woman)

and how:

'It all belongs to my husband.' (Jewish woman)

The scale of this task often seemed to meet with little or no acknowledgement from organisations. We recognise that this does not necessarily imply that workers were unaware of these difficulties, but rather perhaps that they felt unable to engage with their implications. Hence this still seemed to leave unchallenged the assumption that once the woman had left than she was independent, and that poverty (which was mentioned very little by any of the organisations) was better than being abused. But if we consider the material deprivations facing women and children without income or resources, this seems to overlook the enormous hardships facing women even after they had left the violent context.

'I had four bags of clothes for me and the kids. He took the fridge, the cups, the saucers, he took every single thing.' (Irish woman)

'We moved in there it was Christmas Eve and someone was after taking the meters out, they took the boiler out, we had nothing.' (Irish woman)

Sometimes poverty even prevented women from keeping their children, as in the case of a Jewish woman interviewed who had 8 children who, when she moved out of the marital home, she could only take the youngest to her small one bed flat and other children had to stay behind.

4.5 Employment opportunities

The norm of modern western individualism presumes that an individual should not be dependent on others; nor should the individual allow others to be dependent on them (Hare-Mustin and Merecek, 1986; Pederson, 1987). This is reflected in the current central government strategy's emphasis on promoting a certain type of economic independence, in the form welfare to work initiatives such as New Deal, and the recent Jobcentre Plus programme. Significantly, while such initiatives have increased the pressure on benefit claimants to take up offers of low paid work, such work does not always enhance women's financial circumstances.

Indeed instead of creating economic independence, these policies place added pressures on working class, minoritised women trying to leave domestic violence situations. Their status as mothers is devalued, and obtaining paid employment is attached far greater value by the state. Hence the Jewish woman mentioned above described her struggles to maintain herself and eight children on low paid work and social security. She had moved out and had set up a separate residence with her youngest child. She continued to care for her other seven children on a daily basis who remained at the marital home. She had taken up paid employment and claimed welfare benefits for working families in the hope that she would be financially better off.

'I went to someone to help me get out of the poverty trap. It was the worst thing I could have done really. I took on a part time job and it was a financial disaster. I went onto family credit and ended up on less money a week, I don't know how but I did...If you look at my circumstances, I gave up my "career", my "career" became looking after the family. It's an unpaid job, and you don't get a certificate at the end saying you can do it. I'm not confident to go out and take up a full time job and feel I can work full time and look after my children properly and you get penalised when you take on part time work, you financially lost out'. (Jewish woman)

While middle class women leaving domestic violence in better, higher paid positions

are generally more able to secure economic independence (although their standard of living can be substantially reduced), and so do not have to rely on subsistence state benefits, working class and minoritised women may have had less access to such sources of 'cultural capital'. The above woman went on to discuss how her situation regarding education is similar to many of women in her own community:

'I have no qualifications. That's the situation with most of the women in the [Orthodox Jewish] community... So you've got a) an inability to earn a reasonable wage and b) a whopping great big family to feed on that lack of money.' (Jewish woman)

For her, in her current situation, her strategies towards economic independence focused more immediately on securing both a Jewish and civil divorce, and removing her husband from the marital home, rather than being in low paid work.

'I'm going to the courts to get back into the house, to get it put in my name and get him out...until we're all under one roof and I know what's doing, then I'm prepared to go out and look for something.'

A key strategy to promote women's economic independence, including within the context of domestic violence, is therefore to give greater assistance to women seeking employment by way of providing affordable childcare and higher living wages for working class and minoritised women, and tackling racism and sexism in the workplace. For minoritised women, opportunities to access employment, training and education courses which take into account the diversity of festivals and cultural practices would also be vital.

4.6 Transport

Transport issues were a recurring theme in the interviews with women survivors, both in terms of needing a means of escape and being able to survive and manage with children after having left.

'I was in a panic because I couldn't get the kids out, I didn't have a car and I didn't have any money. I thought what can I do. He had the money'. (Irish woman)

Moreover the sheer effort of managing arrangements around children and organising transport created difficulties in being able to plan and consider options:

'I used to spend most of my time travelling to and from school and if maybe I received help

regarding transportation I could have gained time and I could have also gained the physical effort, I maybe could have thought about things, I could have had a better chance to think better about my resources and things.' (African woman)

Maintaining the security of hostel or refuge accommodation also gives rise to transport difficulties:

'...we cannot get a taxi to the door [of the refuge] and with three children and I was not very well. And I had anxiety and panic attacks and it was just so difficult for me. And there was no public transport. I mean there was one bus that ran once an hour.' (African woman)

Significantly transport also emerged within our study as a principle enabler for women to be able to access services.

4.7 Lack of childcare

'To become independent from the refuge ...you need, in my case I have a child, help with my child. Working and schooling – my major thing is childcare.' (African-Caribbean woman)

'Without a child I would go out and get a job, go to school ...with child it is hard without paying for childcare as a mother I have to wait until my child is older.' (African-Caribbean woman)

Women were often forced to make impossible choices, which meant that if they wanted to go to work they had to make enough to pay for childcare and still come out better off. Often this was not possible:

'If I had to pay for childcare that would leave me with no money to buy milk, food and clothing. If I had to pay childcare ...I might as well stay at home and live on income support.' (African Caribbean woman)

We can only guess at how childcare issues figure in women's decisions to stay or leave:

'Not many women with a big family will walk out of the marriage.' (Jewish woman)

Moreover as one culturally specific domestic violence service pointed out, some South Asian women escaping domestic violence have to move far away. This means that children leave not just the abuser but also extended family and community links. Similarly one of the Jewish women interviewed described the position of a friend,

who could continue working only because of community support with childcare that traditionally would be carried out by extended family members. This is the kind of support she regards as most lacking for herself.

'She's got a full-time job, she's always worked, I think she's a secretary, very competent. So she's got a full-time job but there's a family in the community who have taken her on, like parents... They look after the children when she's late home from work, anything... So you asked me before what would have helped me and I say a mum and a dad to come and take the kids, sort things out, stay with them, and they'd be there to do things until I got back on my feet.' (Jewish woman)

For many of the women leaving the domestic violence had meant moving away from access to community and family support and they therefore had less access to 'live-in' baby sitters. We should not romanticise or presume that women can access community or family support. Hence an Irish woman who had 5 children felt unable to access family support because...

'I had a family but [who] wants you with 5 children.'

Within the support groups set up in the study crèche workers were booked for childcare. The timings of the groups were structured around the school day so as not to exclude women with school age children. A number of women would not have been able to come to the groups without this. Even so, on a number of occasions women whose children were ill were unable to come to the group.

Not all the accounts of services were negative. One Irish woman reported on a number of occasions having had support from a Health Visitor who arranged care for her son when she was in hospital giving birth to her second child, and on a further occasion when she was hospitalised, social services provided temporary foster care for the children. In terms of family support, a South Asian woman interviewed talked of having been able to go to University and have a part-time job because her parents looked after her children during the day.

Moreover lack of childcare and money obviously impacts on the quality and range of facilities open to children:

'I am not a working mother, I am on benefits, I can't afford everything whereas if I knew where the agencies [holiday play schemes] were in the holidays, I could go there. My kids could experience other things that I could not provide for them.' (South Asian woman)

Similarly, childcare issues hampered the process of arranging and setting up a new home:

'If there are five kids and a mother, she's got a house, she's got to buy the carpet, furniture etc how does she get round that with five kids? ...I know I've got two, which I've had to drag around with me. If I could have left my kids somewhere, I could have done twice as much in one day than I could have done in four days.' (South Asian woman)

4.8 Housing

Women's experiences of housing allocation were largely distressing and substandard. The process was further mediated by 'race', where women and organisations reported that minoritised women were often housed in areas which other 'majoritised' women didn't want, but also on the assumption that women would want to be near their community, thus indicating something of the intersecting relations of class and minoritisation. It is important to note that often women did want to be near their community – and particularly the Jewish women interviewed talked of needing to be near their community to access culturally specific schools, synagogues and shops. However, African and African-Caribbean women reported that they were often given the worst houses.

'Black women get the worst of it all ...they give you no choice, if you refuse ...you're on your own ...I left a nice, decorated home ...to be offered a property that is in disrepair ... it may be their best, then what are they saying that this is the best we think about you ...because I am a Black Caribbean, they give me the option ...where black people live ...that make it you will be with your own kind.' (African-Caribbean woman)

Not only was the housing often reported to be in an appalling state, but also that it was in dangerous areas. It also often meant their children had to change schools and that women were further isolated from familiar and community networks. We recognise that choices are limited with the reduction in social housing stock, but on the other hand notions of 'race' and gender seem to mediate housing allocation in particularly disadvantaging ways.

'It was such a bad house that I don't think a human being could live in a place like that, it was so dirty and you know I'm Muslim and you can't have a toilet in the kitchen, and there was a toilet in the kitchen and I can't have that.' (South Asian woman)

'The council they said they could only give me temporary studio flat in X area. I would have

to change the school for my daughter because it was out of the area. She needed two months to finish the primary school ... I would not go to X. It is a dangerous area – a studio flat would kill me and my daughter. They said if I didn't take that flat I would be living outside in the park or wherever.' (Jewish woman)

Moreover racism intersects with experiences of domestic violence if women are re-housed in a white area where they are subjected to racial harassment/abuse (or their children are). This produces particular dilemmas for minoritised women around visibility within their communities vs. isolation outside them:

'The areas where women tend to only be offered properties are in areas where there is a high Asian population anyway which would make it difficult for them to move back into because again of fear of isolation ... women always say they want a mixed area. "I don't want to be the only Asian woman on the street."' (Culturally specific domestic violence organisation)

As indicated also by Wilcox (2000) the pressures of bad housing, along with isolation, can be crucial in making women return to abusive relationships. One of the South Asian women interviewed had left a violent relationship and gone into a refuge. From there she had moved on to set up a new home and found a job but felt so isolated and vulnerable in a white area that she then returned to the abusive relationship and (at the time of the interview) had come back to the refuge.

Here we might note that there are greater childcare responsibilities and housing needs associated with having larger families. The cultural norms associated with some minoritised communities mean that some minoritised women leaving domestic violence may have larger families. However it is important not to presume this:

'Also there are lots of myths about large Irish families. There are some large Irish families and trying to find accommodation for those large families is always problematic. They're the ones that people remember the most, the most difficult to place. So it may seem that there's this big Irish population in the refuges or that it only happens to Irish women, because they might be more difficult to place if they have a large family. But they don't always have big families.' (Irish woman)

As we discuss below, women with no recourse to public funds and without children are particularly disadvantaged as the local authority has no duty to house them.

4.9 Racism and sexism: Encounters with services

Notwithstanding service commitments to equal opportunity policies, there were some examples of direct racism and sexism within women's accounts of services. While these factors enter into the meanings (Chapter 3) women accord the violence and their experiences of services, and affect their successful transitions (Chapter 7), clearly they also function as barriers to services. An African-Caribbean woman reported that when she had explained her situation to her GP he suggested that she go back home.

'They [social services] should deal with you regardless of race and colour ...they should treat you with respect even if you are an asylum seeker.' (African-Caribbean woman)

'A really officious obnoxious benefits agency man was so rude to me. I was a bright, intelligent woman, articulate and I thought I could work my way through most things and he totally disabled me with his attitude to me. Straight away he made reference to me being Irish, both my first name and last name, wanted to know whether it was my name or whether it was my husband's name, why was I using my name, why wasn't I using my husband's.' (Irish woman)

In one very striking example, an African-Caribbean woman reported how the police responded to her request for intervention to stop the violence by checking if the perpetrator had a criminal record. They then sent woman back home from the police station in the middle of the night and with no escort.

Further, as discussed further in Chapter 3, hostel services did acknowledge racism and sexism among residents, which clearly also function as a barrier to some women, but also indicated reluctance to take action against this:

'We do have racist remarks made although the license agreements do say that we can evict if there is any sort of racial or any other sort of remarks about infirmities or anything but with it being homelessness it's such an enormous thing I really don't feel expert enough to give opinions on ...' (Statutory service)

'I know one young Irish woman in particular who was a pathetic little girl actually and who couldn't read or write either and she was badly treated and unfortunately was also picked upon in the hostel setting that she came into.' (Statutory service)

Moreover, as elaborated in detail in Chapter 5 (Barriers II) privileging cultural/ community identification over attending to gender oppression can lead mainstream

services to leave minoritised women in dangerous situations:

'The fear of racism, the fear of seeming racist, actually makes ...[services] respond in favour of the abuse rather than looking at the women's situation and is she safe to go back.' (Culturally specific domestic violence service)

4.10 Immigration and no recourse to public funds

Perhaps the most immediate issue affecting service provision arising from many of the women's and service provider accounts was immigration status and having no recourse to public funds and/or assistance. Immigration and its impact loomed large in many of the women's experiences of accessing services in particularly distressing ways. Yet significantly while immigration was pivotal in many of the women's stories it often played little or no role in accounts from generic services, and indeed also those of non-specialist domestic violence services.

4.10.1 Immigration difficulties as a silenced/'private' issue

Immigration issues seemed to pose difficulties for many of the women in the study, in particular the African, African-Caribbean and South Asian women. Indeed this concerned over one third of the survivors interviewed, i.e. 8 of the 23 women (3 African, 3 South Asian and 2 Jewish). This additional set of difficulties not faced by women from dominant cultures leaving violent relationships parallel and intensify the known difficulties of acknowledging, speaking out about, and escaping domestic violence in a number of ways. Firstly minoritised women, especially those who have relatively recently entered the country, have little access to relevant and appropriate information or knowledge of where to go to for advice. Not only does this indicate limitations on women's sense of entitlement, but also on their sense of exclusion from generally available services. So, for instance, one woman felt she could not access the Citizens Advice Bureau because she wasn't a 'citizen':

'..and I used to cry to these [black] women, white women don't help, they [black women] said we'll take you to the citizen's advice bureau...So I said, I'm not citizen, how can I go to citizens advice bureau. I was thinking that it is only for citizens...so they took me there and they were really helpful.' (South Asian woman)

Speaking out about violence also, for some of our participants, coincided with having to talk about their immigration status, which therefore further highlighted the links

between domestic violence and minoritised status. While it was not only the culturally specific domestic violence organisations who spoke of immigration issues, statutory agencies focused on the question of who would pay for services and one agency talked of being seen as punitive and limited in their response (in promoting deportation rather than dealing with the crime). Hence it was the culturally specific domestic violence organisations who were particularly concerned about women who had no recourse to public funds. For as the refuges themselves are dependent on the rents paid to keep running, they were often limited or found it difficult to support women without recourse to public funds.

4.10.2 'No Recourse to Public Funds' and refuge provision

The 'one-year rule' states that women who have entered Britain as spouses of British citizens as well as women with 'limited leave to stay' do not have recourse to any public funds should the marriage break up within one year. Indeed current home office proposals seek to extend this period to two years. This rule has had particular impact for South Asian, non-EEC European women and African women.

'We've got her in our accommodation, she doesn't speak English, she's got three very young children and so we are actually feeding her, but nobody is supporting her at all, there is no monetary support from anywhere and this does happen.' (Statutory service)

This traps women further within abusive relationships. As a culturally-specialist domestic violence service put it:

'Women can't actually get out [of abusive relationships], legally they can't get out because if they choose to leave they are liable either to deportation or you know no access to the public purse...' (Culturally specific domestic violence service)

Moreover the mere expectation of such difficulties can work to limit the support offered to women. For example one woman spoke of trying to get into a refuge and not being allowed in because the refuge worker questioned whether she was telling the truth about her immigration status. She was in fact in paid employment and so was eligible for public funds. But she was not believed so was not given access. Thus women's access to services was being mediated both by financial resources and by stereotypes of what being an immigrant women meant.

From our material it seemed striking that there was little critical engagement with immigration issues from generic services who did not appear to consider immigration

issues as a significant concern, do not report being affected by it, or else it did not figure in their framework. When it was engaged with it was in terms of who pays for what (e.g. housing, food, living expenses) or seeing domestic violence as being used by immigrants as a way of accessing services and being accorded refugee status. Such representations are critiqued elsewhere in this report. Here we note that women with no recourse to public funds actually need a wide range of support services (housing, social services, benefits, employment, mental health support etc), just as other women do. Indeed what women in this position do not need is for this to be seen somehow as their issue or responsibility.

'It's very much they take the individual cases, we have to fax them and ask them will they take on support of this person and in some instances they have said no, it depends.' (Statutory service)

Refuges, which are notoriously short of funds and dependent on the rents paid to them via such public funding, are therefore often unable to support women who have no recourse to these funds. In the context of chronic under-funding for women's refuges, black women's refuges have tended to gain less public funding (see also Hague & Malos 1999, p81).

'There's no statutory duty anymore for the council doesn't have a duty anymore towards supporting women with no recourse to public funds and insecure immigration status ...housing associations will offer properties only on the understanding that the Social Services actually pay the rent for that woman and that's very discretionary very much inconsistent.' (Culturally specific domestic violence service)

Yet non-specialist refuges, among other services, tended to refer women who have 'no recourse to public funds' to culturally specific domestic violence services, further indicating how notions of culture and responsibility mediate some service responses.

We might point out that in relation to women with no recourse to public funds, Social Services Departments can offer help under section 17 of the Children Act, but this is discretionary. Through this route, they can pay for women and children to be accommodated in refuges. However women with no recourse who have no children are further disadvantaged as they would not be considered a priority, making the options for them particularly bleak.

4.10.3 The threat of deportation

Added to the way organisations do, or do not, approach immigration is the way in which the threat of being deported also affects woman, in terms of exacerbating their distress and sense of insecurity and uncertainty. In our previous study (Chantler et al, 2001) we documented how women not only saw how 'the law gives all the power to the man', but also how the abuse they were subjected to was made possible because of their immigration status. The 'one-year rule' gives the husband the right, and power, to have the woman sent back to the country of origin. As indicated in Chapter 3, current national immigration policy fosters a particularly potent interaction between racism and sexism by which the abuse of women by violent partners is maintained and perpetuated. Even after they had left the violent relationship, women spoke of the distress of waiting to hear the resolution of their immigration status. In this study too women spoke of being fearful of talking about the domestic violence because they might be deported.

Moreover their abusers, too, used this to control women. Women reported many occasions of their abusers threatening to take their children away, or telling them they will be deported if they don't behave.

'Families have told them if you leave, if you do tell anyone, we will send you back. There's a massive fear of perhaps retaliation in the country of origin or stigmatisation against being a separated woman or not just to her but to her family wherever she's, her origins are from, then again it's her children if she has children.' (Culturally specific domestic violence service)

These findings reflect the broader literature that (e.g. Radford & Stanko 1996; Choudry 1996) indeed the women's fears are well justified, for within our research material there were first hand accounts of children being abducted by fathers and taken to other countries with little prospect of being able to claim them back, as well as fathers challenging custody. There was also an account (from a South Asian woman) of being abducted to her country of origin with her passport and identity papers taken from her and being left there without her children so that it took her 2 years to be able to return to Britain to find them.

Agencies were not always sympathetic to the meanings and stresses of immigration status uncertainties. One woman spoke of the refuge's responses as less than welcoming:

'[They] gave me a room but kept saying you should go back. I kept saying I need to see a lawyer, I need to apply for maintenance and sort out my immigrations, it was coming up to

nearly 11 months of my application. They kept saying why are you applying for immigration, you should go back.' (South Asian woman)

4.11 Speaking the language

It is important to see the role of language issues within service provision widely. Clearly language can be a barrier for people who do not speak English, who therefore cannot access monolingual services.

'There are the language barriers maybe that exist, so in terms of reporting it [domestic violence] to us or accessing any support I envisage that there would be added difficulties for women from those particular groups.' (Statutory service)

But there are also more subtle ways in which language issues function as barriers to provision, in terms of general cultural understandings of accents and how language proficiency is presumed to map onto educational status. The reliance of western culture upon written language also generates misplaced assumptions that enter into service strategies.

4.11.1 Lack of translation services

Language, both spoken and written, figures as a central barrier preventing women's access to support when escaping domestic violence. For many minoritised women English may not be their first language, or indeed a language they speak at all.

'We have the language barriers ...some people suffering domestic violence also have not got English as a first language I mean that again is just [an] awkward thing actually [there is] nobody that they can [speak to].' (Statutory service)

Within our study provision around Bengali and Arabic-speaking women seemed to be particularly limited specifically owing to language barriers.

'You know sometimes when you don't speak the language, or sometimes it's difficult. Where would a woman go? You know ... for say well I need help, where would I go, I'm Bengali speaking.' (South Asian woman)

'I think the Arabic speakers ... are at a particular disadvantage ...for example in Women's Aid, we couldn't find nationally [someone]...who spoke Arabic ...similarly within the Police

domestic violence unit...we don't have a linkworker within the Community Trusts who speaks Arabic.' (Statutory service)

As already indicated, some minoritised women did not know about English money, the Social Security system, housing, schools, and the health system. Clearly the lack of Urdu, Punjabi, Bengali and Arabic speakers made this accessing these services more difficult. This context of structural exclusion from mainstream services functions alongside those provided by traditional culturally specific organisations. Although the latter may be more likely to have an awareness of multiple languages, as we indicate throughout this report, they are often reluctant to speak about domestic violence. This makes matters even more difficult for many minoritised women.

While translators are available for some services, and we were able to record examples of this (see 'What Works' – Chapter 9), this is not always the case. Current systems of interpreter or linkworker provision make it difficult to have them readily available where they are not already attached to services. There are indeed difficulties in providing for the very wide range of languages service users may know. Some of the smaller services we spoke with talked of a sense of disingenuity even in having their publicity materials translated into various South Asian languages when they were currently unable to provide services within those languages.

'Services are advertised in a way that they're community based ...even getting leaflets in other languages ...but my feelings about that is that it's alright putting things up in another language advertising this service but when women phone up in other languages and they haven't got anybody to speak to ...it's an expectation that you can't fulfil really ...so it's got to be done very sensitively and you've got to think about it before you do it ...so ...and that's not saying "oh no we can't provide that so we're not going to do it" ...but "what can we do with this" ...so we're not raising women's expectations and they're not getting what they want when they get to the other end of it.' (Generic domestic violence service)

Where services fail to provide interpreters, women whose main language may be, for example, Urdu, Punjabi or Bengali may have to depend on friends, relatives or even 'luck' for them to be understood:

'I don't know where the receptionist was, how to talk the language, I didn't know. But I saw that there were lots of Bengali people sat there, so someone showed her.' (South Asian woman)

This can pose many difficulties. One culturally specific domestic violence service highlighted how women's frustration over communicational difficulties can be

interpreted as personal pathology or feed national stereotypes:

'Women that have to access the service, [x nationality] women and they're having difficulty with their English and with that frustration they become very tearful and with tears they ...and very often people will cloud over "oh she's hysterical". It amazes me I don't know how many times I've heard the saying "oh she's [x nationality]" and almost as if that's a justification for the abuse.'

Furthermore it should be noted that relying on family or community members as interpreters in the context of discussing or even disclosing domestic violence can be both particularly unreliable and inappropriate.

'With one woman she had an interpreter who was advising her .. he was telling her in a very threatening manner that you should return ... and that's something we have to constantly be aware of.' (Culturally specific domestic violence service)

Thus while language issues enter into questions of practical and emotional support, they also restrict the support women who do not speak English can access. As the above examples indicate, like many other contexts of distress (Burman et al, 1998), anxieties about anonymity may function as a barrier to accessing a culturally specific provision. Hence there are challenges for specialist and mainstream provisions alike in adequately providing for minoritised women, in which language issues play a key role.

As well as limitations on oral translation services, structural exclusions can occur through expectations of levels of literacy within minority community languages too. Where generic organisations provide written information in various languages, they are making assumptions that people can read that language. This is indicative of a Westernised notion of education and (cultural) literacy which comes to function in gender-specific ways in creating further barriers for minoritised women trying to access services. Particularly when coming from contexts where men had traditionally done, or had control of, the contact with the outside world, this poses obvious barriers to successful identification of, let alone access to, relevant services. We should note here that women leaving abusive relationships who are not native English speakers are also particularly unlikely to have developed English-language skills, given the tactic used by abusers (discussed at the beginning of this chapter) to isolate women from potential sources of emotional and practical support and so make it more difficult for them to escape.

'If you haven't the language to go to the DSS and organise your benefits, you start off from a

much less powerful position and actually taking the step of going into a refuge, for example, is much more difficult.' (Statutory service)

Moreover the very presumption of literacy also makes it less likely that organisations will be put in the position of having to provide oral interpretation, so potentially perpetuating claims that there is little demand for such service. So while language issues clearly function differently for particular minoritised groups, they also map on to black/white divisions, for where the cultural difference is one of a different language this also tends to coincide with visible cultural and racialised differences. But while language proficiency is necessary for accessing service procedures and their systems, this is also not sufficient :

'I know they are trying to put us on the right path by giving us our independence, pushing us to do things but when I came to Manchester ... been in Manchester nearly three years now ... so when I came here it was like get out of that door and do it for yourself and even though I can read and write in English I was scared. I didn't know which school the kids were going to, which post office to go to, they just told you ... they just gave you a map and go! It's not easy.' (South Asian women)

The long term needs of minoritised women in such situations clearly pose challenges for providers:

'With aftercare it's only for 6 months but some people need it more. Some people can't speak the language, they need more support, with benefits, they get letters to read, forms to fill and send back and I think they should not put a limit on it.' (South Asian woman)

4.11.2 Language as indicative of racism and prejudice as a barrier to accessing services

While translators and interpreters are vital to address the practical and material obstacles and boundaries, they are not sufficient to address some of the differences coded by language. Women's accounts indicated how the broader cultural meanings that attend accent worked to regulate them in trying to offset general pervasive stereotypes about particular minoritised populations:

'I didn't want the neighbours thinking, Oh God who's that they're moving in next door to us ... a travelling family ... or Gypos or you know what I mean so that's when you kind of keep quiet a bit as well.' (Irish woman)

These concerns also entered into the women's sense of being able to seek out service support in the context of domestic violence.

'You don't know what you should be asking for or what you shouldn't be asking for because you don't know really what your rights are as someone in the country and a lot of the time it's because of people's prejudice because you hear it so often from people ... especially if there's anything going on with bombings or anything you didn't want to be heard then because everybody gets tarnished with the same brush.' (Irish woman)

As with other women who may speak English but with regional or national accents, class and cultural stereotypes abound which attach various characteristics to these accents. Many of these are informed by beliefs around people being stupid and ignorant. For women whose first language is not English, this communicational barrier is sometimes treated as their (rather than the service) deficit, feeding also into stereotyped assumptions around intelligence and understanding. Women of Irish heritage may have specific barriers to contend with in relation to language. A heavy Irish accent can mean that speaking English does not necessarily warrant an appropriate response. Hence losing an accent in order to 'pass' as white English may be a key strategy for Irish women.

'I think it was really hard to begin with because we're going back about 16 years, so I think the political context at the time, made it difficult to seek help without meeting up with some prejudice, particularly me I suppose, caused me to be frightened, I suppose, of approaching agencies. I'm thinking of when I went to sign on for the first time, because I'd never signed on before. ...He was just very difficult, throw away comments, asking when I'd got off the boat basically, because I didn't have an accent. He was just quite offensive really. There'd been some recent terrorism and I remember seeing some information about bomb alerts as I went through, because it was a public building, and I'd stopped and thought as I was going through that it didn't help that the woman went in with me was another Irish woman in the refuge with me.... The fact that he couldn't understand her accent, could she speak slower. She was actually assisting me because I'd never claimed before. So some of it was inferred and some of it was overt. I was frightened because... [of] early childhood experiences of seeing my mother, and my father, ridiculed by their accents, people couldn't understand what they were saying, and making reference to them being stupid in a way, because that's the stereotype of the Irish, being thick.' (Irish woman)

4.12 Summary

As already indicated, we embarked on this study anticipating that emotional difficulties

and childcare were key barriers to minoritised women being able to make transitions to independence (in the sense of financial and emotional coping). This expectation has clearly been upheld. Beyond this, amid all the other complex questions surrounding experiences of minoritisation, it is hard to keep the very ordinary but critical matters, such as money, childcare and housing in mind, as issues facing all women leaving violent situations but affecting minoritised women too, and in intense ways. In addition to amply documenting the importance of these, our material highlights transport as a key barrier.

On top of these general issues are key issues for some minoritised women produced through immigration status and associated issues of (lack of) entitlement to public funds. We have highlighted the stigmatising lens through which women with immigration difficulties are seen, including as undeserving of public support. We propose that if we do not engage with the reality of some women's experiences around immigration then organisations are creating immediate structural barriers for minoritised women. Just as understandings of 'race', culture and gender need to mediate how organisations respond to domestic violence, so too they need to consider the impact of immigration rules and status as obstacles to minoritised women's moves from violence to independence.

5 BARRIERS TO SERVICES II: 'CULTURAL' ISSUES

Erica Burman and Sophie Smailes

Introduction

Having identified in the last chapter some key material barriers faced by minoritised women leaving violent relationships, we now turn to address subtler but equally powerful conceptual barriers that enter into how services engage with and interpret working with minoritised women. As well as documenting how current national policies limit service access and entitlement, analysis of the research material also highlights key ways in which assumptions and expectations, especially service anxieties about engaging with 'race' or cultural issues, intersect with the traditional ways in which all communities cover up acknowledgement of domestic violence and so present barriers to appropriate intervention. In this sense, such 'race'/cultural anxiety fuels a dynamic of 'cultural privacy' that works to render domestic violence within minoritised communities more invisible and so creates further barriers.

We are acutely aware of the dangers of reproducing cultural stereotypes that present minoritised communities as 'deficient'. Clearly any discussion needs to be situated firmly within the context of structural inequalities based on racism, sexism and class oppression. Indeed our focus on minoritisation presupposes an acknowledgement of how dominant groups currently and historically create and perpetuate inequalities, albeit often inadvertently. This happens typically because minoritised groups are evaluated through the (cultural, gendered and classed) norms and assumptions of the dominant group without recognising the power inequalities perpetuated. Hence in drawing attention to constructions of 'community' in this chapter, we highlight two related issues: firstly the links between gender and class oppression *within* communities as well as, secondly, how failure to attend to or challenge these contributes to services (perhaps unwittingly) perpetuating these.

We begin this chapter by, firstly, addressing the vexed question of the extent to which responses to domestic violence are mediated by culturally specific understandings.

Secondly, we document strategies provider organisations within our study adopted in engaging with minoritised communities around domestic violence issues.

Drawing on the theme of 'homogenised absence/pathologised presence' discussed in

the Introduction, in the third section we offer an analysis of the ways culture and gender function in relation to domestic violence. Throughout this chapter, rather than presenting dominant (service) and minoritised community responses separately, we have attempted to explore how these are interwoven in two key ways. Hence this section illustrates some consequences of the ways both mainstream services (and the dominant culture) and minoritised communities together privilege community membership over women's abuse and distress. We suggest that this forms a key reason why domestic violence experienced by minoritised women is rendered less visible or even invisible, as something that can be overlooked or even excused for 'cultural reasons': a 'homogenised absence'.

The fourth part is organized around the converse or corollary of this representation. In this we highlight the sometimes heightened visibility of minoritised women both within and outside their communities, and in particular how domestic violence brings them and their communities under particular scrutiny. This 'pathologised presence' produces particular additional effects that deter minoritised women from seeking out service support, and equally can act to prevent services from engaging with them.

The fifth section discusses discourses of shame as a particularly prevalent association between minoritised women and issues around domestic violence. Here we attempt to extend this to focus also on what might be interpreted as service providers' own shame in acknowledging the inadequacy of their responses.

Finally we highlight additional issues discussed by survivors as significant, but less obvious, barriers to their access to services that did not figure in other accounts.

5.1 'Cultural' issues in addressing domestic violence?

Interpreting domestic violence in relation to cultural issues always runs the risk of 'explaining' the abuse in terms of that culture. This indulges stereotypical and often racist judgements about the culture, including the position accorded women. Beyond this, it can ignore the role of cultural and religious identifications, especially in the context of minoritisation, and threatens to overlook the key barrier of racism that, along with sexism, prevents women's access to services.

There are three key consequences of these conceptions. Firstly, the concept of community is typically portrayed as static and unified, often seen as represented by powerful leaders. This gives rise to unhelpful ways of engaging with or on behalf of minoritised women through traditional structures of (usually male) religious leadership.

Secondly, there is a tendency to abstract communities from their broader socio-political contexts to portray them as uniquely oppressive and restrictive, without situating this in relation to wider practices (that may be equally restrictive, or may even create the conditions for enabling these restrictions – as in the examples about deportation discussed in the previous chapter). Thirdly, it is assumed that community is of universal importance to all the women. As we shall see later, each of these representations turns out to be inadequate.

All this is not to deny culturally-specific meanings and practices involved in minoritised women leaving, as in entering and conducting, marital relationships. So for example, white Europeans (except perhaps for the aristocracy) tend no longer to have arranged marriages, whereas for South Asian (Muslim, Hindu and Sikh), orthodox Jewish and Irish traveller peoples this is a common cultural practice. Britain's minoritised communities exhibit wide cultural variations in family organisation and living arrangements that have their reflection in childcare responsibilities. Further, while divorce remains officially impossible within the Catholic church, Muslim and Jewish women can only become divorced with the husband's consent.

Thus notions of culture and religion are integral to notions of community and were seen by both the survivors and providers as being influential in creating barriers for women surviving domestic violence. Significantly, we found in our material that women were often much more clear about the separation of culture and religion then were services. Transgressing a cultural norm or religious practice did not necessarily imply a rejection by women of their culture or religion, nor a lack of affiliation with their community - even if they regarded its current organized practice as having worked to maintain their oppressive position.

'It [domestic violence] is not part of the religion, should not be tolerated at all.' (African woman)

Both Irish and Jewish women also spoke about the struggle of going against religious practice and being perceived as breaking God's law by wanting to leave or divorce their husbands.

'Your marriage was decreed in heaven and you are going against God's commandments.' (Jewish woman)

One woman, of African-Caribbean origin, spoke about how her church congregation were very much against her leaving her husband and indeed how her difficulties were problematised:

'People can't deal with the emotional side ...there is a pecking order even in the church with your status. If you're married you go to the top of the list ...they want you to go back to a violent relationship.'

An Irish woman discussed how women who broke the religious code would be subject to persuasion to return:

'I also thought that if I went back to my local priest that I would be told, one of my sisters, my older sisters, when her marriage broke she was living in the Midlands and our local parish priest in Manchester went all the way, her husband who wasn't a Catholic contacted the priest and told him that my sister was leaving him. He went all the way from Manchester down to the Midlands to remind her of the fact that she'd been married in the Catholic church and read the riot act to her basically, and 'Irish women don't do this.'

Interestingly, some women saw their cultural specificities as an effect of minoritisation, rather than as a feature of their particular cultural heritage:

'I don't think it matters, if you're English, Asian, African, American. I really don't think it does. I think that's a fallacy. I don't believe it's any different. But because the Jewish community is a closed community, that makes it difficult, but then you get that with all the ethnic, the Irish, the Asians.' (Jewish woman)

Yet as was discussed in Chapter 3, and elaborated further in this chapter, culture and religion became elided in many of the providers' accounts. Moreover such 'cultural' matters cannot be understood outside of their reception within prevailing popular culture and social policy, which overwhelmingly stereotype and stigmatise such cultural differences as deficiencies or even pathologies (Phoenix, 1987). As this Irish woman commented:

'My name mattered to me, it was part of my culture, but within 6 months of living in the refuge, and going through the process of seeking help through agencies, I found it very difficult to stand up and be proud. I did experience what I perceive as prejudice because I was Irish, and stereotypes with what the Irish community is supposed to be like. You're either travellers or drunken brawlers, and you often see those images depicted on TV. All the characters on Coronation Street or EastEnders are plants as I call them. They're either Irish or Scottish, and they've always got an alcohol or domestic violence problem.' (Irish woman)

As we elaborate below, these dominant cultural understandings structured the willingness both of minoritised communities and individual women to access mainstream services.

5.2 Current ways provider organizations work with/in minoritised communities

From our study organisations providing support for minoritised women appeared to work in four ways: firstly, 'it's all the same'; secondly, 'softly, softly'; thirdly, as mediated by the notion of cultural privacy through 'cultural respect'; and, fourth, as informed by what they saw their specialism to be.

5.2.1 'It's All the Same': Discourses of generality

A prevalent explanation of domestic violence is in terms of unequal power relations existing between men and women, enshrined in culturally sanctioned gender roles: 'Women, in the tradition of victimology, are often blamed as being inadequate wives or colluding in their own harm and that of their children' (Radford and Stanko 1996, p68). This general interpretation of domestic violence was evident within mainstream provider accounts:

'It doesn't matter if you're South Asian, white or whatever, you are fed the same line ... that it's the nuclear family, it's heterosexual, and it's happy every after, and you've got to live with it.' (Generic domestic violence service)

However the nuclear family is a culturally and historically specific form of household organisation and, while the globalisation of western values and norms is hugely invasive, what counts as family can vary considerably. Useful as this general explanation is for warding off the way in which minoritised cultures are made 'exotic', it still threatens to overlook some of the particular barriers minoritised women can face, both in seeking support and indeed in having their oppression recognised as domestic violence (e.g. where it is not only perpetrated by the husband/male partner).

5.2.2 'Softly, Softly'

We heard from several culturally specific organisations that their approach was to work 'softly softly' in raising or addressing issues around domestic violence. This also included approaching or working directly with the community leaders. The responses from women to this approach were varied. For some this was effective as a non-stigmatising route towards accessing support. Yet we also recorded accounts from women who referred to the same organisations saying that as far as they knew there was no arena to speak of domestic violence at all; indeed they felt they could not.

Jewish women, particularly self-defined orthodox women, spoke of the importance of getting Rabbinical authority for providing services around domestic violence, and we encountered some examples both of where such sanctions were forthcoming (cf Chapter 9), as well as where these were withheld (see section 5.4 below).

The rationale, from the organisations' perspectives, for these approaches is twofold, firstly so as not to 'scare off' the women themselves (assuming they would be), and the second to not offend the community. This reflects other accounts of how services engage with minoritised communities to reinforce intra-community power relations (Sahgal and Yuval-Davis, 1992; Chantler et al, 2001), and is clearly also influenced by the ways such culturally specific voluntary sector organizations often have to gain funding from the privileged, traditional parts of their communities.

5.2.3 Cultural respect = cultural privacy

Notions of 'community' are therefore mediated by gender as well as 'race'. So not only might organisations, including the police, not get involved out of 'respect' for the culture – and one has to then consider here what kind of assumptions mediate that 'respect' - but also how they potentially do not get involved out of fear. One woman put this rather succinctly when she was discussing organisations:

'Black people, Muslim women that maybe they don't interfere, this is how things go in our communities. And maybe they are right because there will always be furious resistance and community leaders they would object, say if the Authority interfered. But this is wrong. People cannot avoid doing the right thing fearing that this is too controversial or too much controversy will arise ... and community leaders ... men, they just want this to continue and they will make whatever excuses to have this power and it's purely power and exploitation in my opinion.' (African woman)

Generic organisations, out of a 'respect' for the woman's perceived community, were not confident about facilitating a space for women to speak about their experiences of domestic violence.

'It's a very sensitive issue. People won't actually talk in the first place or it takes time to disclose these kinds of things. Unless you trust someone.' (Statutory service)

Or as a statutory community-based health service put it:

'It's what is acceptable to talk about, an invasion of privacy to ask ... around confidence.'

At some level this respect for (what we have come to describe as) women's (and others') cultural privacy seems to play into the ways women are silenced in their communities and roles. As indicated earlier (in Chapters 3 and 4), many women suggested that they didn't know who to go to, and what was available in terms of support. However, here we make the further point that even where they did approach services, the unwillingness of organisations to challenge cultural norms (and we acknowledge this is not easy) links up with male-dominated relations within minoritised communities, making the experience of domestic violence more invisible.

5.2.4 'Specialist roles' and organizational cultures

We should note that cultures, customs and practices are not specific to minoritised communities, but they also characterise mainstream organizations - in the public as well as voluntary sector. It is of particular relevance to note here how the prevailing culture of compartmentalization of services has given rise to an ethos of separation of professional roles (including not impinging on another professional's domain of responsibility) and specialisms of qualification and activity. These cultural conditions also impact on providers' sense of entitlement or authority to intervene and get involved in cases of domestic violence. Minoritised women seem to elicit particular anxiety and sense of insufficient knowledge to act appropriately, with the key consequence of their needs remaining unmet.

5.2.5 Not expert enough

Statutory organisations typically commented about not feeling qualified to know what to ask – both in terms of minority cultural practices and domestic violence - unless specifically requested. Hence generic organisations reported themselves insufficiently expert in terms of 'cultural' expertise:

'I honestly wouldn't like to urm I certainly don't feel myself expert enough in that field to make a comment.' (Statutory service)

'Unfortunately unless somebody actually comes and says what their needs are, it's a bit of a blanket approach.' (Statutory service)

Alternatively, culturally specific organisations claimed not to feel qualified to work specifically around domestic violence:

'I don't think it would occur to them [i.e. to woman to access this organisation] and it's not a specialism of ours and we've never professed it to be. There are other agencies that do it out there better and more resources and have a lot better networks to deal with things like that.' (Culturally specific generalist service)

and indeed they were not perceived to offer such services:

'They don't advertise domestic violence. They advertise mostly special needs, mentally ill, carer ... and I don't think they have anyone there for domestic violence although there are plenty of workers.' (Jewish woman referring to culturally specific generalist service)

Clearly this intersection between the 'specialisms' of culture and gender in relation to services around domestic violence for minoritised women suggests that service worries – whether cultural or professional – can give rise to a situation where such women have few sources of support available to them.

5.2.6 Caught between: Organisational cultural clashes

Moreover since audits and evaluation systems are designed only to measure particular outcomes and interventions then this poses two kinds of barriers to their involvement as: a) being 'outside their area', b) or as something that would not 'count' as an intervention, or even c) as something that someone else does anyway. This is particularly relevant in relation to domestic violence as it is clear from both broader studies and this one that women may try a number of times before they finally (if at all) leave the violent relationship, and so providing for them requires complex inter-relations between services, perhaps over an extended period of time.

Interestingly, while we highlight later the key assumption held by mainstream services about minoritised communities that 'they look after their own', the dominant cultural/ service norm concerning specialist remit seems – in the mind of the organisations - to fail to qualify as equivalent. The next examples illustrate very familiar aspects of this current contract culture that work to limit agency interventions and break up continuous, 'joined up' provision.

Hence one key division concerns short-term vs. long-term involvement:

'I suppose we only deal with the short term and we hopefully pass the girls [sic] *on to the agencies who will deal with the long term and we do referrals to Social Services if we feel there are any other care issues ... urm the outreach workers ... they're quite a long term support*

... they do help people who suffer domestic violence and they do help them sort of settle and.. show them how to access all the necessary agencies.' (Statutory service)

A further key divisor of service interest and involvement arises through those interventions directed towards children rather than women (which are explored more fully in chapter 6):

'It's very difficult because we are a child protection agency essentially so we're coming from the angle of protecting the children ... so it is linked more with childcare than with the woman.' (Statutory service)

A third form of limiting intervention was documented where the woman sought out support but the response was not of the form she wanted. She called the police who focused on punishing the perpetrator rather than supporting her escape from the violence:

'I went to the police first cos I'd been beaten up, so I went to the police. And they wasn't no help, they just wanted to lock him up. You know and basically I was saying to them I want to get away, I don't want to ... you know, I don't want this.' (Dual heritage African-Caribbean and white British woman)

5.2.7 Culturally different norms concerning outcomes?

Further, the question of evaluating outcomes poses specific dilemmas in the context of domestic violence in relation to minoritised communities. For many community organizations their first (and often only) response is to offer mediation. By contrast mainstream organizational responses may contribute to culturally-laden reproaches such as 'why doesn't she leave?' (see Chapter 7). As discussed elsewhere in this report (Chapters 3 and 7), this can involve stereotypical and negative evaluations of particular cultures or cultural practices. It also thereby neglects attention to the substantial material, as well as cultural, barriers that prevent or deter women from leaving.

5.3 Domestic violence and the monitoring of minoritised communities

Organisations interviewed in the study discussed communities in multiple ways. As also indicated in Chapter 3 (section 3.2.1) some of these conceptions include ones that make it more difficult for women to approach services. Whereas all communities have forms of internal monitoring or care, this should not be regarded as fulfilling

responsibilities for service provision. Indeed the very notion of a community as singular and unitary tends towards homogenizing diverse power relations and tensions within it. Furthermore within current policies, 'community' when applied to minoritised populations is especially subject to forms of romanticism fuelled by multiculturalist discourses of 'cultural respect'. These become particularly problematic when attempting to grapple with the complexities of addressing minoritised women's needs in the context of domestic violence. For contrary to the romanticised representation of 'community', domestic violence highlights just how divided communities can be. This includes not only challenges to definitions of 'community' but also exploring how and when to cross boundaries between communities for better service provision.

Since women, in all cultures and classes, have been positioned as representatives of cultural identity and as responsible for its reproduction through household and childrearing responsibilities (Yuval-Davis, 1997), women surviving domestic violence challenge cultural norms for both culturally mainstream and specialist services. These challenges are perhaps easier to avoid than address. Accounts from both mainstream services (and the dominant culture) and minoritised communities acknowledged pressures to privilege community membership over women's abuse and distress:

'*... needs as a family comes before an individual's needs. An individual's needs are often neglected ... it's very important to keep the appearance up with the family and the family together no matter what is going on.*' (Statutory service)

Such notions of putting family, community and appearances before the individual were presented as peculiar to the minoritised groups – almost as if they did not function as a monitoring tool for majoritised women as well. Organisations reported women being encouraged to stay in violent relationships for the children and family's sake, that it was the family who would sort out and manage the abusive situation.

'*On an individual basis there would still be a lot of emphasis put on families and the whole thing that cuts across many boundaries and cultures, emphasis put on your marital vows and all the rest that goes with that.*' (Culturally specific generalist service)

Corresponding with the strategies outlined earlier, there is a range of representations of domestic violence:

5.3.1 'It Doesn't Happen'

Romito (2000) has noted a 'passive' denial by organizations about the existence and

prevalence of domestic violence, in the sense that there is a failure to 'see the signs', to probe or ask questions, and to take women's (perhaps cautious or defensive) accounts at face value without considering factors that might constrain them from being more frank. Indeed McLeer and Anwar (1989) reported that if women presenting at Accident and Emergency hospital departments with injuries indicating assault were specifically asked about domestic violence then recordings increased from 6% to 30%. Within our study, the largest Accident and Emergency department in Manchester reported that they did not ask about domestic violence. Clearly collecting such information is vital in the provision of appropriate health care and onward referral if the woman wants access to other services.

While this may be a general phenomenon, there may be even less willingness to acknowledge domestic violence as occurring within minoritised communities.

'Some of my own invisibility... tied in for some way with me about the invisibility of domestic violence. People don't want to see the domestic violence, they know it's going on, they know it's there. Also the fact that I'm Irish. They didn't want to see it when this didn't want to. Discard it. I think that's almost, I think that's what was harder, people seeing me as invisible than it was for them to be verbally abusive to me because of it. Because then I didn't exist... I've seen it when people have been prejudiced or racist... They do that with domestic violence, if you're from a minority group they do it even more. I've seen Asian women or Black women waiting and people go to the people behind them and just ignore them. That invisibility makes you feel like nothing. That may be something that's common with other women, not being seen, it's as though you're nothing. That and the additional abuse, your crime is to come from a minority group, with all its preconceived ideas and prejudices about you, the double hurt that prevents you from accessing services, because you know what people think about you, or you know what some of the myths are because you've grown up with them. If you're in any type of crisis it makes it difficult for you to approach anybody, but when it's domestic violence it's even more difficult.' (Irish woman)

5.3.2 Domestic violence as a pretext for intervention

Yet beyond such 'overlooking', there are more sinister examples of women failing to be attended to, or only attended to in the pursuit of another agency intervention agenda. As also noted in Chapter 3, minoritised women often have well-founded expectations, if not actual experiences of, racism from services:

'I'd also approached the police and had quite a negative response from them. That was to do with the domestic violence. But as an Irish woman living in England, I'd always been a bit

suspicious of approaching the police, at that point in time, because of personal experience with close members of the family... They'd had quite horrendous experiences of being detained and things like that, so I was frightened to use the police in that sense, didn't trust them. So the police were another agency ...that I wouldn't have thought of going to, being fearful of the response. ' (Irish woman)

We have already mentioned the case of an African-Caribbean woman interviewed in our study who went to a police station to request intervention around domestic violence only to experience the agency checking whether her partner had a criminal record and then sending her back home in the middle of the night without even an escort. Such experiences of both failing to take reports of domestic violence seriously and instead treating them as opportunities to regulate other aspects of minoritised communities fuel community anxieties about exposure to further racism. It is well-known for example that more Black and Irish people are stopped by the police and in prison, more Black children are taken into children's homes and are in care. Yet, as the above example indicates, a response to this of 'colour blindness' or a reluctance to attend to cultural/racialised specialisms for fear of being seen or experienced as racist is also inadequate, since it effectively blocks women from accessing services that they need.

5.3.3 Disbelief (or: 'It doesn't happen here/to us')

'It doesn't happen here' or 'it doesn't happen to us' is a very widespread response to, or perception surrounding, domestic violence – which as discussed in Chapter 3 engaged class as well as racialised stereotypes. Unfortunately such disbelief or denial can also be found in accounts provided by agencies as well as the reports of the women's families. An Irish women interviewed talked of pressing charges when she was in hospital from her injuries, and being advised that she need not be present in court because the police were sure he would 'go down' for a few months. However:

'He got away with it 'cos he knew one policeman and I don't know what happened and his statement was changed and that I was as bad as him' (Irish woman)

On a previous occasion when this woman had returned from hospital for treatment for injuries sustained from the violence and the social workers came to return her 2 children:

'They come in and they looked and he started crying and getting on his knees, 'I swear to God, I'll never hit her again, I was drunk'. He always blamed it on the drink. 'In fact I want

you two ladies to come every day just to make sure that I never put a hand on her again'. And so they fell for it... He convinced them and I never seen the social workers [again].'

5.3.4 Blaming the woman

We have already noted the broader tendency for women to be positioned as responsible when relationships break down, including becoming violent. A number of different strands of blame could be identified within the accounts generated from the study, as exemplified below:

Firstly, women can be blamed for the violence, as having elicited it:

'There was a middle aged woman there and she got very angry hearing my story, saying it's my fault. "Because your husband's good, his age is low".' (South Asian woman)

'I think the majority of them see all of what is happening now as self inflicted. I have, I don't know, hurt his honour and dignity.' (South Asian woman)

Also women reported being blamed for leaving:

""how could you do a thing like that?" ... "what's wrong with you?".' (Jewish women)

Secondly, the role of others in maintaining the woman's reputation was very much at issue. A Jewish woman interviewed reported how a family member had tried to ruin this by spreading malicious gossip depicting her as an evil woman for leaving. This relative had previously abused her, so she did not feel she could return to her family or community of origin.

Thirdly, beyond familial reputation, women were sometimes blamed for bringing the community into disrepute. They spoke of incidences where, rather than supporting them, members within the community told them: *'you have disgraced us'* (Jewish woman).

For minoritised women, the anticipated effects on the community, as well as family, militated against disclosure.

'You keep quiet ... you don't tell anyone your business.' (Irish woman)

5.3.5 Racialised representations of violence: 'It's a Cultural Thing'

Cultural explanations for domestic violence threaten to overlook the violence in favour of problematising the culture. As Maynard and Winn (1997, p.181) noted: 'Ultimately black women suffer a lack of protection within the community, are particularly isolated in white areas where stereotypical views of black behaviour as "normally" violent abound and may not be protected by the law because of police racism'. Here we might also add, because of the fear of being seen as racist.'

'Organisations go oh well it's a cultural thing ...so racism is institutionalised in a sense and people are so scared that they'll be pulled up for being racist that they actually don't tackle it at all.' (Generic domestic violence service)

'[Another Irish woman] and I were told that they didn't know why we didn't go back now, because "your lot" don't believe in divorce and you'll go back to it. If he gets the priest to you, you'll be back in a minute. But I said I wasn't going back.' (Irish woman)

'You get judged straight away. English people think that we don't have those problems in our community ... they didn't expect it to be happening because we all look so happy, but behind closed doors a lot goes on,' (South Asian woman)

'That was the reason I wouldn't [say anything] because I didn't want [it] to be "oh Irish, what do you expect?".' (Irish woman)

'When women have gone to the police, asking for help, when they come and say that it is okay, they wouldn't arrest him or caution him. A lot of men they just get away with it.' (African-Caribbean woman)

While clearly this is only one of various organisational responses to minoritised women, within our study we found that not only did generic organisations report not necessarily addressing issues of domestic violence, but also that there is a tendency either to 'treat everyone the same' or not to address differences at all.

5.4 The visibility of minoritised women within and outside communities: Their 'Pathologised Presence'

We now move on to discuss responses that do highlight the question of gender specificities within minoritised communities. However where issues of domestic violence among minoritised women were acknowledged, women can sometimes be

seen as responsible for this, and so they and/or their communities are pathologised. This occurs in 6 inter-related ways.

5.4.1 Failure to acknowledge institutional racism and sexism

In Chapters 3 and 4 we discussed racial, cultural and class stereotypes that circulate in relation to domestic violence that produce barriers for minoritised women seeking support around domestic violence. Here we might note that providers recognised some of these difficulties, but still framed them as the responsibility of the individual to transcend:

'The officious nature of local authority puts a lot of people off.' (Statutory service)

Or in an interesting – if ambiguous reference - to 'culture' as a mediator of response to a key frontline service:

'The sheer fact we are the police and culturally what that means to some people.'

'I think going to the white community and asking for help when you're from a different ethnic race, it's not easy, we don't make it easy for people, I wouldn't want to come in here and ask for help'. (Statutory service)

Such accounts indicate the need for organisations to engage with the institutionalised racism and sexism within their organisations, which militate against women feeling able to approach them.

5.4.2 Community compromises of confidentiality and professional advice:

But if explicit or implicit barriers to mainstream services were identified, then it seemed community networks could just as effectively bar access to usual ways of accessing support via the closeness of community networks. While in Chapter 3 we highlight how women were reported to be fearful of being recognised and traced, here we might note how this extended to concerns that if they consulted advisors from within their own communities then professional practice will not be maintained. This gave rise to particular dilemmas for minoritised women, for while it seemed they would prefer to access support from within their communities, they were not confident of retaining their anonymity and so were reluctant to seek out support. Or alternatively they faced the risk, or actuality, of racism and the worry of bringing their communities into

disrepute for disclosing violence to an 'outside' mainstream organisation:

'We do struggle to link women in with particular resources that they feel safe with' (Statutory services)

'Coming from such a small community, confidentiality is a huge issue. Their GP could be their husband's cousin and it's very, very difficult.' (Culturally specific domestic violence service)

The same provider later highlighted how class and professional networks within the communities could prevent professional intervention over domestic violence:

'And if that woman decides to withdraw from that GP and access the services of a non-[names cultural group] GP in another part of [city] it will raise questions by her partner and in one instance the violence got worse when he realised that she was becoming close to exposing what was going on so it was sort of intimidation. I think the impact and the pressure upon a woman to keep quiet is much greater than it would be, for cultural reasons for she doesn't want to expose her good [cultural/racial background] lawyer husband as being an abuser ... There have been instances whenever we've gone to access a solicitor for a woman in the X area that no one wants to touch it.. they won't take Mrs A on as her husband's a well known respected figure within the community ... if a partner has approached a solicitor "and if you do decide to take on this case I promise you that you won't get more business from my clients" or whatever.' (Culturally specific domestic violence service)

Such accounts underscore the importance of statutory or mainstream services that stand outside intra-community conflicts of interest, as well as safe refuge provision that may be some geographical distance from the women's community of origin.

5.4.3 Being found/identified

Within our study there were several examples of women who had left an abusive relationship being followed and caught through community networks. Our participants included women who had had to move several times, including to different countries, in order to escape abuse; of women whose friends and family members had let the abuser re-locate the woman, extending to networks that effectively blocked women's chances of employment within the extended community, and even facilitating the removal of children and the isolating of the woman. While this kind of the 'hunting' goes on in majoritised communities, it was often presented as being peculiar to minoritised communities.

Indeed women's fears of identification extended to their concerns about possible identification from their accounts as generated within this study, which have impacted on this report in at least two key ways. Firstly, it should be noted that, in consultation with survivors we have removed information that could make them identifiable, and this has led to some loss of specificity and richness of detail in the analysis. Secondly, although we invited participants to tell us how they identified (in relation to cultural heritage, background, or structures of racialisation), this has posed us with some ethical dilemmas around identification. We have not felt able to use all of these self-descriptors in representing women's accounts because we were concerned that doing so would compromise their anonymity. We recognise that this may echo more general ways in which services and women themselves are put in the position of having to deny or subordinate aspects of women's identities for purposes of protection.

Both women and provider organisations discussed women's fears of being identified and recognised when using specialist and non-specialist refuges and services and how this impacts on their work.

'in X [country] where can you disappear to? Everybody knows everybody else.. I knew I was in a trap'. (Jewish woman)

'The Asian Community never gives up looking for a person.' (South Asian woman)

I certainly would not go for help in any way, shape or form to my Irish community. When I was needing help there wasn't a cat in hell's chance, I didn't go to my priest or anything because it's a very closed community. Within a very short space of time everyone would know your business, or at least that's what I thought. (Irish woman)

Moreover, one culturally specific service drew upon these concerns as a rationale for not working explicitly with domestic violence – either within culturally specific or mainstream services:

'I don't feel that Jewish women would access a mainstream support group, I really do, it's taken a lot for them to access our very low key services, so if you had a group, I don't think they would access it...I think they would see themselves as being different to the other women who would access the group, I think that they would see that their problems are different, although, I would say that the majority of the problems are very similar, but they wouldn't see it in that way, they would, it would be completely different and they wouldn't want to go to the group.' (Culturally specific generalist service)

But then when asked whether elaborating a culturally-specific arena for such discussion

would be helpful, the community norms of 'keeping it within the family' and community reputation were seen to prohibit culturally-specific intervention.

'I mean it's kept so secret, even the families that we visit, it's not like known in the community...I think women wouldn't want to come to a group to be identified as such...They wouldn't want other women, even other women in the same situation to know, because they still have a standing in the community and all those things.' (Culturally specific generalist service)

It is important to note how the combined upshot of these two perspectives would lead to a view of minoritised women as unwilling to engage with any kind of service. This tied in with the analysis above (section 5.2.4) which highlighted how agencies 'specialisms' militated against their feeling able to offer appropriate support. However indications from both women's accounts of trying to access both mainstream and culturally specific domestic violence provisions suggested otherwise. Moreover during the course of the research the organisation concerned made links with the culturally specific domestic violence provision, and from this it appears that referrals and more substantial service relationships will now be forged.

In particular when organisations spoke of South Asian and Jewish communities they argued that the women:

'... know that all the community will be against them and people will try and find them.' (Statutory service)

However this sense of being identified in undesirable ways also connects with broader contexts of racism outside specific cultural communities. This often militated against being 'counted in' as a minoritised group, where 'passing' as white is a possibility:

'In my line of work I have to constantly ask women their ethnic origin and all the jobs I've had have required me to do monitoring, and the group of women who are most reluctant to give their ethnic origin, believe it or not, are Irish women. They are so suspicious as to why you're asking. They'll give you anything else, but if you ask their ethnic origin they're quite fearful. They want to know why you want it, what you're going to do with it, and who's going to have access to it.' (Irish woman)

Finally there was another important connection between our research process and our topic. As already made clear, this study was carried out in partnership with the Black and South Asian women's refuges in Manchester. In terms of finding women survivors to interview for the study, these agencies were important referrers. However

the other two minoritised communities included within the study, Irish and Jewish, have no equivalent dedicated domestic violence services in Manchester. It is relevant to note therefore that the Jewish and Irish survivors accounts in this study were generated from generic domestic violence services in Manchester or via informal networks between participants (as a 'snowballing' effect), as well as those identified in London via Jewish Women's Aid. The comments above may indicate something of why this is.

5.4.4 Being shunned/losing community

This rejection by the community, for breaking with 'tradition' and seeking support around domestic violence outside the community was borne out in some of the woman's accounts. Thus, there were women from all of the minoritised groups who had found themselves rejected and ostracised from their community.

'We went to one case conference .. and the centre in which the case conference was being held had a small Kosher café in the centre only for the ultra orthodox people and I went in with that woman and we went into this café to have a cup of coffee because we were early and everyone got up and walked out. So word had reached the community on the Monday and she had left her home the Thursday previous. And to me it was a deliberate attempt to weaken her defence and to and to undermine her and to show her that local people were "hell with this, this is what we'll do to you" and that's quite difficult to battle with constantly.' (Culturally specific domestic violence service)

A South Asian woman reported how her family and friends no longer spoke to her because she had left her marriage, while an Irish woman remarked:

'I can remember going to a wedding almost twelve months after I'd left my husband and it was my cousin's wedding. A couple of aunts and uncles are incredibly staunch Catholics and one of my aunts, as soon as I walked in, pulled me to the side and said "Don't you dare tell anyone you're separated, this is my daughter's wedding, don't you bring shame on us"...' (Irish woman)

This sense of being shunned was also recognised by services:

'often there are repercussions within the community ... retaliation may take place.' (Statutory service)

Yet for the 'community' to have such far reaching effects in blocking women's moves

to independence it clearly also was accorded importance and value by the woman. Indeed for many of these women it was the loss of this community as well as the fear of isolation within majoritised communities which stopped them moving on. The complexity of community as both a longed-for resource as well as sometimes a site of oppression for women is not always acknowledged by providers when discussing the impact of community on domestic violence.

5.4.5 Organizational representations: 'They Look After Their Own'

The pervasive notion of community as monolithic (and separate) bolsters the allocation of stereotypical identities to women who are South Asian, African-Caribbean, Irish and Jewish, and assumes that the community from which they come 'takes care of its own'. Within our study in particular Jewish and Muslim religions/cultures were perceived as being closed and the assumption that these 'take care of their own' seemed to work alongside the norms of 'cultural privacy' and 'respect' to stop organisations from reaching out and engaging with women – thereby perpetuating those (dominant as well as minoritised) cultural norms which can isolate and fix women within oppressive positions.

'Sometimes it feels as though you enter another sort of reality and people are stuck in this often extended family situation which is abusive and it's like there are these walls that are around and can almost feel it when you visit that you are in another world. Her real world is one where she is just put down so much that she believes that there is no way out. And you feel it yourself going in there.' (Statutory service)

An Irish survivor indicated how this structure of 'looking after one's own' intersected with a sense of non-entitlement conferred by her minoritised position:

'My family background was that, even though I was undergraduate as well as graduate by that time, you didn't claim, you didn't do those sort of things, because that was what was expected of the community. They would look after their own; they wouldn't use benefits, very proud. My father still to this day, hasn't claimed anything, and he's 75. It's that sort of attitude that you don't do it. Some of that's about bringing shame, some of it's about the attitudes towards the Irish when my father came over in the '50s and being given that information, seeing my mother and father ridiculed by their accents...' (Irish woman)

Similarly the worker at another culturally specific DV service discussed professional responses to her organisation:

'Yes yes whether that be ultra-orthodox or whether it be "well if they're from the Jewish community and they are suffering abuse well they will definitely be well looked after, but you know the Jewish community is a very rich community" you hear that all the time and so constantly I'm repeating myself well actually that's not true and this woman has actually got nine kids and she doesn't have finance, she doesn't have access to any huge amount of finance and so yes professionals do have their own stereotypes of the Jewish community and that's something we're constantly working against because every woman I work with, I mean the refuge at the moment is so diverse – it's just, I've got very ultra-orthodox women living alongside completely secular Jews.' (Culturally specific domestic violence service)

5.4.6 Racialised representations of gender and community roles

As also indicated in Chapter 3, provider organisations spoke of how 'religion, society, culture, tradition, all these things play a very important role' (Statutory service) in the barriers women have to overcome to escape domestic violence. Examples were given from both Jewish and Muslim communities prioritising men over women, and family over women, in contexts of abuse. The implication here seemed to be that domestic violence and women's perceived subservient roles were a normalised part of the culture from which these women came. As already seem from the assumption that 'it's a cultural thing', providers assume (sometimes correctly) that minoritised groups try to deal with violence within their communities and are reluctant to acknowledge its existence. But stereotypical assumptions still circulated that could further confirm these barriers. As already indicated (3.2.1) Jewish women were seen as family orientated and privileging community and family needs over their own, African-Caribbean women as strong and violent, South Asian women as passive and submissive and Irish women as 'being used to it'.

'It's almost accepted that that's what happens to women and there is a cultural history of violence with Irish women that's very difficult to get those women out of the cycle.' (Statutory service)

The influence of culture, class and family from the organisational point of view impacted on a number of ways – highlighting intra-community stereotypes as well. While Irish Travellers were typically the cultural group that organisations readily discussed in terms of a cross-generational culture of violence, they also considered the impact of this 'culture' on the wider Irish community:

'[It] impacts on the younger women now, makes it even more difficult for them to remove themselves from the situation if their mother or granny have that within the same household

... they have seen their mother and even their grandmother abused and they have thought this is how it has got to be for the sake of the children.' (Culturally specific generalist service)

(See Chapter 3, Section 3.2.3 and Chapter 6 for further discussion of 'cycles of abuse'.)

These racialised stereotypes were both explicitly, and implicitly (in terms of notions of dependency vs. independence, see Chapter 7) drawn upon to account for not interfering and not speaking about domestic violence, the effect of which is to produce another barrier. While women do question and challenge such cultural norms, the ways in which culture and gender and religion are discussed by organizations construct these as fixed differences, and peculiar to these minoritised communities. What organisations seem to overlook was how by engaging with such constructions of community they colluded with and buttressed the oppression of minoritised women.

5.5 Discourses of shame

When considering what was at stake in disclosing or seeking assistance in relation to domestic violence the range of restrictions that limit women's 'freedom to speak' figured in provider as well as survivor accounts. These concerned not only structural issues of, for example, immigration status as a way of limiting women's freedom, but also more subtle cultural and gendered dimensions of experience. In particular discourses of shame figured within accounts of minoritised women's responses to domestic violence, and were accorded a key role in their pathways into services. We might well question why shame should arise in contexts where women were the recipients of oppressive and abusive behaviour. However equally we should question why so much discussion of shame was associated with particular minoritised groups (especially South Asian and Jewish). Gendered conceptions of women as mothers, wives, protectors, women being responsible for the success of marriage and family mobilise widespread cultural meanings that inform how shame is understood.

5.5.1 Women's accounts of shame

In common with many women, respondents in this study experienced much shame in relation to identifying as survivors of domestic violence. The groupwork set up as part of this study focused on many themes associated with the shame of being abused, of loving someone abusive (see also Chapter 8). Yet interestingly, notwithstanding the widely circulating notions of the paralysing effects of shame, we heard just as much from both women and workers about the tactics used to attempt to shame

women, rather than only the effects of shame upon women.

5.5.1.1 Failing as a woman

'a lot of women are fed it that ... they feel themselves a sense of failure ... they have brought it on themselves.' (Generic domestic violence service)

'[You have to be] someone who is coping, somebody who is happy, happily married women, somebody who looks after the kids.' (Jewish woman)

Dominant constructions of femininity and gender portray domestic violence as a response to the woman having done something wrong. This was particularly indicated by the accounts of one woman who reported reflecting after the relationship had ended:

'why he hammered me, what did I do? ... I did the cooking, the cleaning, everything, he controlled the money and then batters me on top of it.' (Irish woman)

Other women also spoke about how they had tried to fulfil their understanding of their marriage contract, by doing the housework and bearing and caring for children, with implied or expressed surprise that they still got abused. So shame was constructed not only about 'washing dirty linen in public' but about being a failure as a woman.

5.5.1.2 Shame as a bad mother

In some cases women were subjected to quite organised shaming tactics:

'I've had a few experiences which I did feel within the very, very ultra-orthodox community almost bullied myself I went to like case conference where they turned up in force maybe ten, eleven different bodies from let's say x [place] turned up to reinforce that no this woman wasn't suffering violence and actually she's a bad mother and that's why he lost his temper and this could range from head teachers to women that work for other voluntary charities within the ultra-orthodox community... one particular woman there was ten or twelve of them just turned up in force and their mere presence was really overwhelming. They sat at the end of the case conference and sort of like you know stared at my client... it does amaze me the length that people will go through of sort of intimidate you into sort of blaming the woman for not being a good parent.' (Culturally specific domestic violence service)

'.. because when they [culturally specific generic organisations] advertise to collect money for their existence they say 'we support disadvantaged families' well you do not want to be a disadvantaged family so who wants to go there?' (Jewish woman)

5.5.1.3 The shame of staying in an abusive relationship

So women's shame could be multiple, and yet this was often presented by organisations in singular ways, in particular focusing responsibility for this on the woman herself. Not surprisingly, women too identified with this. Hence one woman indicated how she felt:

'...embarrassed, ashamed. I knew people were saying why is she still with him.' (Irish woman)

5.5.1.4 The shame of bringing family or community into disrepute

There are particular pressures on minority communities to present as 'perfect', generated by living in a racist environment. Given that there are already damaging stereotypical constructions of minoritised communities, fears were expressed that any flaws or imperfections could fuel racism. Members of minoritised groups often carry the burden of representing their identified communities. Hence anticipated or real effects of bringing the family or community into disrepute could operate at both intra-community levels and in interaction with the wider society.

[the importance to women that] 'most houses have a happy mask, those houses that don't feel ashamed to admit and they have nowhere to go.' (Jewish woman)

'...my father being told he should have taken all us girls back to Ireland as soon as their mother died, you've ruined them, look at her divorced and the shame of it. '(Irish woman)

'you can't tell anyone, not even my family that I told. Because if I speak then something bad will happen to me in my family.' (South Asian woman)

Women disclosing domestic violence therefore appeared to feel doubly disloyal – not only to their partners and families but also to their communities. Here we see a crucial link between organisational and minoritised community pressures towards 'cultural privacy' that threatens to silence women further.

5.5.2 Organisational shame?

While shame is a well-known 'cultural' attribute, and the theme of shame was most evident within accounts provided by and about survivors of domestic violence, we might pause to consider how this figured also within service responses to such women.

Given the divisions and separations of services noted above (section 5.1.2) it might be anticipated that providers experience shame or discomfort in encountering acute difficulties (including immigration issues and 'no recourse to public funds') that they feel helpless in knowing how to address in meaningful ways. At the end of this report we offer some recommendations of practical strategies to inform such interventions. Here however we want to note how difficulties of listening to and acknowledging distress can also function to prevent organisations from engaging minoritised women, both in terms of what they see and what they avoid seeing. So perhaps the fact that many of the generic organisations do not even mention questions of immigration status and no recourse to public funds may reflect lack of knowledge about such issues. Furthermore even were such information is known about, the overwhelming nature of such structural barriers may make it hard for workers to know how to intervene. We would argue that there are measures that can be taken, and we highlight some of these in our Conclusions. At the very least we invite providers reading this report to reflect on whether the 'shame' so often attributed to (often particular) minoritised women is not something they can also 'match'.

5.6 Other barriers emerging from survivor accounts

In this section we highlight further issues identified by minoritised women who had left contexts of domestic violence that have not been covered in our account so far:

5.6.1 Children as a barrier to leaving

Women indicated critical awareness of how notions of the 'family' mediated their responses and routes of escape.

'The ethos of the Jewish religion is family, family, <u>you are</u> family, you have children, you do family activities.' (Jewish woman)

Notions of loyalty and obligation mediated their choices to speak, and their sense of responsibility to their children, their community and their 'family'.

'If you say that your husband has been hitting you it wouldn't look good in the community ...knock on effect to children and not getting arranged marriages because that's not a good family to marry into.' (Jewish woman)

'Other women who were torn between taking the children away, especially in the Irish community, divorce is unheard of, separation is unheard of, and the family unit, single parenthood, forget it. And this very strong family-oriented notion of needing two parents, but definitely needing a father, the pull of children to go back to the father and the struggle that they have.' (Irish woman)

Even the children themselves sometimes pressurise the woman to stay:

'We've also worked with women whose children have said well if you leave and you go to a refuge or if you expose the problem we want you to know that we don't want anything more to do with you.' (Culturally specific domestic violence service)

Even concern for family members can function as a reason not to leave:

'I didn't want to tell my mother or father because my father would say you've made your bed ... and me mother would have been worried cos she had enough to put up with me father so I thought I'll stay quiet.' (Irish woman)

Fulfilling the traditional roles of wife and mother within a minoritised community was seen to imply major commitments that women did not surrender except under extreme circumstances:

'So from the day you marry you have commitment, the family commitment, the community commitment, husband commitment, children commitment – whatever you give there is a commitment.' (Jewish woman)

'Where I come from my community when someone is in trouble, they are supposed to share things.' (South Asian)

'It is only because the ... community is so caring. If you knew the number of free local societies, help societies in this community, it's actually mind blowing. The community is very caring which is why I think it's so hard to talk about things that are so un-community.' (Jewish woman)

'I have different ways of looking at things and I have expectations of being part of the community, I can get upset when I feel that I haven't got a community to be part of or if my

community is not supporting me.' (Jewish woman)

The community may be represented as a place where women want to return to:

'I still needed a sense of community around me because that was what I had grown up in and it was what I was used to. I still needed some sort of familiarity around me.' (South Asian woman)

'The barriers they have to really that they face is exclusion from their community.' (Culturally specific domestic violence service)

5.7 Summary

In this chapter we have attempted to show how key stereotypical (and contradictory) representations of communities held by provider organizations included that: a) domestic violence does not occur; b) 'they look after their own', and c) the community functions as a monitoring and policing structure, which restricted and blocked women's move to independence. While the first two of these produced a culture of non-interference, often justified in the name of cultural respect, the third indicated an overly rigid conception of minoritised communities as separate from the mainstream culture that effectively ignored broader responsibilities in producing and maintaining such norms.

Further we have illustrated how these organisational cultures intersected with the ways minoritised communities respond to the racism, anti-Semitism and anti-Irish oppression exacerbated by prevailing longstanding, as well as acute, political contexts to make it even more difficult for women to reach outside their communities for support. In particular this was represented as signifying a betrayal of their culture in ways that perpetuated the racism. However because of pressures on women that prevail within all communities this was seen to close off avenues of support to women which in some cases further entrapped them within abusive situations. Thus the dynamic of normalised absence/pathologised presence produced particular dilemmas for minoritised women surviving abusive relationships which were exacerbated by services failing to adequately engage both with racism and its intersections with gender and class oppressions.

6 MINORITISATION AND MOTHERHOOD: WOMEN, CHILDREN AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Sam Warner and Kamal Pantling

Introduction

In the UK women with children constitute a significant group of those affected by domestic violence. This is unsurprising given that domestic violence often starts or intensifies during pregnancy (DOH, 2000a). Hence, policy and practices in respect of domestic violence have developed to meet the needs of children as well as women. Indeed, the DOH (1999) has recently identified domestic violence as a specific factor associated with emotional abuse of children. This is significant because emotional abuse is understood to have profound and adverse long-term consequences on children's development (ibid.). Hence whilst domestic violence has long been understood to have negative consequences for women, increasingly concern has focussed on the negative effects of domestic violence on children. Additionally, current government policy has highlighted the need to consider children's welfare within their specific cultural context (DOH, 2000b). This has been a long-term concern of the voluntary sector attempting to provide for women and children from minoritised communities. However, there are still few specialist refuges for women and children from minoritised communities and such services are under-resourced.

In this chapter we explore some of the intersections between minoritisation, motherhood, childhood, and domestic violence. We draw on the interviews we conducted with the minoritised women who have experienced domestic violence who are also mothers and with the women who provide services to mothers and children in this context. We consider the ways in which concerns over children can serve to restrict women's opportunities to leave violent relationships. We discuss some of the negative effects domestic violence can have on children and identify some of the consequences for children when women leave violent relationships. We challenge the notion that the negative effects of domestic violence on children are inevitable, enduring and beyond mediation. We then critically examine current statutory approaches to domestic violence and identify limitations regarding women and children from minoritised communities.

6.1 Caring for children: Domestic violence and the impact of motherhood

As also noted in Chapters 4 and 5, when women live with domestic violence their lives may be restricted in multiple ways such that they have little access to family, friends and wider community resources. They may have few positive relationships at all. For mothers, their children may represent the main, if not the only, concern in their lives:

'Because the children for a lot of these people are the only things they live for. The only reason they get up in the morning.' (Statutory service)

Mothers, in violent relationships, not only must consider their own survival but also the effects that their leaving or staying will have on their children. Whilst some women believe that children can be protected from the negative effects of domestic violence through secrecy and silence, still more are painfully aware of the profound emotional impact growing up in a violent family can have on children. This knowledge can provide the impetus to leave. For women who may feel unable to leave for themselves may be able to act to protect their children. Sometimes children may be more direct agents of change in facilitating resistance to domestic violence:

'The abuse was so bad. Even my eldest child who was 8 then, he got so upset he asked me "he is so mean, what are we waiting for?" This is an 8 year old telling me that and I contacted the X centre. I had a friend who worked there and I phoned him. I told him that I had to move out within two hours and he phoned X [the refuge].' (African woman)

However, for many women, their children become part of the mechanism through which abusers exert control over them:

'He never hit the kids and stuff but I'd actually get a good hiding if the kids cried, so the onus was on me to keep them quite. So even when they were small, you know if they were crying I was terrified of getting beaten up. You're just so terrified that you're going to get beaten up and it's not a case of like, you're putting yourself before the kids but you're trying to keep the peace.' (Generic domestic violence service worker and survivor)

Children may also be used to intensify the emotional abuse of mothers:

'They shouldn't really do what they like to a woman but to do it to the kids - that's the way they get to you. They do it to the kids to get you - that's their way of hurting you as well.' (Irish woman)

In the struggle to protect their children from violence, women may remain trapped in an abusive relationship and so still fail to protect their children from harm:

'We've got some cases at the moment where the children are very emotionally disturbed and it is purely because of the cycle that they have gone through.. very often alongside domestic violence goes child abuse as well. And children are, if not physically abused, are often emotionally abused by the perpetrator of the domestic violence and are used as a pawn in the middle. And certainly are used to frighten them: "if you don't do this I'll do something to the child" and that transmits to the child.' (Statutory service)

Abusive partners were also described as using children to ward against mothers accessing help from outside the family, by articulating well-founded concerns regarding inappropriate state intervention in respect of, and inadequate provision for, children from minoritised communities. These concerns relate to the fact that minoritised communities are at greater risk of mandatory social intervention and that Black children are over-represented in the care system. Hence, women are encouraged to worry about their children's removal into care, should they break the silence around domestic violence. Moreover, some women felt unable to access services because of anxieties about their immigration status. Indeed, because of their immigration status some women could not leave because they had no recourse to public funds and so could not access services.

When women did access state services, abusive partners were also described as using the laws governing child welfare to continue abusing and exerting control over women. In the interests of safeguarding children's welfare, the courts have often agreed to contact between child and father, even where this may mean increased risk to the mother:

'He wanted to see the children and it was something that I always wanted him to have, regular contacts...he wanted to have things when he was ready for them.. once he even beat me up in his car and I was kicked to the ground in front of people. I had to receive medical treatment and my children witnessed this.' (African woman)

Contact provides a key site for manipulation. Hence, using children as a conduit to control mothers does not stop when the woman leaves the relationship:

'The abduction [during contact] was an attempt to drag me, to make me leave this country. And this is the one thing I could not do.' (African woman)

Contact also provides a context for collusion by the extended community:

'The first two years of being back here he would come to a Jewish children's home [where contact would take place] and it was awful for me because they made a terrible fuss of him. They treated him like royalty and they invited him to have lunch with them. I was in a terrible state throughout.' (Jewish woman)

Even without direct manipulation by the abuser, or state and community collusion, women's concerns for their children still contributed to their remaining in abusive relationships. On a simple level, large family size prevented others helping:

'At the end of the day I had a family but who wants you with 5 children?' (Irish woman)

Having many children, then, may require women to make uncomfortable compromises. For example, one Jewish mother of 8 children had to leave all but the youngest behind because they could not fit into her small one bedroom flat. Hence, as this woman said, *'not many women with a big family will walk out of the marriage'*.

Wider concerns about their children's cultural needs compounded the pressure women felt to stay in violent relationships, as leaving their abuser also often resulted in losing wider community networks. Both mothers and workers noted the importance of cultural identifications for children and expressed concerns about the difficulties of maintaining these outside of the immediate community:

'It's a lot harder when you've got so much to lose than it is if you can just say, "right I'm just going to move to another house in another area". You can't just move to another area either. Because the area where you want to live is near to the schools that are suitable for your children. Because I'd say 90% of Jewish children go to Jewish schools so you would want to be in quite close proximity to the schools, to Jewish shops to buy Kosher food. There's a number of things why Jewish women can't just move and disappear.' (Culturally specific domestic violence service)

Hence, even though the extended community was not always experienced as supportive of women, the combination of loss of family and community still was viewed as contributing to the difficulties women faced in leaving violent partners:

'In some South Asian families that when escaping domestic violence [they] have to move far away. So children leave not just the abuser but also extended family and potentially community links - which makes it harder for women to leave.' (Culturally specific domestic violence service)

The loss of family and community links has implications not only for children's current

lives but also their futures. Women expressed fears about the impact of leaving violent men on children's marriage prospects. Some women from Jewish and Asian backgrounds described pressure to keep the family together in order to secure a 'good match' for their children. Women noted that leaving the violent partner would militate against children making good marriages, because if children are known to come from broken homes and/ or an abusive family they will be judged to be a poor marriage prospect. Such concerns can leave women feeling that they must stay in abusive relationships in order to secure their children's futures:

'I'm counselling an Asian woman who said she wanted to leave but can't leave because of her children. I mean this is a mature woman. Her children have to be married and if for example, if the family that they want to marry these children know that they're estranged - if you want to keep that kind of face for the children's sake, or you show a good face then you just grunt and bear it I suppose.' (Culturally specific domestic violence service)

The notion that children who come from broken homes and abusive families are undesirable can be so profound that, as one woman said, in order for *'women to protect their children they will hesitate even to go to a Jewish counsellor'* (Culturally specific generalist service). Shame about loss of marital status and domestic violence is further attenuated through the loss of material security which is often occasioned when women leave:

'I want [my daughter] to visit because she is engaged, she will get married soon. And I hope she can come to visit me before marriage because after marriage I don't think my son-in-law should come and visit because I haven't got a nice house, or a car. My son-in-law knows I'm separated. They are broad-minded but I'm self-conscious about this. I don't want to - not for a long time, not until my child is settled with house and children, then maybe I will see them.' (South Asian Woman)

Women's concerns for their children's futures are weighed against their concerns about the negative effects of domestic abuse on their children's current lives. Violent partners play on women's concerns for their children to keep them trapped in abusive relationships. Both leaving and staying bring difficulties and challenges for mothers and the children they care for.

6.2 Living with fear: The impact of domestic violence on children

Children respond to experiences of domestic violence in many different ways. This will be a function of a range of factors including their relationship with parental figures, and wider sources of support, and the duration and nature of domestic abuse.

Children may experience negative effects, however, even when they do not witness domestic violence directly:

'Women very often say to us that "they didn't see anything - I made sure the child didn't see anything" and I am sure women do that but children pick up on the atmosphere, the fear in their mother, the instability.. [They] have to move and run and flee. They are experiencing all of that - they might not see any violence but the impact of it is there upon them.' (Statutory service)

The effects of domestic violence, therefore, extend beyond the actual physical abuse to encompass the child's whole life. They (like their mothers) may find ways to minimise the threat of violence through developing strategies to protect themselves, their siblings and their mothers:

'Women and children daily negotiate their safety. They negotiate how to minimise the level of abuse they experience, and that's one hell of a skill, and one hell of a pressure that's there all the time ...We've been told about behavioural problems that children have, that these children are manipulative and controlling. And they're not necessarily being manipulative for being manipulative's sake. They might manipulate a situation to keep a social worker out, to keep a teacher out of the home, or from contacting the parents, because they know that if they have contact with the family, the mother is in more danger, or the sibling's in more danger or they are.' (Generic domestic violence service)

Children, then, must develop strategies for coping with the intense feelings of fear, powerlessness, and anger engendered by living with family violence in order to survive and to preserve a public sense of normality:

'I have practical experience of going to an address at 2 or 3 o'clock in the morning and the children are physically stood outside the footpath clinging to the mother and father has gone berserk in the house and at 9 o'clock in the morning they are in school.. and it bears no relationship does it?' (Statutory service)

It is not only the original trauma of domestic violence that affects children. When women leave violent partners their children will face new difficulties. Children may, as their mothers fear, lose contact with their extended family and community. The price of safety, then, is increased isolation:

'A child doesn't just leave their dad or their grandparents they are actually stopped [having] contact with their aunties and their uncles, and their cousins... leading to a child feeling extremely vulnerable and very isolated...put in a new context and told to cope. Now how

difficult is that? For children it's impossible'. (Culturally specific domestic violence service)

Specialist refuges are uncommon and may be far from the community the child has grown up in. Moreover, women may want to be far from home because of fears of community collusion. In small communities the risk of being found increases. Hence, children from minoritised communities may be at greater risk of losing family, school and wider community connections than children from majoritised groups. Additionally, because of the lack of specialist services and/or fears of community collusion women and children may end up living in areas where there are few other people from minoritised communities. Women and children may, then, exchange violence within the family for racial harassment on the street or in the refuge:

'We've had women telling us and children telling us, that they've been picked on because they're Asian, and I think racism rears its ugly head up at various different intervals.' (Culturally specific domestic violence service)

Even without racial harassment there may be considerable tensions within refuges as women, both mothers and non-mothers, and children struggle to adapt to their new (often impoverished) circumstances and the difficulties of negotiating shared space. Women expressed their concerns about the, sometimes, high level of disturbance in refuges and the impact this had on their children. More than this, the frequent changes in residents and (sometimes) workers contributed to concerns about an unstable climate that attenuated already strained relationships:

'I think children need to express themselves as well and sometimes they don't do it with me but they do do it with others like x[name of person]. She couldn't stand the sight of me and she sees me everyday. She just gets attached to people, she always cries. She's like "is such and such a person coming back, is such and such a person coming back?"' (South Asian woman)

Accessing services also requires particular formations of identity for both mother and child. This is because services are delivered either to children in need or to vulnerable adults. As such, mothers and children are encouraged to embrace their sense of victimhood as this provides access to psychological, social and financial support. This encourages a focus on weaknesses and difficulties rather than strengths and abilities. This may bring additional anxieties, because if victimhood and negative affects are over-emphasised the child protection system comes into force. Mothers may be judged to be inadequate parents and children may be deemed to be 'at risk' and in need of state intervention. Moreover, if women and children display too many difficulties they may be excluded from the very services they wish to access. For example, if women and children use drugs, alcohol or self-injury as ways of coping with the

emotional effects of domestic violence they will be excluded from refuges. They may then find themselves in inappropriate housing or in the psychiatric system where there is no family provision and hence, the original trauma may be attenuated and difficulties may get worse.

Domestic violence and its aftermath, therefore, can have a profound and far-reaching impact on the psychological health of children. Both workers and mothers reported a range of emotional effects including fear, powerlessness, anger and profound sadness. Children in refuges were said to display feelings of anger and resentment and lash out at the mother or other siblings - shouting and screaming or shutting themselves off. Refuge workers also observed that some children internalised their feelings of anger and depression and developed physical symptoms or illnesses. Other children developed coping strategies including self-harm and so-called eating disorders. Still others were said to have attempted suicide. Children were said to suffer from poor self-esteem and lack self-confidence and hence concerns were expressed about the impact of domestic violence on children's sense of self.

Domestic violence, therefore, impacts in multiple ways on children's relationships with themselves and ultimately on their relationships with others, including their mother, father, extended family and wider community. For children from minoritised backgrounds it is clear that these impacts may be exacerbated by the other potent intersections between minority and majority community dynamics, including the racialised relationships with statutory services. Domestic violence can be understood to restrict children's abilities to form positive and stable relationships. In some ways it is general concerns about the ways in which domestic violence can impair social relationships that constituted the greatest worry for mothers and workers:

'It's upsetting for them at such an early age that their introduction to what relationships are like and that's very damaging introduction to what relationships are like ...they are then going to be taking it into the playground or taking to their friendship groups and growing up with a very distorted view of what a family unit is, or how you interact in your personal relationships.'
(Generic domestic violence service)

Concerns about psychological damage and impaired social relationships are so pressing for carers not only because they prescribe children's current life but also because they are drawn on to predict children's possible futures.

6.3 Learning from the parents: (Mis)understanding the cycle of violence

Early experiences impact on the ways in which people make sense of themselves and their relationships with others. So too do later experiences. However, many theories of psychological development focus on the impact of early life and, hence, sometimes the effects of early experiences may be over-stated. For example, according to Attachment Theory (Bowlby, 1973, 1969; Rutter, 1978) early relationships with parental figures act as templates for all future relationships. And according to Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1977) children learn how to have relationships through imitating those around them. Such theories of human behaviour act as the unacknowledged foundation for populist accounts of how childhood experiences determine later adult relationships (Burman, 1994). Such theories, therefore, are drawn on to offer a way of understanding the effects of domestic violence, both concurrently and in the future:

'I think that we see the evidence of very very disturbed children - both emotionally and also who become quite violent and aggressive and have very negative attitudes towards women, particularly boys, and it's to do with the domestic violence history that they have experienced.' (Statutory service)

These psychological theories of human development rely on and reproduce gendered readings of violence. This means that boys are understood to identify with, and therefore imitate fathers, and girls are understood to identify with, and therefore imitate, mothers. Such understandings, in part, underpin current refuge policy that excludes male children over the age of thirteen because of their potential to be violent:

'I've had women, Afro-Caribbean, Asian and white women, who basically have difficulties with their children and basically would say "oh it's because he's witnessed this all his life".. We've had children who've abused their mothers, children who come out of those environments because all they've seen is their mother being abused...especially boys - boys tend to because they've learned ..this behaviour. So boys are inclined to be abusive to their mothers and also to sibling girls in the family.' (Culturally specialist domestic violence service)

Mothers may then fear for their children as they envisage a future that mirrors their own life:

'When these children get married if it is a boy he will imitate his father, he will not imitate his mother and if it is a girl she might imitate her mother and if she is lucky and she has a nice husband she married. But if she has a husband like her father she will continue wearing the

mask like her mother. She will repeat her mother's experience.' (Jewish woman)

As indicated by these accounts, mothers and workers expressed their fears about the ongoing cycle of abuse that would continue from one generation to the next. Yet tolerance of violence does change from one generation to the next and such theories of human behaviour fail to explain the many varied ways children and adults respond to experiences of violence. There is some evidence that boys identify with male role models and girls with female role models. However, many children who witnessed violence in their early years do not grow up to be violent, or to accept violence. Indeed, some in later life actively campaign against violence and work to limit its effects. Others simply do not re-enact earlier abuse:

'I've got 7 brothers and not one of them hit their wife, not one of them and yet the life we had when we were growing up was unbelievable there was nothing but violence.' (Irish woman)

Yet cycle of abuse theories raise anxiety regarding the perceived inevitability of future abusive relationships and hence, can be drawn on to prematurely condemn children. When this happens children may be denied access to services that could mediate the effects of domestic violence as they may be deemed to be already, and permanently damaged. Children's future marriage prospects, as noted, may also be restricted as judgements are made about their damaged personalities and social inadequacies. Such judgements are further reinforced through reference to wider cultural and racial stereotypes that depict, for example, Asian women as passive and African-Caribbean and Irish men as aggressive:

'Oh Irish what do you expect? You know because sometimes they frown on us like we're all drunkards and I suppose a lot of men in all nationalities they all beat their wives but the Irish seem to have it sticking like they're known for it like and then there's some nice men.' (Irish woman)

Such beliefs about cultural stereotypes and the 'cycle of violence' can act to further restrict services to men, women and children from minoritised communities because the assumption is they are culturally (if not biologically) prone to violent relationships and hence are beyond intervention and change. Theories of human behaviour that are predictive of a cycle of violence, therefore, posit a psychological model of human learning and behaviour that actually supports social structures of racialisation. These can then be used to restrict access to service and to reinforce wider practices of racism and exclusion.

Mothers (and workers) have genuine concerns about cycles of violence and their

children's futures. However, it is important to recognise that children have great capacity for renegotiating their pasts and determining different futures for themselves. It is necessary therefore, to enable opportunities for change through sharing information, providing opportunity for reflection and through challenging racial and gender stereotypes that further pathologise children from minoritised communities. Such opportunities for change should be targeted at both service providers and service users, and be made available for both adults and children.

6.4 Between women's rights and child protection: A conflict of interest

In Britain there have been a number of shifts regarding the focus of public concern (and public enquiries) about child abuse (Warner, in press, a). Following the publication of 'Child Protection: Messages from research' (DOH, 1995) concern has focussed on the long term and negative consequences of emotional abuse and neglect[1]. This represents the bulk of child protection referrals. It is in this context that the most recent department of health guidance has been developed. This includes the revised 'Working together' (DOH, 1999) which provides a guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children, and the 'Framework for assessment of children in need and their families' (DOH, 2000; see also DOH, 2001).

Focussing on emotional abuse and neglect has led the State to move from a concern with incidents of actual abuse to more general concerns regarding the quality of life provided by parents to children (Corby, 2000). It is in this context that domestic violence has been raised as a specific factor that compromises the welfare of children (see DOH, 1999b). Hence, safeguarding the welfare of children may, in this context, be seen to coincide with safeguarding the welfare of the abused carer:

'Children may suffer both directly and indirectly if they live in households where there is domestic violence. Domestic violence is likely to have a damaging effect on the health and development of children, and it will often be appropriate for such children to be regarded as children in need. Everyone working with women and children should be alert to the frequent inter-relationship between the abuse and neglect of children. Where there is evidence of domestic violence, the implications for any children in the household should be considered, including the possibility that

1 It should be noted that whilst the current focus of concern may be emotional abuse and neglect this does not mean that physical and sexual abuse of children is ignored, only that different concerns predominate at different times (c.f. Warner, 2000).

the children may themselves be subject to violence and harm. Conversely where it is believed that a child is being abused, those involved with the child and family should be alert to the possibility of domestic violence'. (DOH, 1999b: 71)

Hence, in respect of domestic violence, supporting the non-violent parent is understood to be the most effective way of promoting the child's welfare (Warner, in press, b). However, although making links between child abuse and domestic violence can be useful, this can also add to children's confusion regarding a conflict of loyalties:

'Recent research recognises the impact on children which has meant that checking the welfare of the children in household, officers now do a little more of physically asking children if they are okay and perhaps consider them as potential witnesses although acknowledging legal implication of this'. (Statutory service)

Thus, although the state's current recognition of the impact of domestic violence on children is welcomed, state practice may not always be helpful to children and mothers. Children's difficulties may be attenuated, and paradoxically, the increase in concern about domestic violence may ensure women feel more powerless rather than empowered. This is because the State has a greater responsibility to intervene in the lives of domestically abused women and their children, albeit sometimes at the cost of depriving the woman and her child of their culture:

'The woman actually went to social services because she needed help and in the end social services just bombard, take over everything and she had to leave the home, and in the end everything else became more important than her.. I am saddened by this case actually because of the children. Social services take over and make decisions about their lives and there is no cultural input in the understanding of their faiths or anything.. This woman does not have a voice. They won't listen to her. So with the black community people are aware of that and don't really want to use social services unless they really have to...the last resort.' (Culturally specific domestic violence service)

Hence, although the needs of mothers and children may be deemed to coincide, children's needs will ultimately take precedence:

'We are a child protection agency essentially. So we're coming from the angle of protecting the children.. If the woman chooses to stay with the man and there is a fair amount of violence in that relationship then we'd have to go through conference route and the children would have to be registered [as being] 'at risk of harm'. But that doesn't mean we cannot offer ongoing support and work with the family, so it is linked with the children more than the

woman and I think there are very few specific services just for the women within social services.' (Statutory service)

Because domestic violence is now considered to be an indicator of emotional abuse, grounds for removal of children into care have been increased. And as already noted, there is already a greater risk of children from minoritised communities being placed in care. Such factors can increase women's reluctance to access state services:

'I think a lot of Jewish families won't get social service involved in any shape or form because of the fear that the children will be removed ... massive view in the community that social services remove children.' (Culturally specialist mainstream service)

Yet child services may be the only way women can access support in leaving violent men. This is the case for women who have no recourse to public funds. Hence, as Mullender (2002) argues, it is crucial for local authorities to recognise children in refuges as 'children in need' as this category opens up access to a range of support services. Indeed, many of the provisions made to support women and children in respect of domestic violence are restricted to those who have right of abode and therefore, the current gains made in public policy must be extended to all vulnerable women and children. Additionally, although current government policy has been developed to increase cultural sensitivity through highlighting the need for familial and cultural specificity, the needs of minoritised communities in practice may be far from being understood and addressed. Recommendations for improving services to minoritised mothers and children surviving domestic violence are outlined in Chapter 10.

7 TRANSITIONS TO INDEPENDENCE

Khatidja Chantler and Hindene Shirley McIntosh

Introduction

In this chapter, we explore two central questions frequently posed, either implicitly, or explicitly, by services providing support to women and their children in abusive relationships. These are framed around: why doesn't she leave? and why does she go back? We explore these by looking at the strategies of resistance used by minoritised women whether they stay or leave abusive relationships, the various meanings given to describe independence, and the level/type of support (crisis, short term and long term) on offer, including the sort of provision that is perceived by organisations and survivors as being helpful. We draw particularly on refuge provision as one of the key points of transition for women using domestic violence services.

7.1 Meanings of independence

The term independence is by no means easy to define, as there is no single one definition. In Western societies the dominant view regarding independence places great emphasis and reward to the white, heterosexual, able-bodied, middle class male who is able to master and control his own life, and environment. In this construction, independence is seen as a state of being free from the control of others, is highly valued and equates with strength and agency. On the other hand, dependency, that is being reliant on another for support, is deemed undesirable and a sign of weakness. Within this framework, independence and dependence are seen as two polar opposites rather than allowing for the possibility that one might be both dependent and independent, strong and vulnerable. It also excludes the notion of inter-dependency which is based on mutual reliance and a strong sense of give and take (Pederson 1987). The meanings and value attached to independence, being dependent and inter-dependent is an underlying theme of this chapter which we keep returning to.

7.2 Autonomy and victimisation

The notions of being independent/dependent as discussed above also apply to women in abusive relationships. Women who stay in such relationships are typically seen as

weak and completely victimised, thus denying them any credit for strategies they may use to keep themselves and their children safe. Conversely, women who leave are portrayed as strong, exercising choice and autonomy.

From the material generated in this study, we want to challenge the notion that women only show strength when they leave violent relationships. As Mahoney (1994:60) states:

Social stereotypes and cultural expectations about the behaviour of battered women help to hide women's acts of resistance and struggle. Both law and popular culture tend to equate agency in battered women with separation from the relationship.

Dominant discourses of domestic violence often pathologise women for staying with abusive partners, especially when they have children. As previously elaborated in our earlier chapters, there are enormous barriers for women, particularly minoritised women, when trying to access formal and informal help. Additionally, we acknowledge that women may stay in violent relationships for a number of reasons including for the sake of their children, their family, love and a sense that perhaps the relationship will improve over time. Here we highlight the examples of women's resistances whilst living in abusive relationships. We also discuss the complexities and dangers encountered when they do leave a refuge, or home.

Attempts at setting the context of minoritised women's experiences within Eurocentic notions of autonomy and victimization or strength and weakness is problematic, in that it does not fully explain their experiences of oppression and resistance within violent relationships: ' "Staying" is a socially suspect choice – often perceived as acceptance of violence – though "leaving" is often unsafe.' (Mahoney 1994 : 60)

Yet in some of the survivor accounts from Jewish, and South Asian women, staying was not seen as a socially suspect choice by their families or communities, (or indeed themselves) but rather the opposite. Whilst these women were not tolerating the abuse, leaving was seen as more problematic than staying, as illustrated by this South Asian woman:

'I wanted to make that decision but I was too scared because it was always, I've got to think of Mum and Dad, I've got to think of the pride, I've got to think of what will people say, that's what stopped me...I did leave once before but ...I left for good but my parents made me go back because they said it might be alright. So I went back for my parents' sake. But 18 months after I had to leave again.'

Whilst an Orthodox Jewish woman described her difficulties in seeking a divorce from her husband:

'So my problem was that my husband wouldn't listen to any Rabbis, so going to a Rabbi was unhelpful and the people I did go to their whole focus was to keep us together at all costs. I tell a lie, my Rabbi said stay together as long as you can but once it gets to the stage where you can't, go but as I said, my husband won't listen to anyone, so no-one's been able to speak to him.'

Different accounts were given by African-Caribbean and some Irish women who faced pressure to leave by their families and communities. We take the example of an African-Caribbean woman who received both clear and coded messages to leave:

'People used to come back and says to me, before the first day, [name of respondent] don't go out with X because he's a bad man, but you know once I said love is blind... Right well love was blind for me, so me dad, me dad didn't warn me as much... he just said be careful [name of respondent]...'

Communication within her family was coded; the issue of domestic violence was alluded to, yet members of her community were openly talking about her relationship. While an Irish woman interviewee, expressed her feelings of pressure to leave by friends and neighbours:

'Yeah well they knew what I was going through, you know, my black eyes. Me neighbours knew as well...I felt embarrassed, ashamed. I knew people were saying why's she still with him? I was scared. I was absolutely petrified.'

So the dilemma of autonomy versus victimization does not adequately explain how minoritised women discuss domestic violence. Given the above testimonies, it is clear that these women were under extreme pressures to conform by their violent partners, family, and community, and instead resisted and implemented their own action for survival.

7.3 Resistances within violent relationships

In the course of our survivor interviews, women described the strategies of resistance they employed within violent relationships, in the face of pressure from their partners, family, community, religion, and agencies. When a woman is facing abuse from a partner, she is dealing with someone whose violent potential she knows all too well

and whose signals she has had to read closely. Women's attempts for survival and control within the relationship are paramount as acknowledged by this domestic violence worker:

'Women and children daily negotiate their safety. They negotiate how to minimise the level of abuse that they experience, and that's one hell of a skill, and one hell of a pressure that's there all the time...' (Generic domestic violence service)

Women and children become skilled in knowing what will trigger a violent incident, and what will not, and how to hold as much of their power in situations of domestic violence. Ways of holding or gaining power in relationships is what we turn to next.

7.3.1 Attempts at exerting control

An African-Caribbean woman described how her violent partner would not allow her to buy any gifts for the children, and that her friends had to be over the age of forty:

'I didn't have friends at my age like twenty-two, my friends had to be forty or sixty because apparently X used to say they don't corrupt you...'

So despite this restriction of only being allowed to have older friends, she was still able to resist by negotiating a system with her neighbour, E, so that her children would get some Christmas presents.

"...E used to buy individual chocolates each week up to Christmas... she used to put keep cling film on it and put little tabs on it at Christmas and all that, and what she used to say it's from your Auntie E, when it was really from me... I could not pay for it, so that was all right with X because she was over forty, she's sending presents for the kids that was fine."

A Jewish woman resisted by setting up a separate home for herself and her youngest child, but was still very involved in her marital home:

'I used to go to the house a lot, I just didn't sleep there. I was there looking after the kids for years, but when I went ahead with the divorce I was told not to feed him anymore, and have the kids here for supper which would really knock it home to him...One child moved in with me and the others stayed with him...I went back in the evening and made them supper and did the shopping. I did everything, just avoided the house and didn't sleep there.'

So although not having broken ties completely, and despite the difficulties, her strategy of resistance offered her space to think about what she wanted for the future.

'It's very difficult trying to run a family and not living in the house. I didn't realise how difficult it was. This [her flat] has been a sanctuary for me. That's what's given me the confidence to go ahead with it. I'm in a very different place than I was four years ago which I wouldn't have been if I'd still been with my husband, he has too much of an effect on me.'

In another example of a South Asian woman (whose first language is not English), it appears that as the woman begins to gain some independence and makes some choices for herself and realises that her life should be different to how her husband wants it to be, he attempts to take control by isolating her and the children. She wants love, but he uses sexual violence to fulfil his needs. After looking after children, cooking, cleaning, she says:

'I deserve more. And I couldn't find the love and care, share and happiness...because he wanted the body, I don't want to give him the body, I said I cannot do that anymore without love. If you want it you make me happy.'

Women also reported many instances of reading their partner's mood, trying to please in order to keep themselves and their children safe. Further more, as this survivor said, not every woman wants to leave:

'Yeah, even just a listening ear, that's why I think it's a good idea to have the outreach workers cos a lot of women don't want to leave home they just want a bit of support.' (Irish woman)

7.3.2 Fighting back in the relationship

A number of feminists have commented on the rise of libertarian and anti/post-feminist perspectives which have challenged radical feminisms. Some academic and popular writers in the 1990s have suggested that radical feminism has constructed women as victims. 'The reality of women who kill their abusers highlights the problems with this concept of "victimhood" feminism, because, whilst undoubtedly victimized, these women have fought back in the most direct way. However, to represent them as strong survivors, "warriors against the patriarchy", does a different disservice to their experiences.' (Bindel et al, 1995, p66).

So whilst acknowledging the dangers of depicting survivors as 'warriors against the patriarchy', and consequent expectations that every woman 'should' respond with

physical violence, we are equally aware that some women in our study did retaliate using violence. They reported this as an important way of responding to their abuse.

A young woman who took shelter in a culturally specialist refuge; described her experiences of fighting back in the relationship:

'...My boyfriend was being violent, but I was giving violence back. I can't really say that I was frightened because I was hitting him back. I am a person that if someone hits me, I will hit him back. I've met other women who can't do that.'

She was resisting the victim label,

'When I say strong, you have to know that you are going to get through it. You've got to really want it, and knowing that you're a human being, that you're a woman. You shouldn't let people take advantage of you.'

However, more typically, we found that women resisted in a variety of ways other than physically fighting back, by exerting some control over finances, living space, being able to provide for their children.

7.3.3 Repercussions of resisting

It seems that whatever women do, whether they stay or leave, whether and how they resist, they are likely to be 'blamed'. Sometimes the repercussions of resisting have brought further retaliation.

An African-Caribbean woman described her attempts at getting maintenance from a former partner without the knowledge of her then violent partner. She was unaware that he had been watching her:

'One day me coming out of [former partner's] house, I didn't know X was watching me, and everything. X crack home after me... that was the first time I got payment.'

She was forced to hand over the maintenance, and subsequent payments.

'I went back with the money and every single week I went up there, I had to go to [former partner's] house get the money, and X would be waiting for me, except [former partner] found out and so I was getting beaten up, and beaten up, and beaten up, every single day, every single week for two and a half, three years'

Similarly a South Asian woman who had refused to have sex with her husband:

'I realise that, when men doesn't have body they get angry ...if woman doesn't give, then they start a fight.'

This Irish survivor reported how her abuser tried to sabotage her attempts at independence:

'But then he used to have access and decided to have it in the nursery... so if I'm up in the nursery everyone kind a knew, he was there and he would pass remarks if I was passing by or he'd get X to say go on there's your mum go on and I was trying to do me work and I thought I was going to get the sack because the kids kept wanting to hang out with me...And I'm thinking because I have a little life and I'm working now he doesn't like it. You know.'

An African-Caribbean informed us of how her violent partner thwarted her attempts to press charges against him when she sought assistance from the police:

'X's scheme was if the police came the police will say to me you want to charge him and I say yeah then I gave them my statement and all that. X used to get another girl to ring up to say she's [name of interviewee] and she dropped the charges, but I don't say the police wrong at the time, I go and ask them, she did say but you dropped the charges over the phone.'

Such incidents of sabotage are also documented in the wider literature (e.g. Raphael, 1999).

7.3.4 Plans for leaving

Some of the women had devised intricate plans to leave, and waited for the right time to do so to ensure the safety for their children and themselves.

'a lot of people say get up and run. When you're frozen you can't get up and run you just sit there and freeze and you're wait till your time come to run...So I had to bide my time,' (African-Caribbean woman)

In preparation for leaving she had hidden money under the floorboards, and fed her violent partner with cat food, to give her time to escape:

'I get onions and tomato and I season that cat food well, well, well, well you know I mean well and I put beef Oxo, beef Oxo cube in it to make it look a bit browner...But I dunno how

cat food go off, he dunno how cat food go off.'

He then fell ill and went in search of a doctor, while she quickly arranged a place in a refuge for her and the children.

'I said kids you got ten minutes to grab your favourite toy, I got ten minutes I'm ready, I'm prepared ... I got me suitcase...I told her [refuge worker] what X does she not even listening what I'm telling her, she just laughing because what I did to X.'

A Jewish woman described the elaborate steps she had to go through in order for her and the children to escape: getting official documents without husband's knowledge, buying plane tickets on her credit card which she had not used for a number of years, and hiding them for when she was ready to leave.

'I can't tell you the sense of elation that there was chance that we could make a life for ourselves. I didn't dare think too much about the future.'

In leaving women had taken drastic measures to flee violent relationships, under conditions of subterfuge, showing courage and determination.

7.3.5 Dangers of leaving

Having decided to leave, many women are still at risk of further attacks (BCS, 1996). The women in our study were acutely aware both of the dangers of leaving and reported distressing accounts of retaliation.

An African-Caribbean woman described her anxiety and fear around leaving her partner, X for the first time:

'So when we get to [destination]...I got to think about, and here's me going, I've got to have the kids clothes cause I've got this feeling, the money's in me bag, watching if X is on this train, what if X is on the train. I get hold of the kids and say if you see X, run, just run. To me, kids run that way, me jump out of the window of the train, because I know now I'm dead.'

A South Asian woman, who had left her marriage reported (via an interpreter)

'Her husband at night phones her and disturbs her, 2 o'clock, 4 o' clock. Late night, early morning, 6 o' clock, at any time, he phones and says... it's been 3 or 4 weeks now. He says,

if I see you I'll kill you. That's what he says.'

Another survivor said:

'There were a lot of people after me through my boyfriend. There was a whole lot of mix up. I told a family member where I was living, then the trouble started again, a friend of my boyfriend found out where I was living, and I had to move out of Manchester...I've always been a survivor, on my own.'

She identified herself as dual heritage, and owing to the violence she had to move out of Manchester. At the time of the study she was living in a very white town, which had a bad reputation in relation to racism.

Particularly distressing was the account given by an African woman, who had left a violent relationship, managed to get refuge support despite not having any recourse to public funds, successfully set up home, only to find all her attempts being completely thwarted. This is what she reported as happening at one of the contact visits when her estranged husband was visiting the children:

'... once he even beat me up in his car and I was kicked into the ground in front of people. I had to receive medical treatment and my children witnessed this.'

After this incident, she decided he was not to see the children unless it was set up properly by the courts. She fought to keep her estranged husband away from the children and this is what she reported:

'He is the master of manipulation and control and he applied all the pressure that he could, so that they could apply all the pressure they [the courts] could to allow him to see them [the children] because he was going to work away [abroad]. And what happened, he managed ... and he absconded to [name of African country]...So the abduction was an attempt to drag me, to make me leave this country. And this is the one thing I could not do.'

Although she had taken steps to set up home with her children, her estranged husband sought every pressure to force her to go back to him including abducting her children. She has been refused Legal Aid to help recover her children.

7.3.6 Violence and divorce

Issues around divorce also presented opportunities for perpetrators to try and maintain control.

An African woman after leaving her abusive relationship, requested a divorce from her husband. He retaliated by applying for a custody order for the children, and to have her deported to Africa. His ability to threaten her with deportation adds a different dimension to her experience and links directly with her minoritised status. This account (as many others) also highlights how perpetrators often use children as a way of tormenting women.

In another account, a Jewish woman discussed the difficulty in obtaining a 'Get' (Jewish divorce) from her husband. A 'Get' is conferred only through the man and he refused to engage in the process at all. The impasse had gone on for a number of years and while she now has Rabbinical support and legal advice which is helping to forward her request, the process has caused her considerable distress and left her little/ no recourse to financial support from him. The power dynamic played out in this woman's account is not untypical of how men can, and do, sabotage women's attempts to move towards independence.

7.3.7 No recourse to public funds

We discussed the specific issues relating to no recourse to public funds for minoritised women in Chapter 4. However, we want to stress the hopelessness of the inter-sections of domestic violence and immigration. In our next example, an African woman was desperate to be independent but this was seriously impeded as she had no legal status to remain in the UK or any recourse to public funds.

'If I was strong I can work and support myself, and my kids, I wouldn't be needing my husband, will I? I would have the confidence by myself and say I can do this. Now I'm stuck, I'm just sat at one place. I can't do nothing. It's hard, you just want to depend on somebody. If I was strong to do things for myself, I can take my kids to the proper school and they'd be doing things, I'd be working and doing things for myself and for them. I wouldn't be dependent on nobody.'

Not having legal status as a British citizen or with indefinite leave to remain, keeps her in a state of dependency upon her husband:

'I just need support for me, for me to understand that I can do things for myself. For me to know that I'm strong. The weak part of me is like my partner, whenever he comes back. He's the one man who is destroying me, and it's that man I cannot say just leave me alone. I need a real help in that side, to know that I can say no to him.'

In this section, we have worked with the ideas of autonomy and victimisation and outlined the strategies that women use when they are in abusive relationships. We also illustrated how leaving a violent relationships does not mean an end to the abuse and the ways in which state practices around immigration have serious consequences for minoritised women. All of the women in our study recognised the dangers of both staying and leaving a violent relationship.

We now move on to consider the sort of services that are available to women wanting to leave violent relationships. In particular, we explore how organisations and survivors discussed themes of independence, dependence and interdependence in their accounts as these differences help to indicate what survivors may find more helpful.

7.4 Domestic violence: Dependency and becoming independent

From the interviews we identified a number of tensions around what independence means for organisations and survivors of domestic violence. These related primarily to the ways in which organisations prepared women to live on their own (or with their children) free from their abuser(s) at a vulnerable time in their lives. In general terms, women in our study wanted help to be free from their abusive partners and or family connections, as well as wanting practical, material and emotional help. Examples of this included: setting up home in a new environment, accessing education and training courses, help with immigration, finding employment, schools for their children, confidence building, and developing supportive networks and connections. This is in keeping with the wider literature (e.g. Maynard & Winn 1997) and in keeping with what workers reported women as needing. So whereas there was agreement about the goals of interventions, there was less agreement (between survivors and organisations) of how this help is best delivered.

7.4.1 How organisations perceive their role

The meanings given to independence by organisations informed how they provided services to both majoritised and minoritised women. Great emphasis was placed on providing practical information to women. A domestic violence worker commented

on what mainstream and specialist organisations saw as an essential part of their role in empowering women to independence:

'It's about giving women information. Information is power, and it's empowering the women with the information to go to the agency, so they can do it for themselves. It's no good us doing it for them, because I think that further disempowers women.'

Both mainstream and specialist organisations cited key working and 'networking' as important ingredients in helping women to access as many resources as possible within their locality in order to lessen the impact of isolation. A mainstream refuge worker described how her organisation works with residents:

'The best thing you can do for women is to get them in touch with as many agencies as they need so in the beginning you focus on what their long term needs are... the bigger network of people you can get them in contact with then the better for them...'

Similarly a worker in a culturally specific women's refuge commented that it was important to provide:

'emotional, practical support, getting them linked up with local networks, getting women involved in local community groups and accessing resources for them so that they can start off on a good footing.'

And a social worker for a culturally specific social care organisation remarked:

'..it's managing to get their life, budgeting, housing, sorting out the schooling, getting into routines really, I think a lot of women who suddenly move and they're on their own with a number of children, it's routines and we would help get that organised...'

Hence there is a high degree of agreement between agencies (regardless of whether they were culturally specific, generic social care agencies or domestic violence agencies) that empowering women with information, encouraging them to contact agencies themselves and linking women into other provision and networks was the best approach. However many survivors report that they did not feel adequately supported and were expected to do too much on their own, too soon.

7.4.2 Too much, too soon

This survivor talked of the support she felt she needed, at least initially:

'..and practically, they [refuges] need to support you more as well. Because...I'm not saying for the whole thing, the refuge but for the first month at least, even something as simple like going to claim for your benefits, it's quite intimidating for a young girl if she doesn't know what she's doing. Sometimes...you're in a big new city for god's sake, you know, you might not even know where you are going.' (South Asian woman)

Another woman describes feelings of fear and abandonment:

'You are going through suffering. I know they [refuge workers] are trying to put us on the right path by giving us our independence, pushing us to do things...So when I came here it was like get out of the door and do it for yourself and even though I can read and write in English, I was scared. I didn't know which school the kids were going to, which post office to go to, they just told you....they just gave you a map and go. And it's not easy.' (South Asian woman)

Both of these survivors had fled to Manchester from other towns or cities – and these may be specific issues for minoritised women. A South Asian refuge worker described what she called the continuum of domestic violence that black and minority ethnic women face in having to travel greater distances to escape the violence and evade detection from their community. The harsh reality is:

'...a lot of those women actually had to move a lot further away to actually escape violence then perhaps their white counterparts...it forces women to start hundreds of miles across the country and children to start again in the hope of re-building their lives and supporting themselves and their children in perhaps, well in very difficult circumstances.'

It can be anticipated that the fewer networks a woman can access once she has fled, the greater the level of support will be required.

A woman of African-Caribbean and white English heritage described what she felt were the tensions between support and trying to be independent:

'If I go somewhere and that person can't give me that, well if I can try and do that myself, I'm going for it. I'll give it a shot, you know. So, I do...but at the end of the day there's not enough staff for everyone is there?...that's a shame cause I think that with some people they just think the support's not there and they just go about... because if the police don't help them...the person's still out there, you know what I mean. Looking for them. And you know, they crumble don't they? They just turn back and go.'

One of the statutory agency workers we interviewed, described the sort of support women needed as equivalent to 'intensive care'. The high level of support that women

need, especially initially (but also at certain other key points in transitions) is crucial to effective intervention. It appears that organisations, in their quest for women to be independent, may well be under-estimating the level of support required. Although lack of resources is an important issue, there also appears to be a view of independence which fails to acknowledge that women may also need to be dependent at certain points in order to move on. Neither is this to advocate unhealthy dependency on workers or services or to disregard women's resilience and resourcefulness, but rather to recognise that dependency is part of the journey to independence. Some organisations do recognise this process as illustrated by:

'We try and help people to do things for themselves, we don't want to do everything and take over their lives, but at certain times I think some people need that help, they need that practical help, but then it's helping them to manage without the help really and moving them on to that.' (Culturally specific generalist service)

Our interviews with survivors also indicate that a more 'nurturing' approach may well respond better to women's practical and emotional needs. Indeed, in situations where they felt that this was being offered they were very satisfied with services:

'[the refuge worker] helped me with money because she sent letters to [culturally specific care organisation] and she helped me get money. When I came to my home it was horrible, she helped me to do repairs, to decorate. She helped with what I needed to buy -she showed me where to get things.' (Jewish woman)

Although practical and emotional support are inter-linked, some women felt that services tended to prioritise the practical concerns over their emotional needs. This was recognised by some women as being linked to staffing levels, nevertheless it indicates where gaps in services are perceived to be.

'That's your primary focus really, you know having a roof over your head and I thought I got that and afterwards I felt that there was very little emotional support. I mean the workers are very good, but there are only 2 workers to a refuge full of 9, 10 women.' (South Asian woman)

7.5 Interdependency

The push for the type of independence which values self-reliance places enormous pressures on minoritised women to be independent when they have come from communities where greater value is placed on interdependency. A South Asian woman

states how difficult it was to achieve independence, of living on her own, when she left her violent husband and in laws:

'In a week, totally. I was independent, I've never had that, you know the independence and not many Asian women have that chance of becoming independent because they depend on the family and stuff.'

She adds:

'So basically when I did leave, I honestly didn't know how to make decisions and even now I find it hard. And I didn't even know how to be independent but it took me about six months to a year to be able to handle the situation.'

She has been able to achieve independence by having the support of her parents who also share in the rearing of her children.

'I'm doing a degree in Social Work. I'm in my second year. I work as well and I'm single with two kids and I'm loving my life at the moment even though it's really, really hard financially, believe it or not. But support wise, my Mum and Dad are supporting me because of the children, they look after the kids once I'm at uni and at work.'

Without this informal practical support from her parents, she would not have been able to achieve this level of independence, thus highlighting the need for adequate child care to enable women to move on.

Other than family support as a form of interdependency, we also highlight two other locations where mutual reliance worked well. These are: a) supportive relationships formed within refuges, and b) through group work.

7.5.1 Supportive relationships within refuges

Despite some of the difficulties associated with living in a refuge (which we discus later in this chapter), many women commented on the positive aspects of communal living as being able to talk with other women with similar experiences, and to learn from, and support each other:

'I helped one woman here, and now we are very best friends... We're from different cultures, she's from another country but we are very close.' (Jewish woman)

and

'I met a lot of people and we became friends, so to me this was a holiday... we all acted differently, all different problems. All we do is talk to each other, support each other, listening to each others problems. We don't force each other to talk, it comes out naturally after a few days.' (Jewish woman)

7.5.2 Group work

The group work conducted as part of this study is discussed in Chapter 8 in greater detail, yet we would like to draw attention to one aspect that was most valued by the women. As group members got to know one another (even not withstanding the short term nature of the groups), they offered to provide transport to each other, or made joint arrangements to get to/from the group, they helped with translation, they shared their skills, some women exchanged phone numbers, women supported each other during group sessions and some continued to do this outside of the group. The building of networks with other women with similar experiences was seen as being very powerful and offering an alternative community. This is a good illustration of how we can demonstrate both dependency and independence simultaneously.

We now move on to consider refuge provision in particular as this is one of the key services that women fleeing violent relationships may contact. It is also potentially a very significant point of transition.

7.6 Refuge provision

In this section, we explore a number of key issues which, although specific to refuge provision, also have implications for more generic health and social care services. We begin by outlining a brief history of refuge provision, then we highlight issues in contacting survivors from the cultural groups in our study. Next, we report on survivors' experiences of refuge life: physical space, the need for emotional support, isolation, and racism. Whereas the first three are issues for all women, we consider it important to highlight both commonalities (thus challenging notions of 'normalised absence'), as well as how those commonalities may have a different impact on different minoritised women, through structures of privilege and its relationships with 'culture' (without presenting minoritised women or 'cultures' as a 'pathologised presence').

7.6.1 Historical contexts of refuge provision

During the 1970s, refuges and rape crisis groups were usually set up by women involved in the Women's Liberation Movement (WLM), and the work was regarded as fundamentally political (Bindel et al, 1995). However, even within this, differences between women based on relations of class, disability, sexual orientation and 'race' were paid very little attention, such that more specific needs and concerns were largely overlooked. This parallels what was happening in wider feminist discourses, and just as the challenge to white feminisms were posed by black feminists (Amos and Parmar 1984; Carby 1982), so the development of black women's refuges was led by black women activists.

The rise of the New Right in the 1980s brought with it dramatic changes in the economic and political climate of Britain where public sector services were under attack. Services for women were under threat from loss of funding, which placed feminist activists under greater pressure to provide services to women and their children experiencing and fleeing domestic violence. Within this, the position of the black women's services, including refuges, was particularly hard hit (Hague and Malos, 1999).

One of the effects of these changes has resulted in grass roots workers not only becoming professionalised service providers but also experiencing chronic under-resourcing and competing for pots of monies from heavily bureaucratised contracting and funding arrangements. This has saddled refuges with enormous administrative and financial burdens, whilst trying to maintain support for women and children. The work of refuge providers is now viewed by some as an alternative to social care services, rather than the campaigning and political work of its origins (Bindel et al, 1995).

7.7 Contacting survivors

To reach survivors who may have wanted to participate in our study, we contacted a wide range of organisations, mainstream and specialist – both in relation to domestic violence and cultural groupings.

In the end, the majority of the survivors we interviewed came from culturally specific domestic violence agencies: Jewish Women's Aid, Saheli and Hosla (South Asian Women's Refuge and Outreach Projects), and the Manchester based Black Women's Refuge. The Women's Domestic Violence Help line was particularly useful in putting us in touch with Irish women. We should also note that we had also contacted the 'mainstream' refuges in Manchester as well as culturally specific organisations, providing

generic, community based social care.

It also needs to be noted that we found it particularly hard to access Irish and Jewish women survivors of domestic violence. A number of reasons emerged as influencing this process including: ethnic monitoring which has historically discouraged people to self-identify as Jewish or Irish (currently this remains the case particularly for Jewish people), the pressure to remain invisible for fear of fuelling cultural stereotypes, dominant hierarchies silencing domestic violence, the 'containing' of domestic violence to certain parts of Irish and Jewish communities e.g. travellers and the Orthodox Jewish communities, and most importantly the lack of Irish or Jewish specific (i.e. domestic violence) services.

In contrast, we found it easier to access South Asian and African and African-Caribbean women despite similar anxieties about racial and cultural stereotypes. It seems very likely that our relative ease of access to these groups is linked in large part to both these latter groups having access to services which are both culturally/racially specific as well as respond specifically to domestic violence. Similarly, we were able to talk with Jewish survivors primarily via Jewish Women's Aid (London).

7.7.1 Survivors' experiences of refuges

Survivors' accounts of their experiences of refuge life include both positive and affirming experiences, as well as experiences that they report as being damaging and difficult. As we have stressed through out the report, domestic violence services are chronically under-resourced and clearly this has a big impact on the level and type of services on offer. However, as we have already discussed above in relation to 'independence', survivor accounts also indicate other more subtle narratives that we can learn from to ensure effective practice around domestic violence.

7.7.1.1 Physical space

Many difficulties were encountered by residents which related to the physical environments of refuges. All refuges have limited space and even more limited resources, which are often overstretched by the efforts to accommodate the women. These difficulties are compounded by the inevitable tensions and intensity of communal living, especially in an environment where women and their children are likely to be with other women and children for large amounts of time:

'[It] wasn't nice, we were all in one room, 5 children all in one room... I didn't like it but we were there for about 6 weeks.' (Irish woman)

Apart from the overcrowding mentioned above, issues around children and use of space and facilities were identified by several women as being problematic:

'...when the kids come [back to the refuge] from school where do they usually go? The TV, the cartoons and when I was in the refuge there was only 1 TV...the kids used to come in [and] a certain residents wouldn't let my kids watch TV...and [so] my kids spent most of their time upstairs in the bedroom with their toys. And it's not nice to isolate your kids from the rest of the world.' (South Asian woman)

Whereas these pressures are common to all women living in refuges, we may need to take particular account of minoritised women who for cultural or religious reasons may have larger numbers of children. Many refuges are not equipped to deal with larger families, and thus particularly in culturally-specific refuges, this may lead to an intensification of the difficulties of communal living in a restricted environment.

Standards of cleanliness and hygiene that inevitably vary interpersonally were therefore also difficult to manage:

'...there wasn't enough hygiene in the place [refuge]. Some women when they were on their periods, didn't clean up after themselves. They went in the showers there was blood on the floor. The toilets aren't flushed. Some people are like that, that's their choice, but when you living in a shared place you have to.' (South Asian woman)

An African-Caribbean woman expressed her frustration that every time she went to cook a meal, she had to clear unwashed dishes and pans from the previous evening, out of the sink, and put them to one side, so that she could use the sink. She felt that the other residents were abusing the facilities:

'They don't have to pay for anything ...they abuse it.

She explained that she does not use the communal lounge because she feels it is kept in an untidy and unclean manner. Many of the women smoked, and she did not wish to sit in a smoky room.

'My child has asthma, I can't put him in a smoky room. The reason why I stay here [in her room], is because I keep my room clean.'

While differences in standards around cleanliness figure for all women using refuge space, however for many minoritised women there are particularly powerful resonances and messages around racist and class based stereotypes of being 'dirty'. Not only are such messages used by dominant groups to maintain superiority, but unsurprisingly they may also be drawn upon by minoritised women. These discourses may well contribute to heightened tensions around cleanliness in both 'mainstream' as well as culturally-specific refuge provision.

However, there are also positive examples of using shared space as facilitating shared discussions and activities between women, including culturally affirmative ones - for example, the women in the London Jewish refuge having Friday night dinner together.

Survivors also gave accounts where they had positive shared spaces in refuges:

'Most of the time it was peaceful apart from these little bits and pieces. It was very peaceful here, it's a very peaceful place to be and to relax. You have your Kosher food, you can cook. It's like being in your own house.' (Jewish woman)

A Jewish woman told us her experience of feeling *'I'm like family here'*. We had received similar accounts from Jewish women who had experienced living in a culturally specific refuge as being amongst 'family', where they could study the Torah, eat Kosher food, and celebrate Jewish festivals.

One of the difficulties is that refuges cannot really take on the space and feel of 'home', yet there may be expectations that they should:

'The staff they try to be nice but they're strangers, it's very frightening, I found that it was very frightening and lonely and you don't know your place in the refuge. You can't say it's your home.' (Irish woman)

And as this worker from a community based organisation comments:

'...temporary accommodation ... there's an air about them that's not welcoming, I don't mean that against refuge workers, I know they work really hard, but it's not a place where you think when I grow up I would love to live in a women's refuge.'

7.7.1.2 The need for emotional support

We mentioned this briefly above, but stress that many of the accounts point very

powerfully to the sense of isolation, aloneness and fear. Although we recognise the strengths and resourcefulness of women, it is equally clear that emotional support is vital. Emotional support, particularly in the evenings, was highlighted by some women as being crucial:

A South Asian woman commented:

'You might feel down at 8 o'clock in the evening. You might not have any money to call the Samaritans. You know it takes a lot of courage to actually phone the Samaritans...and sometimes I used to sit here and I used to feel really isolated...I think [name of refuge] needs more staff...it needs to give more time. I think it needs to be...I mean a 24 hour refuge maybe.'

She goes on to say that lack of emotional support contributes to women returning to abusive situations:

'They [survivors] have actually come in here [the refuge] and seen things and thought oh I can't stay here, I can't do this and then gone back to an abusive situation cos they basically never had the support around them. They make the decision in the evening and the evening time is the worst time.'

An account of a Jewish women who had stayed in mainstream refuges also highlighted lack of support:

'We never had chats with the staff, we never had anything like that. They would never come to your room or ask about you, how things are going...They just expect you to get on with your life... They had nice and polite staff, but they weren't caring. To them it was just a job.' (Jewish woman)

There were also examples of where emotional support was provided and was much valued:

'because it was Jewish [refuge] first of all, because they understand your needs, and you're here with the people who care about you, but it was more the staff really, they support you 24/7 – if you need them.' (Jewish woman)

and:

'well the emotional support that I'm getting ...when I first came to the refuge, I felt empty and lost, and after a few weeks talking to [support worker], I would tell her how I felt, she

would encourage me to be strong ...if I felt rotten ...I could cry with her, after a little while ...I gained self esteem ...it has helped me.' (African-Caribbean woman).

It is important to note that women did also report that they drew on each other for support (not just workers) as also discussed above (see section on interdependency).

7.7.1.3 Isolation: Refuges and secret locations

Attending to issues of isolation are linked to women's support needs. The secrecy surrounding the location of refuges poses some complex questions that have been longstanding concerns of the women's refuge movement. We raise them here in order to consider some of the broader implications of such a policy, rather than to question current practice.

The vast majority of refuge locations are kept confidential. The primary purpose of this is to protect women and their children from further attacks. This has been the key rationale for the secrecy of refuge locations, and the safety of women and children fleeing domestic violence clearly has to remain the paramount consideration. However, more recently there have been some feminist challenges to the need for secrecy as the only strategy for ensuring women' safety, given other acknowledged unwanted effects. Haaken and Yragui (in press) points out that the secrecy of refuges can communicate to women that to be abused is shameful and thus reinforce the dominant message that it should be kept secret. Furthermore, they also argue that as isolation is a tactic that perpetrators use, refuges may be replicating that process by isolating women and their children. This isolation takes the form of residents not being able to share their address with friends or supportive members of their families, or to invite them back to the refuge, thus making it very difficult to have reciprocal relationships. We offer this account because the acknowledged need for the secrecy of refuges appears to be in tension with the clear importance of maintaining existing supportive networks and developing new ones.

Women and children staying in refuges face the threat of eviction should unauthorised visitors arrive. Within the interview material there was an example of a woman of African-Caribbean origin who sought companionship:

'Sometimes I just wanted to get out on my own. You know... just to get away... I got to know people... a few people now... and like, I didn't want people to know...where I was. Plus it was a refuge and you're not supposed to tell anyone.'

She had been threatened with eviction because a male acquaintance had called for her at the refuge even though she had not given this person her address:

'And one time somebody come and knocked the door for me... and this person lives like 3 roads up from the place... One of the staff come in and she says to me... "I'm sorry you're gonna have to pack your things and I'll find another hostel, cause you might jeopardise other people"... I'm crying now, you know and my kids are saying "'mummy what's wrong?"'

She later spoke to this person who informed her that, it was widely known in the community that there was a refuge in the locality:

' "I've known where you are all the time". Everybody knows that the children's home is there, and the woman's hostel, refuge whatever is next door. Everybody knows that'.

When the wider community is aware that there is a refuge in the locality this poses serious problems to the anonymity and secrecy of refuge provision. Additionally the safety of women is compromised when refuges are located near areas renowned for prostitution and places women at greater danger from men soliciting and/or following them home. This is the case for at least one Manchester-based refuge.

This example highlights how balancing the need for physical safety and to enable refuges to be more open is a vexing problem. Haaken and Yragui's research, based in the United States, suggests that refuges in their study who were open about their locations, did not compromise women's and children's safety. Whereas we recognise there are differences within the UK and US contexts, we raise this issue for further consideration rather than providing definitive answers. In relation to minoritised communities, we also need to think about how feasible 'openness' may be compared with the smallness of community networks and the very real fear of being found. It further needs to be acknowledged that many women may chose alternative methods of escaping violent relationships (other than entering a refuge) for example through housing associations etc.

One key way of ensuring safety that emerged in Haaken and Yragui's research was to encourage the local community to take domestic violence on as a community issue and extend the responsibility of safety for residents at the refuge to the community, rather than locating it purely with the refuge workers. Exciting as this possibility is, it presents enormous challenges to the current way in which domestic violence services are organised in this country, including how to ensure women's safety. However, the notion of broadening responsibility is appealing and two key ways in which this could be developed further is through volunteering, and strengthening partnerships between

helping agencies. We recognise that both these methods are already used to varying extents, and we discuss these more specifically in our conclusions.

7.7.1.4 Racism in refuges

We heard accounts of racism operating in refuges at three different levels: between residents, between workers and residents, and workers as intermediaries of state practices, particularly immigration law.

An Irish woman described how she was ostracised for days by the other women in the refuge over a colloquial Irish saying that had been misunderstood by the other women. Instead of the phrase being recognised as a term of endearment, it was interpreted as an insult. When this survivor approached a worker for help, it was handled insensitively. In effect, the worker was colluding with the other residents, the consequences of which she had not appreciated:

'...I've only got one abuser at home, here there's a group of 8 women treating me like shit. Forget it. That was because they didn't understand, they didn't stop to ask the question. The workers did, and they said I needed to sort it out myself. I said I could've walked out and never come back. I said you could be so p.c., and that I was for walking and they said that I didn't... I could have been dead over a word, and those workers took part in that by not dealing with it. They should be assertive. I said they must have seen how upset I'd been about it. They must've known how close I was to going back and that if it hadn't been for [name of friend] I would've gone back. He'd have killed me.'

and she also recalled:

'...We [survivor and Irish friend] were ridiculed on many occasions because we were both Irish Catholics and there was a church nearby and we were both in a great deal of distress and we found comfort in going to Mass...We used to go to church each evening and we were ridiculed for that. There were also references made to us being part of the IRA, and different things like that, all the Micks stick together, and we would cook Irish meals and different things like that, and they would make comments about cabbage and potatoes and about all sorts of other stuff. It wasn't all the women [in the refuge], just some of them....'

And when approaching a management member to voice her concerns, this speakers cultural identification as an Irish woman was negated.

'she [management member] was so dismissive and she said, 'well if I walked into this room, I wouldn't know you were Irish'.

This is a very clear example of the flip side of 'passing'. The emphasis on visible differences as a marker, on the one hand, may allow people to 'pass', but also makes them invisible, involving a negation not only of cultural identifications but also a denial of anti-Irish racism.

Racism adds to the isolation encountered by minoritised women as illustrated by this African-Caribbean woman who did not experience the other white residents as helpful or polite:

'I say good morning, and the [white] women don't say good morning back... Its like they are cut from the same cloth, you pass them on the stairs, you come up and you say "excuse me"...they don't talk...I don't have anything against them.'

A worker in a generic refuge commented:

'Even though we are all women, we have one thing in common, and that is domestic violence...[but] It is difficult for a non-white person to live here.'

Another African-Caribbean woman had sought emotional and practical support outside of the mainstream refuge she was living in from an older black woman who taught her how to cook Caribbean food.

'You know, they weren't helpful as if you're a black woman, they didn't cater to for for their needs... they said to me anything you want just come and ask us because we've got the money... And I asked them for like a bowl or a bucket to wash down the kids at night time... They were looking at me strange, you know the little things that when you picked up when you were kid and your mother passed it on.

In the end she bought her own cooking and household utensils:

'I bought meself a Dutch pot [and pan] and I brought it back home and the sniggers and the asking questions and pulling down business was there but X used to say to me [name of interviewee] once you get your house you got all these stuff to take with you... I bought even though the worker said... there was money there to cater for everybody's needs'

Through the support of this older black woman she was able to re-acquaint herself with her Jamaican heritage, and was able to plan for her new home.

Workers in black-specific refuges also commented on what women had reported to them:

'...one of the key things about rationales behind having an Asian Women's refuge as well is to actually counteract issues of racism that women and children may experience in mainstream refuges, we've had a lot of women telling us,...and children telling us that they've been picked on [in mainstream provision] because they're Asian, and I think...racism rears its ugly head up at different intervals. (South Asian worker)

and of workers in mainstream refuges not challenging racism:

'I think what's particularly difficult for other groups is that we don't know enough about their cultures... I mean, I speaking personally, I don't... it's difficult to tackle sometimes... you don't want to play the racist card... so you go in there and it's... I've seen organisations "oh well, it's a cultural thing"... you know... so the racism... is institutionalised in a sense, and people are so scared that they'll get pulled up for being racist that they actually don't tackle it at all.' (Generic domestic violence service)

Throughout this report, we have highlighted the pernicious ways in which state practices, specifically immigration policy intersects with issues of domestic violence. As Cohen (2001) argues, many workers in the statutory, and in this instance also the voluntary, sector are mediating between the state and people requiring benefits. We have already outlined (in Barriers 1) the way in which women who have no recourse to public funds are often denied access to a refuge.

In our next example, we report on the difficulties this survivor experienced in trying to arrange refuge space – desperately trying to flee before her husband returned. However, this African woman had incredible difficulty trying to persuade the refuge she contacted to accept her. They wanted to check her immigration status and documents before offering her place and in the end she was forced to try elsewhere.

Another woman was offered space in a refuge but, because of her immigration status, the refuge workers refused to get her any proper legal advice and suggested that she return back to her country of origin. She only got help with her immigration when other (Muslim) residents accessed support for her via Citizen's Advice Bureau.

To provide 'refuge' space that fails to attend to, and challenge, racism places women in the invidious position of having to chose which kind of abuse they want shelter from: domestic violence or racism. The evidence makes it very clear that to provide sensitive and accessible services to minoritised women, it is essential to combat both racism and domestic violence.

7.7.1.5 Refuges as positive spaces

Although we have commented on less positive aspects of refuge life as reported to us above, to end this section we want to emphasise that refuges were also seen as valued spaces:

'I will never forget that experience [of being in a culturally specific refuge] I learnt a lot about myself and other people. I got space on my own to think. you need space on your own at some times in your life, so you can think.' (African-Caribbean woman)

'the refuge itself ... it's a good place to go to get away, you know ... as a break' (African-Caribbean and white English heritage)

'what was so nice about the refuge was, you know that they do outings for the parents...you know when you're on benefits, you can't afford outings' (South Asian woman)

'And I felt like they [refuge staff] cared. She [refuge worker] had to drive me around for a whole week and I was in hospital until 7 o'clock one night when they go off duty at 5, but she didn't just leave me there, she stayed till 7.' (South Asian woman)

'The atmosphere [in the refuge]. There was energy here, you feel that everything is smiles. Nobody says not to do things. Very soft, nice atmosphere. I think [names of workers] made a good atmosphere.' (Jewish woman)

7.8 Leaving the refuge: After care

Leaving the refuge to set up in her own home is another key transition point. Having left a violent relationship, and accessed refuge services and then moving on can be both an exciting as well as anxiety provoking time. Moving from a crowded refuge to living on your own does have a huge impact as described by a South Asian worker:

'...the big jump between sharing with six families and suddenly you're living in your own property it's a very difficult thing, it's a very harsh thing in a lot of ways...'

Many women reported finding this a particularly difficult time, both practically and emotionally.

'I think there needs to be more of a practical and emotional help there and once you are out of the refuge, once you have been re-housed, I think there needs to be...there isn't any

emotional support once you leave, you are basically left to yourself. I mean you are taken away from the refuge, you are told that you can never come back here again. Well basically you can't come back to the building itself but you know somebody will contact you soon about....outreach support. But that first night, you are living in your brand new flat and when you get that flat you have to think, well this is for the rest of my life.' (South Asian woman)

An African woman who has no recourse to public funds and who has difficulty reading English talked of her enduring difficulties.

'Sometimes I get letters and I can't read them well. I ask [refuge worker] whether she can help me to explain what they are about. Like gas bills and and things like that. And things I should not pay for like Council tax. Sometimes she will help me and call the tax people. When I first went there the thing that they told me, if any problem I have, they will help me. I still have the problem, they say they are not going to help me.' (African woman).

Clearly women have different needs, as well as at different times, and so also form different judgements about each other, as in this account from a black woman who expressed her frustration about other residents not wanting to help themselves:

'Some women need pushing, they were just lazy, and wanted to stay there [in the refuge]. They didn't want to come out. Expecting people to do everything for them, these are older women I'm talking about.'

There were also a number of examples of good practice in resettlement work in the interviews. Much of the housing that women are offered is low standard accommodation often in a poor state of repair and decoration and one of the refuges interviewed operates a team of volunteers who can do the decorating before a woman moves into home.

For women who may have been trapped at home, 'getting out of the house' is very important and educational opportunities of a variety of kinds offer the possibility for this. With proper child care as part of support work, then education classes, leisure activities and new skills can all be offered: access courses, DIY skills and swimming lessons were all mentioned as important opportunities for women.

Voluntary work was mentioned as a very valuable way of restoring self-respect and dignity and a sense of self to women as well as a way of combating loneliness and isolation. Many domestic violence services recruit volunteers which also offers a route for women to 'give something back' to the refuge movement, to offer support to others

and gain support themselves, during the long process of rebuilding self-respect and dignity.

In chapters 4 and 5, we documented the structural and more nuanced barriers to fleeing and staying out of abusive relationships. These are also in operation when women leave the relative safety and support of the refuge – indeed, more acutely as women grapple with the practicalities of setting up home coupled with a reduced level of support. The increased vulnerability of women returning to abusive relationships is also documented elsewhere (Kelly and Humphreys, 2000), thus stressing the necessity of after-care and resettlement work.

7.8 1 Independence and isolation

Within our study, issues of isolation also emerged as an important factor for all women, but more acutely for minoritised women who are dealing both with issues around domestic violence as well as racism and questions of cultural identifications. This is well illustrated by the following example, which also ties in with our discussion of independence earlier on in this chapter.

A South Asian woman spoke movingly about fleeing domestic violence, seeking shelter in a refuge, moving out, getting her own flat and a job. To all intents and purposes she was the 'perfect' client, she had moved towards independence in all the prescribed ways.

'I was independent, I had a job, I had a flat, a really nice flat but there was still something missing and I felt isolated, I felt like I was trying to get in towards religion at that point as well and...I couldn't actually approach the community because the community would totally....I'd left, no family, living on her own, basically that's like, I'm sorry but we're not letting you anywhere near our daughters...So I was cut off from the community in that sense and after that I thought I needed my family so I tried to go back home again. I mean this was after four years of struggling and surviving and thinking I can do this, I can do this, I'm going to live on my own. And four years later when you think everything is going to be fine, when I did achieve the job...I ended up going back home. And I went back home and I realised that things hadn't changed. Things were worse than ever in fact, not any better, they were worse and I actually managed to walk out again for a second time. Nightmare...so it was basically a whole round circle. I mean I think it's quite sad because I left home, I achieved everything that I wanted, but there was lack of support.'

Throughout her account, her need for a sense of community based on cultural and

religious identifications was very strong and highlights how significant this is for minoritised women who see such links as integral to 'belonging' and being supported. The strength, resilience and sense of pride in what she did achieve, is compromised by her sense of loss and abandonment, to the point where she returns to an abusive situation. This indicates the need for after care and resettlement work to be offered according to women's needs and to take seriously the need for support which responds both to domestic violence and the impact of cultural isolation and racism. One of the effects of limited resources is that there is more pressure exerted on minoritised women to conform to notions of independence where they are increasingly encouraged or forced to completely manage on their own, or having to rely on their communities when that is not always a viable option, and worse still forced to go back to violent relationships.

7.9 Working with distress: Impact on workers

One of the tensions for workers is to know how to intervene in domestic violence which is foregrounded by some of the debates around supporting women in abusive relationships versus supporting them to leave abusive relationships, as illustrated by this health worker:

'All we can do at some stages is just keep saying we're here and even saying you don't have to meet anybody, you can just meet an outreach worker in a café or she won't make you leave him, but she could discuss strategies of how [to cope]...'

To go down the 'very radical feminist' route of providing information on how to leave, and not giving her coping strategies could mean loss of contact:

'...and some down the very radical feminist route would say that you shouldn't give her strategies, how to cope with the situation, you need to give her strategies of how to leave. But that might not be...it's a harm reduction measure, in an ideal world she wouldn't be with [him], but it's not as ideal as that is it?'

'Harm reduction' and developing coping strategies, with the option of help should she wish to leave, were seen as vital rather than encouraging women to leave. What emerges from women's accounts is that they do want space to develop their own resistances (without pressure from workers) in ways they feel will keep themselves safe with regard to the decisions they make. It also needs to be acknowledged that for some workers supporting women to stay may be particularly difficult if they perceive themselves as in some way colluding with the abuse.

Furthermore, working with domestic violence can also be frustrating for workers, especially where women re-present:

'There must be something that we could create if it doesn't already exist I mean we just need to identify what it is that would help discourage women from going back to violent partners you know... '

This worker went on to say:

'You know what can you [do]... you can't start threatening somebody that has been here five times already you know we can't be [providing you with a service] you, I mean that's no answer, but you feel surely there's something you can do to point them in an independent direction.' (Statutory sector worker)

However, a domestic violence worker expressed the need for understanding women's help seeking processes rather than pathologising their behaviour:

'I've had people say to me, don't you get frustrated when they keep coming back, and I say, well, that's part of their process. I get frustrated when I'm in refuges, and they say, oh this one's been backwards and forwards, and that really freaks me out because I expect better of them...'

What many organisations fail to do is to understand women's processes regarding leaving and how organisations can themselves militate against women (in the ways we have outlined above), thus forcing them to go back to violent relationships. This domestic violence worker stressed the importance of understanding processes:

'It might take her a dozen times, to go. You know, it's about keeping her safe, it's about allowing her some respite, some time out, so she can get her head together, so she's not going to get beaten tonight, so she's not going to have her head pecked.'

One the major impacts of working in the field of domestic violence are workers' feelings of failure, distress, and frustration. As Warner points out in relation to working with issues of child sexual abuse, powerful feelings are generated because it is about 'mad, bad and dangerous relationships' (Warner, 2000b:7). Not only does this have similarities with domestic violence, but when combined with issues of 'race' and culture, can incite additional anxieties and fears for workers. Warner also argues that when the woman's behaviour is seen as unreasonable, then the worker's response can act to 'contain and control rather than understand and enable' (Warner, 2000b:7). This aspect of worker's responses is well demonstrated in the following examples:

An African woman gave an account of how living in a refuge was too controlling for her:

'At [the refuge], my key worker was X, but sometimes she got a funny way of showing things, she got an attitude, and I decided that I cannot have her to deal with my problems. Instead of her listening to me she wanted to tell me what I should do. She's like controlling me and that reminds me of what my husband was doing to me. So I decided that I cannot have her.'

And a South Asian woman reported:

'I mean I know that at one point I was in [name of refuge] and I was self-harming and I was told at that point that if you self-harm it is a means of eviction, you can get evicted from [name of refuge].'

In highlighting this example, we do not disregard the level of support that refuge workers need to work around these complex issues, but point out the potential for recreating abusive relationships. Given the links between domestic violence and mental health difficulties (ReSisters, 2002), we need to explore ways in which women – as survivors and workers can be best supported.

7.10 Why women go back

Throughout this chapter and indeed the report, we have remained alert to explanations offered as to why women go back to abusive situations. We have identified key barriers in Chapters 4 and 5 and in this chapter we have documented the repercussions of leaving abusive relationships, including how women's physical safety can be seriously threatened by leaving. When these are coupled with lack of support (practical and emotional, structural, material and community-based) which does not engage with issues of domestic violence *and* minoritisation, it is perhaps even more amazing that minoritised women do resist in the ways that they do. Rather than locating the 'blame' of returning to abusive situations on to the women, we need to address the lack of appropriate support services which respond to women's needs and concerns.

As this health worker, in response to being asked what support minoritised women need, put it:

'Comfortable accommodation, support groups, one stop shops where they don't have to trail all over the city, perhaps with issues of language, good interpreting services which of course

Central Manchester is crap at, across the city, transport, creche facilities to give them some time on their own, constant encouragement which is I think sadly sometimes that's the only resource that workers have got.'

However, as we have also illustrated, lack of sensitive support is not only a matter of resources, but also about ways of thinking about independence, the failure to counteract racism in refuges, a lack of recognition of how some refuge practices can replicate process of abuse (both in relation to domestic violence and racism) and the intersections between domestic violence and minoritisation.

8 SUPPORTING WOMEN THROUGH GROUP WORK

Janet Batsleer, Khatidja Chantler and Hindene Shirley McIntosh

Introduction

In this chapter we consider some general issues arising from this study around supporting minoritised women fleeing domestic violence. We explore the double-sidedness of staying/leaving violent relationships, the necessity of working through and beyond stereotypes, and working with issues of secrecy and silence. We then focus on group work, which was an integral part of our research project. We report on some of the processes involved in setting up and facilitating the group work and draw out implications for supporting women through these interventions.

We talk about support in relation to independence and autonomy, but also in relation to connection and to care. In our previous chapter, we described this as interdependency. Hence support can be thought of as strategies which enable a woman to regain (or gain for the first time) self-respect and independence. Support can also be thought of as those strategies which enable a woman to draw on networks of connection, to contribute to them and to draw nurture from them. Exploring this process in more detail, also indicates the ways in which a range of services can better support minoritised women. In our next chapter we draw attention to the types of interventions - both formal and informal that appear to be helpful.

Anti-racist feminist support work can be thought of as engaged in the politics of location, that is in engaging with historical and current racialised, gendered and classed positionings. It is, therefore, engaged in trying to shift and change boundaries in favour of women's increasing freedom from oppression, redefining at every point what is within our grasp and what is outside our power.

8.1 The crisis of staying or going as double-sided

In order to offer good support it is important to understand the double-sidedness of the choices women face in making a decision to leave a violent partner. For some women, it meant a shift into poverty, including absolute poverty and dependence on charity, for women whose immigration status means they have no recourse to public funds. On the other hand, some women experienced control over their own money for the very first time in their lives.

All of the specialist community specific organisations we interviewed emphasised the double-edged sword of community bonds.

'Community networks can make it very hard for women to get out of the door.' (Culturally specific domestic violence service)

'No matter where I went he could find me.' (Jewish woman)

For many women the decision to leave required an absolute turning of their back on the community. On the other hand (as also discussed in our previous chapter), loss of community led to loneliness and isolation and *'loneliness and isolation are killers'* (Generic domestic violence service).

'I would have liked something from my own community.' (Jewish woman)

Family concerns displayed this same double-sidedness, especially concerns for children as has been documented in an earlier chapter. Women reported staying for the sake of the children and leaving for the sake of the children, and regret not doing the other for the sake of the children. If you stay your children may be taken into care or if you leave your children may lose contact with many sources of family and community support. This loss may be particularly acute for some minoritised women and children where issues around cultural identifications - both in themselves, but also as a protective factor around racism may play just as important role as domestic violence.

8.2 Working in the presence of and through and against stereotypes

In considering the meaning of support for women from Irish, Jewish, African, African-Caribbean and South Asian communities, it is impossible not to take into account the effect of powerful stereotypical discourses on the way ideas about support are constructed. These discourses exist across the whole society and are often internalised, so the work of challenging them and working beyond them is the concern of all organisations, both generic and specialist.

A number of these powerful representations are present in the research interviews and we have discussed these and the way they influence policy and practice around domestic violence more fully in Chapter 3 and 5. Here we summarise them briefly as:

The strong Black woman (in relation to African and African-Caribbean women) was apparent. However, it is also important to note that this idea of 'strength' does

not only appear in Black communities; many women in poor communities also have 'strength' attributed to them. The poor victimised passive South Asian woman, seen as part of a particularly oppressive culture, but within a pluralist society we accept this. Stereotypes around Jewish women resemble those attributed to South Asian women where issues of family and community are seen as central and Jewish communities are perceived as 'looking after their own'. This construction suggests that it will be next to impossible for Jewish women to acknowledge domestic violence let alone access support for it. Indeed as already indicated, they were reluctant to access support from outside the community, but also found it hard to get support within it. In relation to Irish women, domestic violence is seen as part of the culture.

All these discourses act to suggest that there is little that mainstream UK services can do to respond to the needs of women experiencing domestic violence and may go some way to explaining the neglect minoritised women experience. They are sometimes to be found too in arguments for culturally specific services. However, we believe that such discourses should not freeze workers and agencies from the very challenging nature of support work with minoritised women and children living in, or fleeing, violent relationships. For failure to do so would not only render the support needs of women invisible but would perpetuate power inequalities both within and outside of minoritised communities.

Such discourses can also have a tremendous impact on the ability of women to believe in themselves sufficiently to feel that they have the right to freedom from violent oppressive personal relationships. However, these considerations also need to be located within the context of a racist society such that freedom from personal, family-based violence may also paradoxically offer women and children less protection in the face of racist violence and abuse. A human rights approach enables workers to free themselves from these discourses, and to enable women they are working with to do the same.

At the same time, working from within specific communities and offering alternative religious and moral discourses is immensely important, and there is probably tremendous scope for cross-community, including inter-cultural and inter-faith work run by women. In both the group work (which included Catholic, Protestant and Muslim women) and in individual interviews, women survivors spoke of their faith in God, the importance of prayer and talking to God as well as the oppression of religion. The following extracts illustrate both how religion has been used to oppress women and also some of the challenges to such oppression from within the tradition:

'Women have been given a wrong view of God by the Church. They have been taught that

God wants them to suffer. I can help them see that that is a wrong view of God, and because it comes from me, a Sister, they will believe me.' (Culturally specific generic service)

'Judaism has a law where you are actually forbidden to abuse your wife and there is also a law to protect your wife.' (Jewish woman)

Women need to learn that men and women are equal in Islam and to be treated equally and women need to learn to live Islamically. 'Be Independent and have an Islamic lifestyle.' (Muslim woman)

In the mixed group that ran as part of the project, there was considerable discussion of faith and faith traditions, and one recommendation emerging at the end of the group was that the research is made available to women in cultural and religious communities who are challenging the acceptability of violence and the control of women.

8.3 Working with secrecy and silence

Secrecy/silence is a strategy that perpetuates domestic violence. On the other hand, secrecy/silence also offers a 'safe space' for women ...a stratagem of protection and safety. Many projects have developed 'low key strategies' which offer safety to women while they work out how to leave. A toy library run by a culturally specific social care agency is one of the places where issues of domestic violence can be discussed:

'We hope if women started coming to the toy library..we're hoping to extend it to have like, sit and have coffee, sit and have a chat, have health visitors come round and talk... it's a low key way of getting to people.'

A women's group in one small suburb with a launderette service attached to it fulfils a similar function for Asian women. Another space - not without its own stigma - but still maybe a potentially safe space for discussions of domestic violence include groups with a mental health focus. The mixed group conducted as part of this research project ran in conjunction with 'Voices and Choices' a women's drop in with a mental health focus at the Zion Centre in Hulme. A 'mental health focus' or a 'women's group' may provide a good 'cover story' and help a woman avoid some of the 'shame' in wider family networks (e.g. 'she's going for help with her post-natal depression') until she is ready to challenge that shaming process on her own behalf. However such spaces also need to signal in some way that they are willing to talk about issues of domestic violence, even if it is obliquely e.g. through having leaflets/posters about

domestic violence displayed alongside other information.

Some workers we interviewed discussed 'harm reduction measures' (a term taken from mental health and drugs work) as an explicit strategy for working with women, helping her gradually develop an idea of her rights to safety and also helping her recognise her own resilience, and factors which can strengthen her resilience. The nature of community education was also recognised as vital: in one interview with a culturally specific domestic violence agency, this was powerfully described as the 'silent voice' of outreach work in a community. The phrase 'silent voice' powerfully captures the nature of the presence of refuges and their associated outreach work within specific communities.

Another approach to working with secrecy/silence is to challenge it directly, to name it and shame domestic violence (rather than the woman). The African, African-Caribbean, and South Asian communities have also got specific domestic violence services in Manchester; Jewish Women's Aid has a refuge in London. Through the course of this study, we were not able to locate an Irish women's refuge in England.

We would argue that both approaches are crucial to working with secrecy and silence - low key, as well as more direct and visible domestic violence services.

8.4 Working with shame and blame

Throughout the research interviews, the group work we have undertaken and in interviews with workers, the emotional impact of domestic violence was at the centre of our discussions. The feelings of shame and of self-blame reported are an amazingly powerful set of controls which prevent women leaving and staying out of violent situations. Various women said: *'Don't let the neighbours know'*. *'If the community finds out, the children will never get a marriage partner..'* *'It's my own fault...I married him.'* *' My mother would say....you've made your bed and so you must lie on it.'* *' Keep your dirty washing in the family'*. This overarching pattern of shaming and blaming the woman leads in a number of directions.

A number of organisations we interviewed had developed strategies for working in relation to the development of self-respect. For example, the local help line reported on the 'Women You are Amazing' Day they had held at a local Girls High School with a significant Asian population, an event that was remembered very positively by one of the members of the support group. The Black women's refuge was holding a Women's Development Weekend, which combined with a holiday break on the edge

of the Peak District. The South Asian women's refuge held a day of activities for women on International Women's Day.

It is within the context of the general issues surrounding support work with minoritised women and children and in the context of domestic violence that we focus now on the group work part of our research project.

8.5 Group work

A key part of our research design was to engage in group work with minoritised women. As already discussed in the introduction, this aspect of our research drew upon our previous study, which indicated that group work may be an intervention that women would value (Chantler et al, 2001). Although our previous study focussed on service responses to South Asian women with experiences of attempted suicide and self-harm, domestic violence featured as a major precursor to such attempts. Our decision to include group work in this study met several key objectives including: providing a safe space for women to support each other, providing opportunities for group members to participate in activities that they may otherwise not have access to, working with women who are traditionally excluded from a range of services, working in partnership with key agencies, contributing to the evidence base for the effectiveness (or otherwise) of group work interventions, and lastly and importantly an opportunity for the research team to 'give something back' - as a method of resourcing women and enabling them to support one another in their transitions to independence.

The group work proved to be an extremely challenging, if ultimately rewarding experience. The tight time scale was particularly difficult. Other issues that were equally vexing included: ethical issues about the nature of support and what was both feasible and fair to offer in short-term groups, issues of who the groups should be for (in terms of ethnicity), where they should operate from, what the expectations of our funders were, what the expectations of potential group members were, and issues around the joint facilitation (or otherwise) of groups.

We had originally planned to conduct 25 in depth interviews with women from African and African-Caribbean, Irish, Jewish and South Asian women before the start of the group work. As part of this interview, amongst other issues, we explored their views about group work in terms of what they might find useful/helpful (childcare, transport, preferences for activities, language requirements etc) as well as an exploration of the sort of group they would feel most comfortable in terms of ethnicity. Hence the planning and specificity of each group was in large part to be determined on the basis

of our consultations with women we interviewed. However, as documented in Chapter 7, our difficulties in contacting women from Irish and Jewish backgrounds meant that we were continually involved in attempts at thinking and trying out different ways to document their experiences - for not making such attempts would be to replicate their invisibility within services in our project. As we continued our efforts, we were also rapidly running out of time as the project had a very limited time scale which could not be re-negotiated.

Ultimately, we had to make decisions about the groups and their make-up, on the basis of the interview material we already had, our discussions within research team meetings and with the steering group and our own networks (either created as part of the research project or drawing on existing networks). Taking these factors in to account, we decided we would set up three groups as follows: one 'mixed' group - mixed here refers to women from any of the cultural groups within our study, one group for South Asian women and one group for African and African-Caribbean women. Given the current debates around mainstream versus culturally specific provision, we hope that our research material around group work will be particularly useful in contributing to these.

Next, we report on each of the groups in turn, indicating some of the key themes that emerged. The models of group work used shifted as the project developed and new challenges were presented and engaged with, but we drew largely on the traditions of social group work and feminist group work (e.g. Butler and Wintram, 1991). The existing feminist literature on group work does not have a strong emphasis on inter-cultural work so that will be the focus of attention here.

8.6 The 'mixed' group at Voices and Choices

This group was facilitated by Janet Batsleer and Sophie Smailes. Both women are experienced in group work and Sophie is a qualified counsellor.

The women who had been contacted during the research process and who had expressed a preference for working in a 'mixed' group were visited before the group started, childcare was organised and transport arranged. They included two women of Irish descent, a Bengali woman, a woman of South Asian heritage still in a refuge, and an African woman. Women involved in Voices and Choices were also invited to join the group, and two did so: both were white English women, one with Irish inheritance.

Confidentiality and consent to publish material arising from the group work were negotiated at each session, as each session was also open. As well as the core membership there were three other South Asian women who attended for one session. So the group was mixed, not only in terms of ethnicity but also in terms of age, position in the workforce, educational experience and in terms of distance from the immediate crisis of leaving a violent relationship. For one woman it was fourteen years since she had left the relationship and her husband had died. At the other extreme were women who had recently entered a refuge. The group ran for seven weeks (eight if we include the session that started the group at Voices and Choices) and the work involved a great deal of tears and laughter, space for individuals to speak, a sharing of news and personal stories and experiences, a lot of talk about God and lots of unanticipated connections and recognitions between women who would usually be positioned as having little in common.

Sophie and Janet structured and facilitated each of the sessions, with a theme running throughout about steps on the journey 'to where?': away from violence and oppression, towards 'freedom' and 'light' and about 'what helps?'. At the end of each session women joined the 'Voices and Choices' sessions and were able to experience facial massage, Tai Chi classes and relaxation classes or just join in chat in the social area.

8.6.1 Emerging themes

In the group work we undertook as part of this project women identified working with issues of shame and blame as a major series of obstacles on what was called their journey, a journey they defined as travelling in the direction of freedom and light. The following indicate some of the general themes that emerged.

1. Denial of the reality of the experience of being hurt, punished or victimised was a common starting point. 'This isn't happening to me.'

2. Disbelief, or the sense that it was hard to believe that the abuse was happening, easier to pretend that it wasn't. Others, including close family may be disinclined to believe her, and so are professional agencies that she may approach for help.

3. Degradation: violent partners often built on this pattern of denial and disbelief to undermine any attempts at resistance the woman might make. Women spoke of the experience of being called ugly or useless or stupid and being denied clothes or food or money. All this means that confidence building work, and work to counter depression with women who have left violent relationships continues to be important for a very

long-time. As this woman said:

'I only really felt free of it [effects of domestic violence] when he was dead.' (Irish woman)

4. Anger was recognised as one of the most powerful motivators in helping women leave violent relationships, but women appeared to need a lot of help in recognising it and accepting it. The desire to kill their violent partner may be very strong and some women needed support in recognising that a feeling and an action are not the same thing, and so not to repudiate these feelings.

5. Self-hate and self-harm. In many ways, it is more likely for the anger to run along established channels and to turn against the self. Women may turn to cutting themselves or poisoning themselves as a form of expression of distress. They may want to die.

The 'heaviness' of the material was mediated by the facilitators also concentrating on 'what helps'.

8.6.2 'What helps?'

The groups shared account of 'What helps' included:

Laughter | Anger | Crying | Talking to God | Trusting in some-one to share your problems

Friends | Accepting responsibility for myself; my thought, my word, my deed

Learning to fight | Learning his language | Learning to be on my own without talking to myself

Taking back control | The inspiration of my children | Thinking about my children's future

8.6.3 Women's views of the group

In the final evaluation session we asked women to say what had been good about the group, issues we should think about in future, and to make wishes for themselves and for each other.

Positive points were :

'I feel calmer now. I feel like myself.'

'A group's better than Valium.'

'we've got the openness with each other and the confidentiality and I've felt very comfortable with the group.'

'talking, being social, getting out the house.'

'you can relate between what's happened to you and see other people going through the same thing.'

'it's given me a perspective through which I can see my own situation. very much wanting for myself and for the others to move on. A very important part of a healing process.'

'sharing problems; naming the anger; a sense of relief or release; not being judged.'

'challenges the stereotypes about other communities and helps you know about your own.'

'can speak more freely in a mixed group than in a group just with others who know your community.'

'to acknowledge that what we've been through is not Okay.'

8.6.4 Wishes for the future

Finally, the members of the group expressed their wishes for themselves and one another and we believe this gives a powerful sense of just how supportive group work can be:

'I want to open my heart and dry my tears.'

'I hope you will be able to spend money on yourself.'

'I hope you will look after yourself. Grab an hour away from the kids.'

'I wish for myself and for all the women in the group that we don't have to linger longer than

we need in this phase of life.'

'I hope to get a job and to get my life back. To get out more and not stay stuck in the house.'

'I wish I could have a house soon.'

'I hate depression. God help us all to fight to depression. I'll miss you. I wish I could often see you.'

'To have a choice and to have a voice.'

'My wish for myself and all the women in the group: Courage.'

For the workers, the sense of privilege and happiness generated by our work with this group was enormous. We hope that this small example of practice will offer encouragement to others to see the value of and create the opportunity for inter-cultural work with women who have left violent relationships, and to overcome their fears about undertaking intercultural work. It is clearly valued from women from different communities, as is work in groups in which issues of shared heritage are to the fore. The value of one should not detract from the other.

8.7 South Asian women's domestic violence group[1]

This group was facilitated by Najman Zaman, who was based at 42nd Street, a young people's mental health project. It ran for six weeks, at a venue offered by Early Years and Play. Barriers to women attending support groups (and other provision) are often practical, particularly around child-care and transport. It was therefore important to attend to these and this was immensely valued by group members. Child-care was kindly provided by Early Years and Play and transport was organised to and from the venue to facilitate participation. Notes of the group sessions were made at the end of each session, incorporating verbal and written feedback from the women.

8.7.1 Rationale for the group

This was in large part based on our previous study on South Asian women with issues of attempted suicide and self-harm where survivors had articulated the need for a

1 We would like to acknowledge Najman Zaman for her contribution in the writing of this section.

South Asian women's group (Chantler et al, 2001). As already mentioned the link between such distress and domestic violence was very evident, so we designed this research project to specifically address the issue of group work support around domestic violence. To further assess whether there was a need for such a group, participants who took part in the individual interviews of our current study, were asked about group work and whether this was an intervention that they would be interested in attending. Out of the 8 South Asian women interviewed, 6 were interested in group work. 3 specifically wanted a South Asian specific group, 1 woman did not mind about the 'mix' of the group and 2 specifically wanted a 'mixed' group. This highlights the need for a range of services - culturally specific and mainstream.

8.7.2 Composition of the group

Group members were recruited in a variety of ways: from the research 1:1 interviews, Saheli and Hosla (Asian Women's refuge and Outreach Service), 42nd Street, Pakistani Resource Centre and through informal contacts. Group membership extended to 12 women. The age range of the women spanned from 18 years to women in their fifties, although six women were under 25. The majority of women were mothers. Although it was not our intention to focus on a particular religious identity within the generic term 'South Asian', all the women who participated in the group identified themselves as Pakistani Muslim. 4 of the 12 women were born in Pakistan, the rest were British born. Given the demographics of Manchester, this is not surprising. Hence, we would not wish readers to draw any conclusions about domestic violence and Pakistani Muslim communities.

8.7.3 Naming it: Domestic violence

Being public and open about who the group was for, and the issues that it was offering support around was a powerful way of communicating an acknowledgement and willingness to engage with issues of domestic violence in South Asian communities. This openness, in contrast to the secrecy and shame associated with any sort of abuse, did open up a valuable, safe space, in which women could work at their own pace:

'I have valued the interaction between women in a safe environment without the pressure to disclose personal details.' (Group member)

and another group member commented :

'I have enjoyed meeting new people who have been through the same experiences I have.'

Whereas one might have expected membership of and participation in the group to be curtailed by fears around confidentiality, on the whole the women had taken it for granted that their confidentiality would be maintained, as other group members also shared similar histories and concerns. However, there was one woman who used a pseudonym for the purposes of the group to maintain annonymity.

Furthermore, although it had been made clear that the group would run for a fixed time period, the women made it equally clear from the end of the first session that they wanted the group to continue beyond the research remit.

8.7.4 Differences and similarities within the group

The discussion that follows illustrates some of the complexities and diversity within the term 'South Asian' and the ways in which they were engaged with by group members. Hence although in one sense this group was 'culturally matched' in other ways, the differences within any category makes it almost impossible to find an 'exact' match, nor would we want to be seen as recommending this (Burman et al, 1998).

8.7.4.1 Religion

Although all the women had self-identified as Muslim, they had different understandings and approaches to their faith. Some women had stronger religious identifications than others. Much of the discussion in the group did focus around issues of faith and culture, with a tolerance of each others' perspectives combined with a sense of finding out what Islam meant for them. Discussion about Islam was also placed in the wider context of Islamophobia and women reported increasing frequency of this after September 11th. They were also concerned about the facilitator and wanted to know whether her being a Muslim woman had impacted on her work experiences post September 11th.

However, there was also a strong recognition that, rather than religion, it was the South Asian experience of culture, tradition and background that was important to them as a group and that this transcended differences based on religion. Hence a group based on different religious identifications such as Hindu, Sikh and Muslim would work equally well, as the commonalities based on experiences of domestic violence and being South Asian appeared to be more significant than identifications

based solely on religion. As this participant said in relation to difference:

'One thing I have valued about this group is how all the women have respect for each other despite differences.'

8.7.4.2 Age-range

As already mentioned, there was a wide age range within the group and we had been anxious about how that might affect the group process. Especially as this was a short-term intervention, we did not want for example, to replicate unhelpful elements of mother/daughter relationships or recreate inter-generational tensions, for example to do with the role of women. However, these differences were on the whole used positively, with for example, younger women with children asking for help, support and guidance with parenting issues.

Age did feature in the discussions particularly around whether or not younger women found it easier to leave violent relationships compared to older women.

One woman expressed that she felt that it was easier for young women to leave home. Additionally, one of the older women felt it was harder to cope if you are older and felt younger women have more options. However, another woman argued that it's harder for single young women to leave as the community will not accept them back into the family as the family honour is seen as being disgraced, whereas older women have more respect as an elder and are accepted back.

One of the younger women expressed:

'It has been an inspiration for me to meet women of my mum's age who leave home as you just don't see it. I think it's amazing that women of that age can go against tradition and leave.'

8.7.4.3 Language

The other main difference that was engaged with in the group was to do with language. 3 languages were spoken: English, Punjabi and Urdu in a fluid and interchangeable way depending on who was present at the group and their fluency in particular languages. Although the facilitator did translate, other group members also took responsibility to ensure that all the women understood what was happening so that

they could all participate freely in the discussions. Clearly, there are limitations when languages have to be translated, mainly that the expressions that are used in many South Asian languages can sometimes appear melodramatic when evaluated from an English language and cultural perspective. Secondly, there sometimes just is not the right word in English to convey non-verbal meanings. However, despite these difficulties, women had established ways of communicating with each other that they found comfortable.

Importantly, we should note that the group was unable to accommodate women who only spoke Bengali or Bangla. None of the women who attended the group could speak either of these languages and it would have been too difficult to include a fourth language. This exclusion, however, may indicate the need for another South Asian women's group which has Bangla or Bengali as its language of communication.

8.7.5 Themes discussed in the group

To maintain the confidentiality of the women who participated in the group, we deliberately do not give a full account of women's individual stories. However, it is important to note that the following issues were discussed: issues around fathers' contact with children, immigration and asylum, 'race', culture and the myths and stereotypes of Asian women, particularly Muslim women, rape within marriage, religion as a source of strength, and isolation and ostracisation from community.

8.7.6 What the women valued

Women commented that in addition to the discussions, they had really enjoyed the range of group work activities they had planned in conjunction with the facilitator. These included Indian head massage, a beauty session which focussed on Asian skincare (as there is an absence of this in our high streets), a sewing skills session (which one of the group members conducted) and a talk about computer skills form the Women's Electronic Village Hall. They also enjoyed the ending session with food from a local restaurant. The fact that there was a budget to pay for external facilitators, transport, childcare, materials for group activities, meant they could access activities they would otherwise not have been able to afford. This woman summed it up as follows:

'I have enjoyed meeting different types of women of all ages... the activities and interaction, having a safe women only environment. But the best thing is getting out of the refuge without expense- can't afford it.'

and other group members:

'I have valued sharing my sewing skills with other women. It made me feel good about myself.'

'I have enjoyed meeting other people, trusting one another.'

'I have enjoyed the interaction with other Asian women and I particularly enjoyed the Indian Head Massage.'

'I've enjoyed meeting different people and having a break from the kids.'

'I've enjoyed making friends. I've enjoyed experiencing different things for example beauty, head massage.'

'I've enjoyed meeting other Asian women and getting out of the house.'

'I've enjoyed having timeout to socialise and to pamper myself.'

'The group has helped me to build up my confidence in different social situations. I have valued the ability to express my opinions and to listen to others.'

'The group has given me the opportunity to gain more confidence and to be more assertive.'

8.7.7 Linking up with other support services

Many of the quotes above clearly indicate the support and strength that women got from each other. However, they also found it helpful knowing about and linking up with other Asian workers (particularly relevant for those who did not feel confident in their use of English) in other services. The group 'broke the ice' so that by the end of the group, women felt more able to approach other services. These included: 42nd Street, WEVH as well as complementary therapies such as Indian head massage.

8.7.8 Cultural specificity

Despite the differences within the group as discussed above, there was a strong identification as Asian women with experiences of domestic violence. They women felt that they valued the Asian women only group, as in a mixed group they reported

they would not feel as comfortable as the dynamics would change. They said they would have to explain things like religion, culture and tradition that they did not need to do in an Asian women only group. They would also have to tackle prejudices and stereotypes of Asian women's experiences and Muslim women's experiences as being oppressed. Also important to note was that one woman did attend the 'mixed' group too on a regular basis and some of the other women had also 'visited' it, for one or more sessions (which was possible as it was an open group), thus indicating a willingness to try out different forms of support.

One of the components of valuing cultural specificity was of a sense of creating a new 'community' to combat the loss and isolation they experienced in taking the decision to leave home and community. As this group member said:

'Asian women who leave home they are shafted out of the community and this is our space, we have helped to create our own community and lessen the isolation...whilst there are mixed services out there none of them cater for us... this is a unique group.'

8.7.9 Future plans

As a research intervention, it was always our hope that the group would continue in some way - either informally through women establishing networks and friendships and exchanging phone numbers and/or for the group to continue. Women have established friendships and they continue to see each other. We are particularly pleased that the research has also facilitated partnership working between 42nd Street, Saheli, Hosla and Early Years and Play beyond the project. Although plans are still being developed, currently plans are for the group to start again at the end of July 2002. Both Hosla and 42nd Street will be providing a group worker so that the group can be co-facilitated, Early Years and Play have offered a venue and 42nd Street have made some finances available to pay for transport, childcare and sessional trainers. However, it has been the determination of the women attending the group and their desire for it to continue that has been the most powerful motivator in facilitating the partnerships to work in a concrete way to support South Asian women and children surviving and escaping domestic violence.

8.8 Group for African and African-Caribbean women

The group facilitators were Shirley McIntosh and Angela Williamson, two black women of African-Caribbean heritage. They are both professionally qualified

counsellors, and experienced in running groups of various kinds.

The group met at Moss Side Children's Centre, and Manchester Metropolitan University and ran for six consecutive weeks. Early Years and Play, and The Chrysalis Project provided childcare. Notes were taken during and after each meeting in relation to the themes being researched.

8.8.1 Rationale for the group

As part of the research proposal it was our intention to establish a group that could develop ideas of support for African and African-Caribbean women who had already left violent relationships and for those who may wish to do so in the future.

The aim was to establish a group within a confidential setting in which black women would be able to share their unique experiences around domestic violence in a safe and contained environment. The facilitation of the group would be by black women but ultimately the ownership and direction of the group would be held by all group members, named facilitators and participants.

8.8.2 Accessing women for the group

In terms of setting up a group for African/ African-Caribbean we were essentially starting from scratch. In order to begin the process of accessing women for the group we began contacting and networking with various community and women's organisations. The organisations we contacted had been identified as groups who had already begun recognising and addressing the needs of black women. We were then able to contact women by arranging meetings with them either in their homes or at the local community centres they attended, to provide further information about the group, and to establish what they hoped to gain from participating.

8.8.3 Barriers to starting the group

We experienced difficulties in accessing older Caribbean women, the major barriers being women who had experienced domestic violence did not want to revisit or talk about their experiences of domestic violence. We encountered similar stories from younger women. In openly naming domestic violence, women were challenged by this, one woman stated:

'I don't want to bring it up, I would rather forget about it. I don't feel comfortable to talk about it [domestic violence] in front of people.' (African-Caribbean woman)

Fear of 'other people knowing your business' and 'who you're gonna tell' were barriers we encountered despite our many reassurances that the group would be confidential in the sense that whatever is said in the group would not be taken outside, and that as facilitators/researchers we would not be using their personal stories but reporting on themes and ideas developed by the group that would help in forming recommendations to organisations about supportive ways of setting up groups. The issues of shame and secrecy were major barriers for women accessing such a group.

8.8.4 Who accessed the group

We decided to have an open group to enable women to join at a later date. Part of this was guided by having a small number of potential group members at the start. The group, initially included potentially, two African women and two African-Caribbean women. We wanted ensure that no matter how small the numbers were it was important that for their voices to be heard.

During the duration of the group two African women, and one African-Caribbean women accessed the group; none of them had any recourse to public funds.

The two women were able to access monies through Social Services for their children but were unable to work, and experienced restrictions in applying for courses as they could not provide proof of benefit that would satisfy course requirements for free places. Their ages spanned 25 to 35.

One of the women who was over 40, had no income at all, and was relying on the generosity of friends and neighbours to feed and clothe her, and the support of local voluntary organisations, for she was facing eviction from her home, and deportation. She attended the group once because she had to be available for statutory agencies investigating her immigrations status. Her hope was to have her own home for the first time in this country:

"Having a living facility would be the first positive thing that will happen to me in this country...sometimes I doesn't sleep at night, I never believe I be in a position like this...I been living it so long, you can't communicate, you just want to be a perfect person again [prior to her experiencing domestic violence]"

Another woman was unable to find the space to attend due to familial problems.

We established regular telephone contact with all the women, to keep them up to date with developments with regard to childcare and transport arrangements, and venues, but more importantly to build on the relationships we had established with them, and to show our care and concern. After the third session the two African women had exchanged telephone numbers.

8.8.5 What helped women in accessing the group

Providing free childcare and transport enabled women to access the group. We also wanted to create an atmosphere and environment that reflected and valued the group members, and so we ensured that prior to the start of meetings the room was lit with scented candles, and refreshments were set out. The preparation of the room was one area that we felt needed to be special, as ones environment does affect how one feels about oneself and others. We also saw this careful preparation as being paramount in the ongoing personal development and valuing of the group members.

8.8.6 Themes that emerged

The major barrier to group members achieving independence was not having legal status to remain in the UK. This has ramifications for any acts of resistance that women may take against their violent ex partners. One of the women talked about her fears regarding her violent estranged husband who is seeking custody of their children, and her deportation. His actions were a direct response to her commencing divorce proceedings against him. The support group was a vital space for her to share her anxieties, but also the impending court action meant that it was not always possible for her to attend the group due to appointments with her solicitor.

Language was another barrier for one woman who had difficulty reading or understanding bills or official letters. Her violent ex partner would order consumer goods on credit using her name and address without her knowledge, which meant she was incurring debts.

8.8.7 What women valued the most

What was important for one of the participants was being believed, and having safe

place to tell her story for the first time.

'I was expecting a place to talk and listen... You really listened to me.'

I was impressed with you guys how you deal with things...I went home feeling wow!"

One of the participants led a Yoruba language workshop, where the facilitators learned various greetings in her mother tongue. She was excited at the prospect of leading a class, and commented:

'You have been very good students...Thank you very much.'

'I valued the friendly atmosphere, it was very warm.'

We obtained information about courses women were interested in which included English, Maths, and Multimedia and opportunities to teach Yoruba from a women's education and training centre based in Moss Side that provides free courses to women who have no recourse to public funds.

After the end of the group, we visited a local training centre for women to enquire about courses to enrol in English, Maths and computer skills.

8.8.8 Their hopes for the future

Both women expressed an interest in maintaining contact with the facilitators, and were keen to know if the group was going to continue. What we were able to tell them is that the research team has been in negotiations with a black social work agency about the possibility of taking over the group but nothing as yet has been finalised. There is also a possibility of a black women's organisation which has expressed an interest in providing a support group as part of their outreach service for African and African-Caribbean women around domestic violence.

8.8.9 What we as facilitators valued

Before the group had started the facilitators had toyed with the idea of having minimum group numbers, in terms of group success and effectiveness, but after the first session where two women attended, what was then valued was the quality of the group experience rather than the size of the group. Quality was chosen over quantity. We

were able to provide a safe space where we could share our experiences and stories as black women. As facilitators we helped group members to establish a network of support. One of the women told us on the last day of the group that she would like to write her story, rather than let the pain of her past eat her on the inside. She had started the process of writing about her life so that she could share her story in the future. It was a privilege to be in the group, to listen to them, and to recognise and affirm their courage and strength.

8.9 Indicators for future group work

Our accounts of the three groups conducted as part of this study, clearly demonstrates the value and benefits of group work interventions. We summarise some key pointers for group work with minoritised women.

It was important that the group facilitators visited potential group members prior to the group starting to introduce themselves, address questions and allay fears about the group (both in terms of confidentiality and reassurance that women could engage at a level that felt safe for them), to explore what women wanted from group work, issues around language and translation, and to discuss practical arrangements such as transport and childcare. Once the group had started, sometimes facilitators also kept in touch with women in between group sessions for a variety of reasons: arranging transport for the next group session, linking them into other agencies, helping women who were sharing specific skills to buy materials and so on. This conveyed a sense of care and concern as well as a valuing and affirmation that enabled women to participate in the group work.

Significantly, transport also emerged within our study as a principal enabler for women to be able to access services. Where transport was provided for them and their children they were able to join our support groups and attend on a consistent basis. All the women's support groups we set up were offered a choice of transport, which we funded, whether via public transport, taxis or their own cars (petrol paid). Such provision was regarded by the women as enormously important, and it certainly facilitated women's attendance to the groups.

In two of the support groups, the facilitators collected some women, either because they were uncomfortable coming on their own or another because of bringing children, while for other women having the fares paid was enough. Other women came together in cars or on own in taxis. For the African and African-Caribbean group, women were offered, if coming in a taxi, to be picked up by a taxi with one of the facilitators.

They had a choice of where they could be picked up, and if they were currently living in refuges we dropped them in the area but not at the door.

Far from fostering dependency, we would argue that provision of transport opened up access to this support. Indeed over time as women gained experience and confidence through coming to the groups some started to organise their own transport and come independently (or with each other). So we must emphasise that women would not have been able to attend had such transport not been provided and resourced, particularly if they were women with children, and/or women whose first language was not English or they were very new to Manchester. Significantly, these were also women who reported feeling particularly isolated, and therefore in need of the contact and support provided by the groups.

Within the support groups set up in the study, crèche workers were booked for childcare (and we would like to thank Manchester, City Council, Early Years and Play for facilitating this). The timings of the groups were structured around the school day so as not to exclude women with school age children. A number of women would not have been able to come to the groups without this. Even so, on a number of occasions women whose children were ill were unable to come to the group.

Hence both transport and child-care would appear to be crucial in facilitating women's access to support groups. Other key points to think about in organising future groups included: issues of access, keeping it casual, giving time to include new women, having information about the people who are running the group, access to information on practical advice and rights, linking women into other relevant support services, giving opportunity for women to meet other women from outside their own communities, as well as opportunities for women to meet in culturally specific groups.

In relation to mainstream versus culturally specific services, our study clearly indicates the value of having both sorts of provision. Different spaces created by the 'mix' or 'sameness' of group members offer women choices about which group(s), they want to participate in and feel supported by. This poses key challenges for workers to practice in both an anti-racist and gender sensitive way.

9 DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND MINORITISATION: WHAT WORKS?

Khatidja Chantler, Sophie Smailes, Janet Batsleer and Erica Burman

Introduction

We are aware that although we have discussed some positive interventions in relation to domestic violence and minoritisation, the overall sense of the report may appear to present a bleak picture. While not wishing to underplay the enormity of the barriers facing minoritised women living in, or fleeing violent relationships, in this chapter we would like to present interventions, formal and informal that seem to be supportive. We do this by highlighting examples of good practice emerging in different sectors. These include: low key interventions; examples from statutory services of good practice, linking up, and appropriate responses; examples from culturally specific domestic violence services; examples from 'mainstream' domestic violence services; refuge work; examples of how agencies work with women's strengths and vulnerabilities; the role of community links and networks; group work; transport and childcare; and sources of informal help.

9.1 Low key interventions

One of the things noted both by a number of workers and by a number of the survivors we interviewed was the importance of times and spaces which enabled a woman to come to her own decision about leaving or staying.

'we offer tea, coffee, condoms, needles and I don't think there has ever been a situation where a woman has just taken up the offer of going to a refuge, they are just not at that stage to go on...all we can do at some stages is say we're here and even saying you don't have to meet anybody, you can just meet an outreach worker in a cafe or she won't make you leave him, but she could discuss strategies of how to cope.' (Statutory service)

Just to be able to talk about what is going on in a relationship without pressure, time to plan what is involved in escaping are opportunities that are clearly offered by this kind of low key professional intervention, and similar points were made in several organisational interviews and also by survivors.

'Just having that one person there to feel safe enough to actually say they know it is going on and them not judging you cos you are not making a decision to move on and out of that relationship, sometimes can be a big thing.' (Culturally specific generalist service)

and:

'It's striking up that fine balance between being a professional organisation and also being a friends welcoming place ... I think that's where the friendliness of our organisation ... it's an important aspect that works.' (Culturally specific generalist service)

9.2 Statutory sector services

Statutory sector professionals can and do work successfully to provide protection from a violent partner:

'I was on the phone by then and phoned [the health visitor] and told her he's been out all night, I know I'm going to get battered ...she was in my house before he got there so when he walked in he was quite nice.' (Irish woman)

This can sometimes take persistence in working with the level of intervention by agencies that women want, as this example, from an interview conducted via interpretation indicated:

'Everyone said the health visitor helps, so she [the survivor] thought she'd tell the health visitor...So the health visitor said why is this happening to you, haven't you got someone who can help? She said she has but they all say it's not your house, you're at your husband's house, you have to stay there and be patient. So the heath visitor said how can you live like this, you are being treated unfairly, how can you live like this? If you say you've got a [family member] in Manchester you should go there. So she said if I go then everyone will say it's my fault, no-one else's. It'll be my fault, so that's why I don't want to go. So the health visitor asked did you tell you doctor what's happening to you? So she said no, I didn't tell the doctor because I didn't get a chance. So the health visitor said do you want me to tell the doctor? And she said if you want to write to me about him then you can.' (South Asian woman)

Other more immediate responses were also particularly appreciated:

'I went to the housing and they were actually really good, they went an put shutters on the house the same day.' (African Caribbean woman)

'The police alarmed us and they fitted panic buttons around the place so we were ready for him. Because of the threat when he did turn up the police turned up armed.' (Jewish woman)

'"I've got a social worker, let me ring her up, and see if she can help" ...social worker rang up, I don't know who she ring up, but she asked me to come back and say to me "quickly, a woman's got a place either in Leeds or Manchester".' (African-Caribbean woman)

It is helpful for professionals to be alert and to be aware that information they offer might not be used at the time but rather become crucial later:

'The Women's Aid Centre which is now the Women's Domestic Violence Helpline. I'd been given the number by an Irish burse in casualty. I hadn't been physically assaulted, I'd been under that much stress that I was just under 51/2 stone. I'd had a really severe migraine which had caused paralysis and blindness down one the left side of my body for about 5 days, and my husband was behaving so badly in hospital that the nurse picked up on it and she wanted me to get away... so I kept the number.' (Irish woman)

The sense of personal connection or recognition of cultural background can be important in first making contact with an agency. Hence this Irish woman recalls how the woman she spoke with was Scottish:

'I kept trying to phone the Women's Aid Helpline and they didn't have an answerphone in those days so I had no idea when there was going to be anyone these, so I kept ringing and ringing and ringing and ringing. I finally got through.. and talked to a lovely Scottish woman, an elderly one. She told me to come down and they'd sort me out.' (Irish woman)

Statutory services are vital in alerting women to available services, and in providing the 'safety net' that enables some women to take the sometimes gradual steps involved in leaving a violent relationship. The following example illustrates something of that need, for this woman's final 'leaving' was enabled by a number of different agencies, as well as her own research on the internet :

'I think it was the police who told me that there were refuges because I had no idea... I went back home. It was ok for a while... I think it was the police who told me again. I'd asked them for something to do with Jewish organisations... they told me about someone who was from [culturally specific social care agency] and this man came round to my house. We spoke in Hebrew so my husband couldn't' understand and he said I needed help to ring a number. That was years ago and I didn't call any number. He offered me support if I needed it though. In the end I didn't call, I thought I might be able to resolve it myself... then we started again.. I was looking at the computer for some reason on the internet and I noticed

something to do with Jewish Women's Aid, or Jewish something, some help and there was a number that I phoned and they put me through to the refuge. I thought it was a very good idea, so I phoned them and they had a space and I came over.' (Jewish woman)

Statutory services also help in less direct ways; two that are mentioned here are ethnic monitoring and grass-roots networking. Working alongside women with experiences of domestic violence (personal and/or professional) helps to break down barriers:

' Say for example in [name of place] is a good example, whereby the officers meet, there is quite a long standing domestic violence group of women from the local area, outreach workers that come together and it's something you have to build up over time, the trust, the rapport.' (Statutory service)

Also recognition of the need for ethnic monitoring:

'Actually recording incidents with any kind of ethnic breakdown, that is something that we've recognised we need to do and are in the process of amending our database so we can actually map out the increases in reporting to us, so we can focus our services a little bit better, because I know under-reporting is an issue right across the board but particularly where there are added difficulties [in relation to minoritisation] there will be under-reporting, and it's what we can do about that.' (Statutory service)

9.3 Culturally-specific domestic violence services

There is much in the interview and group work material that shows the enormous value of culturally specific provision:

'Because it was Jewish first of all, because they understand your needs, and you're here with the people who care about you, but it was more the staff really, they support you 24/7 - if you need them.' (Jewish woman)

Despite the diversity in terms of nationality, historical and geographical locations, this survivor powerfully illustrates the possibilities of working across differences:

'I can be myself, I can speak about Israel, speak about this and that, without them criticising me for being a foreigner. It was really good, and everyone here was a foreigner I think. There were American, Russian people, Turkish people, even English Orthodox.' (Jewish woman)

For some women culturally specific refuges allowed a welcome space to be on one's own. While this would ideally be the case in any refuge, for some women the culturally specific space meant that they could relax more:

'I will never forget that experience [of being in a culturally specific refuge] I learnt a lot about myself and other people. I got space on my own to think. you need space on your own at some times in your life, so you can think.' (African-Caribbean Woman)

In particular women valued the sense of ease at not having to explain their culture:

'I'm a Black Caribbean ...I feel more comfortable with talking to a black woman. It was a matter of feeling comfortable and it felt easier to explain to [a black support worker] than with the white women in the refuge.' (African-Caribbean)

and of course to be able to communicate in their language of choice:

'I wanted to be with women of my own culture because I feel comfortable when speaking Punjabi and Urdu, but yes I can speak English.' (South Asian woman)

We heard lots of accounts of how refuge workers negotiated good links with health workers, and dealt with benefits and other practical needs. We also documented many accounts that stressed the commitment and support offered by workers in culturally specific services that communicated a sense of care and concern that went beyond simply doing a job, and that went beyond culturally 'matched' identifications:

'I have received great help from staff when I was in the process of setting the house up. It was just very valuable and I'm really touched and the gratitude is huge. They felt like family and more, all of them at [name of refuge].' (African woman)

As documented extensively in Chapter 10, the support groups conducted as part of the research highlight the value of women supporting each other. For minoritised women some of this support is not only about finding areas of commonality across experiences of domestic violence, but also about rebuilding something of the community that they have lost through leaving their marriages.

There are also many examples of how women who have left refuges have found it useful to stay in contact with each other. As well as sometimes being a source of friction, other women are a source of enormous support within the refuges too:

'When I was in [name of refuge] I had other residents. Even though I was on my own in my

room I knew that there was contact outside.. if I walked out of my room there was contact.' (Asian woman)

9.4 'Mainstream' domestic violence services

Just as there was an expressed preference for culturally specific services, there was also a need for mainstream services. We have already illustrated above helpful interventions from statutory services, hence the ability to work inter-culturally and at the intersections of 'race', gender and class are essential for all services. As this worker said:

'She was given a choice...and I think that's what it's about' (in reference to giving a South Asian woman the choice of an Asian women's refuge or a 'mainstream' one).' (Generic domestic violence service).

The group work we conducted also illustrated the need for both culturally specific as well as 'mixed' provision. This was indicated by the clear preferences of some group members for culturally mixed rather than specific services; as well all as the enormous added benefits of insight and connection across cultures and religious backgrounds forged through the mixed as well as the specific groups.

9.5 Refuges

Refuges work with very limited resources. Here are some of their interventions that emerged as particularly useful:

'In the refuge there was a play room, a lady come in every Monday and Wednesday and the kids would go in there and just play with the woman for a couple of hours a night and you know ...they do need a lot of reassuring that everything's going to be alright ...you can relax.' (African Caribbean woman)

Given the difficulties of sharing limited space and variation in practices of standards of hygiene that inevitably arise in shared accommodation

'refuges in units, separate kitchens etc which helps' (Generic domestic violence service)

Or generally as a place of respite:

'The refuge itself ... it's a good place to go to get away, you know ... as a break.' (African-Caribbean and white English heritage)

Feeling safe and understood were often mentioned:

'It helped that you knew you were not the only one ... it helped to get away from the man. You felt because he didn't know where you were, that was a good thing.' (Irish woman in reference to staying in a refuge)

'I was a bit more relaxed because I knew I wasn't waiting for him to come home at night time and start ...I could sleep.' (Irish woman in reference to staying in a refuge)

as well as being offered helpful information and consultation

'That did help because they sat me down, sort yourself out, do you want to stay here or sort the place out for the kids?' (Irish woman in reference to usefulness of refuge worker talking to her)

9.6 Working with strengths and vulnerabilities

Recognising that women may need considerable emotional support is important:

'I wanted her to be there during counselling and I needed her almost as a prop.' (Jewish woman)

This support might need to be graduated and tailored to different points in a process:

'They will be like "what I need is someone to take control and say these are your options, you can do this, you can do this, you can do this and it will happen then" and explain every stage of the way ... cos it is a rocky time, they have to feel secure ... for them to feel confident and secure in the knowledge that you know what you are doing.' (Culturally specialist generalist service)

'Women who experience domestic violence quite often need someone to hold the edges initially, but they don't need someone to cut them up and give crutches for the rest of their lives.' (Irish woman)

It is important to document that the support really does have effects:

'Well the emotional support that I'm getting ...when I first came to the refuge, I felt empty and lost, and after a few weeks talking to [support worker], I would tell her how I felt, she would encourage me to be strong ...if I felt rotten ...I could cry with her, after a little while ...I gained self esteem ...it has helped me.' (African-Caribbean woman)

as is working with women's strengths:

'Women are not just battered women. They need services they can dip into and out of, also services that don't hold them in a victim role. ... They do need support, they do need empathy. They don't need sympathy or pity. They need someone to say wow you have survived, look how far you've come. Let them go into the pain if they want to but don't let them wallow in it.' (Irish woman)

9.7 Community links and networks

The value of community links and linking women with other services or networks was stressed by several organisations.

'It is having an awareness of the networks that are there and how to link in.' (Culturally specific generalist service)

'They get an information pack - telling them where the doctors are, it'll have bus timetables in it ... there'll be things like Gingerbread, or one parent families ... where things are, libraries and things like that just to make the transition a bit easier.' (Generic domestic violence service)

Such issues are of particular importance for minoritised women who may have lost their networks by leaving:

'the best thing you can do for women is to get them in touch with as many agencies as they need.' (Generic domestic violence service)

For culturally specific refuges or organisations, there are specific tensions in being visible within their own communities. Such organisations have often to find ways of negotiating or establishing some kind of link with orthodox or more traditional elements of their communities. This area of work can be particularly demanding and skilful. For instance, a Jewish woman spoke of setting up support groups for women going through divorce, which she is doing in consultation with the Rabbi to ensure that she isn't seen as someone breaking up families. The importance of rabbinical

permission and agreement was seen as vital:

'The Jewish law Courts said to me that I had their blessing to go ahead with it, as support network so I imagine that they would give their blessing to a refuge.'

9.8 Group work

Chapter 8 on support highlights the many beneficial effects of convening the support groups and how they contributed not only a resource for emotional support but also thereby reduced women's isolation, extended their social networks and even their skills. The sense that they began to compensate for the community links and identifications that had been lost through leaving the marital relationship in some cases moving quite significant geographical distances to maintain safety. The skills-sharing and practice advice aspects, as well as emotional support, was highly valued.

Indeed that the groups have worked is clearly indicated by the fact that at the time of writing this report it looks like at least two of them will continue in some form (according to the cultural compositions in which they were convened), but under the auspices of other organisations.

9.9 Transport and child-care

Childcare has emerged within the study as a key barrier that also contributes to women being unable to undertake training or engage in career development. While we encountered few positive examples about childcare, where it was provided parental support was indicated as helpful, as also was the support provided by refuges. As already noted, the support groups were made possible by the provision of childcare and transport, as well as structuring the timings of the groups around the school day so as not to exclude women with school age children. A number of women would not have been able to come to the groups without this.

Further the provision of transport enabled women to join and attend on a consistent basis. Choice of transport, whether via public transport, taxis or their own cars (petrol paid) was offered and taken up. Not only was the funding of such provision an initial enabler or prerequisite for participation in the group, as already previously noted (in Chapter 8), once the process of funding and in some cases arranging transport was initiated, group members began to take over responsibility for organising this and even collecting each other to come to the group. Thus both the need for, and capacity

to use, such networks of support were clearly evidenced.

9.10 Informal help

In many cases informal help - if offered - is easier to access and receive than when provided from official services. There were many moving instances of informal support recounted in the interviews.

The importance of family members was enormous, both in the decision to leave and in what happened thereafter. Some interviewees reported how they could only leave once they had secured some indication of their parents' consent (while others reported the pain of rejection). Family members were also documented as offering major financial support and practical support in the form of childcare. But where family support was not in evidence, other sources of support were highlighted.

In several of the accounts neighbours played an important role. For one woman, the only way she could give Christmas presents to her children was with the help of her neighbour. The neighbour both bought them and stored them (as the woman's partner had forbidden her from buying gifts). In another account, a neighbour who knew of the violence, checked with the woman to see if she was okay after she had seen the abuser loitering around and offered to phone the police. In yet another account as illustrated below, a neighbour's intervention challenged the abuser and helped the woman to flee:

'My next door neighbour, as he was hitting me, she's white, she saw it. and I didn't understand English or speak it, but I know this much that she said stop, why are you hitting her? Don't hit her, it's not nice ... I went secretly next door to phone the social worker. She saw that he'd hit me and she told the social worker that in front of me he hit her, that I'm a witness ...so the social worker said don't worry, I'll get my car and my car is this colour, you come outside and take the baby and the rest we'll sort out. so I knew what his sleeping time was and what time he woke and slept so I knew when all the family would sleep. So I called her and said come at this time so she came at this time and my daughter and me left the house.' (South Asian woman)

This account also shows how people in communities can and do offer vital support to women and children:

'.. woman and we used to call her Auntie L. And Auntie L used to say "as soon as X go through the door send up the kids to my house, let them eat their dinner at my home" the only

way them kids would have got fed, as they got older, there was this white and run back, that's how the kids got out of the house.' (African-Caribbean woman)

This Jewish woman was well respected within the community, but also offered support through friendship which she identifies as being different from support offered by agencies:

'The support I give any time somebody comes, they can be a friend ...they are not coming to me as a body for mental health or a body for family abuse.' (Jewish woman)

Finally even the most apparently insignificant or perfunctory offer of support can be experienced as enormously beneficial and meaningful. So when a Jewish woman moving countries to escape violence was asked by an air stewardess if she could help with her bags:

'I can't tell you what an impact it had on me. It was the first time someone offered to help me.' (Jewish woman)

10 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Erica Burman and Khatidja Chantler

This study has generated such a wealth of material that any conclusions offered here can only be preliminary and indicative, rather than exhaustive. However, even at this relatively early stage of analysis it is clear that the study has opened up key areas of inquiry and debate that have urgent and important implications for service policies and practices.

This chapter has two main sections. In Section A, we start by clarifying our claims and remit and locate our study within the national context. We also comment on broader issues posed by this study, including those of commonalities and differences, working with the ordinary and extraordinary, the dilemmas and tensions of working at the intersections of domestic violence and minoritisation, including the role of specific and mainstream services. Within this context, we also highlight the role of broadening of responsibility for responses to domestic violence. We comment on some of the issues that have arisen in our study to do with the needs of children. We move on then to discuss the 'why doesn't she leave/ why does she go back?' questions that permeate much discussion around domestic violence, and we identify key barriers facing minoritised women's access to services. We then comment on transitions to independence and suggest key developments to improve emotional support for women and children. We also offer some reflections on anti-racist working around domestic violence. Finally, we identify what we have achieved, and highlight areas for further research.

In Section B, we make some recommendations based on our analysis of the interview material and group work, as well as discussions held within our research team and steering group.

10.1 Clarifying our claims and remit

At the outset, in outlining and evaluating our claims and elaborating implications from this study, it is important to revisit what the study did, and did not, set out to investigate.

The research was conducted in three phases: a) organisational interviews with a range of statutory and voluntary organisations, generic, and specialist domestic violence

agencies, as well as mainstream and culturally specific organisations; b) in depth interviews with minoritised women surviving domestic violence, and c) the development of supported group work for minoritised survivors of domestic violence.

However, firstly, we did not set out to explore differences between minoritised and majoritised women, nor, secondly, was the study aiming to identify specific differences between minoritised groups. Rather we were concerned to explore whether the positions of and issues emerging for women from minoritised groups indicate specific additional needs that services should consider when working around domestic violence, and to indicate areas for further development that have not been sufficiently addressed up to now.

Further, while the study demonstrates the need for a wide range of strategies and modes of engagement around domestic violence provision in relation to minoritised groups, the greater likelihood of minoritised women using informal routes, and not using conventional services also need to be borne in mind.

We therefore cannot claim to have adequately documented the needs of women from any single cultural grouping (since this was not part of our brief). Equally while we imagine that this study has relevance for policy and practice development around domestic violence provision for women from backgrounds other than African, African-Caribbean, Irish and Jewish, we can only offer this work as indicative. Nevertheless key issues for provision around culturally-specific identifications and intercultural work have emerged from the study that generate specific recommendations.

10.2 The national context

What has been gained by the focus in this study on minoritisation? We have drawn upon Phoenix's (1987) characterisation of the representation of black women as a 'homegenised absence/pathologised presence' as relevant for illuminating how the general and ordinary aspects of minoritised women's needs and experiences are overlooked in favour of more culturally specific features. It is a key challenge to find ways of attending and responding to differences in (and within) minoritised women's positions that does not represent them or their cultures as either particularly vulnerable to domestic violence (as in the kinds of responses we have documented that suggest 'it's in their culture'); or as particularly invulnerable – either to domestic violence (as in 'it doesn't happen here') or to intervention ('they look after their own').

A second key challenge emerging from the study is to find ways to attend to minoritised

women's positions without representing them as particularly demanding of service resources. Indeed our analysis would suggest that, far from being over-demanding, minoritised women are severely under-supported and in some cases absolutely excluded from services. This extends also to women's own sense of entitlement which was shown to be particularly limited, as also an expression of the legacy of entrapment that forms the context for domestic violence.

The picture of services and interventions around domestic violence emerging from this study has been bifurcated: on one hand we encountered reports from some women indicating that current service provision is much better now than 20 years ago. Indeed it is a welcome change to note that there is now much more attention to and development of domestic violence policy at a national level, including key pieces of legislation such as the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, Protection from Harassment Act, 1997 and the Family Law Act, 1996. But on the other hand, it seems curious (to say the least) that never before has eligibility for service support been so heavily circumscribed, such that many women are absolutely excluded from all service and welfare support. There are still therefore many gaps in services and services for survivors of domestic violence continue to be under funded. Within this, the position of black refuges is often more vulnerable (Hague & Malos, 1999).

These gaps refer also to asymmetries between the four cultural groupings topicalised within this study. Within the local context of our investigation there were already two refuges whose provision was organised to cater for women from specific cultural backgrounds or communities (indeed they were partners in the research). In relation to the four groups that have been the focus of our study, currently there is local, specific refuge provision for African, African-Caribbean and South Asian women which needs to be maintained and developed with appropriate levels of funding in relation to the further issues we have identified here. Currently in Manchester there is no culturally-specific domestic violence service for Irish or Jewish women. Contacts with Jewish Women's Aid nationally, and the refuge in London (the only Jewish women's refuge in Europe) were one key source of participants for the study, but the absence of culturally-specific services also, paradoxically if unsurprisingly, clearly impacted on the extent to which demand for such culturally specific services can be assessed. Our efforts to make contact with Jewish survivors as well as our contact with Jewish Women's Aid suggest that there is a need for a Jewish refuge in the north of England. We would suggest that Manchester may be a possible location because it has a large Jewish community reflecting a range of religious and secular positions. In the light of the need we have identified to preserve community links, as well as the need to remain anonymous from community, Manchester would be a suitable location for a Jewish women's refuge **(see Recommendation 13).**

Hence although we did not document specific calls for culturally-specific services around domestic violence for Irish women we are not in a position to recommend that such services are not indicated, while the research has clearly indicated that a community that was previously considered too 'closed' to admit or accept services explicitly constituted around domestic violence can indeed benefit from and will use them.

Finally, as discussed at some length throughout this report, our focus on the intersection between domestic violence services and minoritisation has turned out to be particularly relevant in the context not only of current policies around 'no recourse to public funds', but also in relation to current home office plans to extend the 'one year rule' to two years. Should this extension be legislated for, it is very clear that the position of the most vulnerable and marginalised women will be made considerably worse. Despite the concessions made to the one year rule in 1999, which are intended to benefit women in abusive relationships, very little appear to have changed in practice as the level of evidence required to 'prove' domestic violence is often very difficult to get. One possibility to counter this would be for the burden of proof to rest with the Home Office rather than with minoritised women.

In the meantime, survivors of domestic violence who have no recourse to public funds still need to be supported. The new framework, 'Supporting People' does not attend to this. We also recognise that many statutory agencies are restricted in how they can support women and children in this position, (although see **Recommendations 1, 2 and 3).** However, statutory organisations can also have a key role in facilitating voluntary organisations to support women who have no recourse to public funds. Voluntary organisations themselves also have a key role to play in supporting women and campaigning to put to an end the discriminatory effects of such legislation. Women's Aid Federation is clearly well placed both to challenge such practices and to work with refuges (mainstream and culturally specific ones) to increase access to refuge space to this group. We have heard that Women's Aid Federation have allocated some money to attend to the issues of no recourse to public funds; these efforts need to be maintained and developed such that current uncertainties facing women in this position are ironed out **(see Recommendation 1, 2 and 3).**

10.3 Commonalities and differences

This study has highlighted key parallels and commonalities emerging across the positions and experiences of the women from the four cultural groupings/heritages under investigation. We regard these as indicative of the importance of attending to

experiences and positions produced through minoritisation and specific factors between groups that intersect with domestic violence. Some of these factors (e.g. money, childcare and housing) are common to all women. However, factors such as institutionalised racism make access to even such services particularly problematic for minoritised women. Other factors are specific to only some minoritised women. Hence provision around women who had immigration difficulties, especially those with 'no recourse to public funds' was identified as particularly lacking.

Notwithstanding these commonalities, there is also a clear need to recognise the asymmetry of the categories of cultural/racialised identifications and positions in current policy and political circulation, including those used within this study. Thus just because we have not focused on specificities does not mean that there are none. Rather the perspectives emerging from this study counter the tendency within current multiculturalist approaches to move too swiftly to 'cultural' explanations and overlook how such cultural and community practices function within structures and relationships of minoritisation.

We have highlighted in this study how statutory and voluntary agencies draw upon particular representations of minoritised communities (in different ways, according to the particular minority group under consideration). In this study we have shown how commonalities between women from the four minoritised groups under investigation here are produced through policies that render services less accessible, or even totally inaccessible, to minoritised women. Hence it is important to note that it is the position of minoritisation rather than a feature of the cultural, community or religious background that figures as a key barrier. To overlook this in favour of cultural or religious explanations excludes women further and justifies the reluctance of minoritised women to access services for fear of fuelling racism.

There are implications for both mainstream and culturally-specific agencies here – across both statutory and voluntary sector, and especially in the ways they 'join up' (or don't). **See recommendations 4, 4A, 5, 6 and 7.**

10.4 Domestic violence and minoritised women: The ordinary and the extraordinary

In this study, our focus on domestic violence and minoritisation has illustrated that there are key challenges in working with both domestic violence and minoritisation and the need to attend to both the ordinary and particular aspects of these.

10.4.1 Not either, but both

Our findings suggest that sometimes generalist (statutory and voluntary) services respond to the domestic violence but fail to attend sufficiently or appropriately to women's minoritised positions and identifications. In this they privilege an (assumed common) gendered experience (in this case of violence) that ignores the particular meanings and context of minoritisation. Failure to attend to this acts as a major disincentive for minoritised women to access generalist services. Alternatively, culturally-specific services are structurally positioned as less likely to attend to, or to know how to respond to, domestic violence. Here 'race' or cultural identification is privileged over gendered position. However, culturally specific services that also provided domestic violence services, engaged particularly well with both cultural idenifications and gender, and there is much that we can learn from such provisions.

One key theme emerging from this study was how broader political contexts (that structure representations and everyday, as well as service, responses to minoritised groups in Britain) influence how able the women interviewed in this study were to access services. There are clear implications for the ways in which generalist and culturally specialist services should work together to counter the structural absences or areas of likely oversight within their provision and delivery.

Here we might note how the particularly potent intersection around gender roles transgressed by domestic violence and minority community identification that was seen to circulate within provider accounts threatens to leave such women without any provision. **(See Recommendations 5 and 6 to counter some such outcomes).**

10.4.2 The mundane and the sensational

It is clear from this study that working around both domestic violence and minoritisation poses services key dilemmas in according each aspect its appropriate significance. In conducting this study we were aware of the dangers of fuelling stereotypes of cultural minorities in ways which both ignore commonalities between minoritised and majoritised populations, and which privilege the more unusual or extreme instances of abuse over the everyday ways that women are abused, trapped or unsupported. Many of the most acute gaps in resources we have identified are precisely those that majoritised women also face. It is important to remember that practical, material obstacles to leaving violent relationships and gaining economic (and other forms of) independence such as money, childcare, transport affect minoritised women more acutely given current and historical structures of privileges.

10.4.3 The physical and the emotional

A third key dimension that is often treated as a dichotomy is that between physical and emotional abuse, with physical abuse typically treated as more serious. One reason for this is that that emotional abuse is sometimes assumed (or even normalised), for all physical abuse also involves emotional abuse. But it is also perhaps inevitable that services respond to the more visible effects of abuse. It is therefore a key challenge for services to acknowledge the immediate and sometimes long term effects generated by domestic violence, that may not only include physical injury and disability, but also sometimes quite severe distress (see section on support below). The invisibility of emotional abuse is also a major issue when women are required to prove that they have experienced domestic violence and therefore has implications for police forces, criminal prosecution services and the Home Office **(see Recommendation 7).**

10.5 Mainstream and specific services

The accounts generated from the study – from both service providers and users - overwhelmingly indicate both major misunderstandings arising from misplaced assumptions about 'culture' *and* that mainstream services may be preferred or experienced as more accessible, both in terms of their gender-sensitivity and in terms of minoritised women's concerns about potential compromises to their anonymity through close community associations of culturally specific services. It is also important to note that culturally-specialist provisions may be dependent on their communities for their funding and may therefore be constrained in relation to how overt they can be in their interventions around domestic violence (c.f. 'softly, softly' in Chapter 5). However, mainstream services need also to be anti-racist to respond better to the needs of minoritised women and children. Indeed, we documented many examples of racisms that survivors had experienced within refuge settings. Such experiences force women to choose between racist abuse and domestic violence and clearly neither are acceptable. This form of replicating abuse within helping environments does not appear to be well understood. However, we would not wish to indicate that refuges were the only places where racisms were manifested, indeed the conceptualisations in many agencies of domestic violence and minoritisation served to make the needs of minoritised women and children invisible.

Unsurprisingly, then, preferences for 'mainstream' services are alongside an equally vociferous call for culturally-specific provision, and there are many very positive evaluations of such services from survivors' accounts.

What is very clear is that there needs to be choice with regard to provision of services – and that these should respond both to domestic violence and minoritisation. Hence responsibility of services for minoritised women and children needs to be broadened to include statutory and voluntary agencies, mainstream and culturally specific services.

10.6 Broadening responsibility

There is also an issue about broadening responsibility for the prevention of, and general culture of non-intervention around, domestic violence more widely at a community, and social level as well as at an organisational level. Often where there was intervention – formal or informal - survivors reported these as making a big difference to them (see Chapter 9). Whereas we acknowledge and understand that specific agencies such as social services have a child protection focus, in order to respond to the multi-dimensional nature of domestic violence, a more holistic approach is required. The creation of multi-agency or inter-agency forums are about fostering better partnership arrangements. However, these arrangements need to be translated into concrete and tangible benefits for women and children surviving domestic violence. One way in which this could be done is by a more formal linking of key professionals such as health visitors or community psychiatric nurses with refuge and other domestic violence services. Clearly, such an involvement should not be about the increased monitoring of minoritised women and children, but as a way to facilitate access to relevant support **(see Recommendations 4, 4A and 5).** These interventions will potentially be of benefit to all women surviving domestic violence.

As well as formal interventions from agencies, informal support offered by friends, neighbours and family was also reported very positively by survivors. In keeping with informal support, there is the potential to develop volunteer schemes to support the work of domestic violence agencies. This is already being developed in some domestic violence services and appears to be much valued by both volunteers and service users.

10.7 Children

Chapter 6 highlighted the complex intersections between gender roles and minoritisation in dealing with women's positions as mothers in the context of violence. In this we documented how current practices often fail to deal with the complexity of how violence impacts on both women and their children, and tends to organise interventions, including provision, in rather dichotomised ways. In contexts of violence generally, even when they are not directly subjected to violence, children

can be used by abusers as tools to regulate the mother. In terms of minoritised women, this can take additional forms. While concerns for children often prompt women to leave, questions not only of maternal reputation within community but also how this impacts on children's current and future educational and marriage prospects also figured potently in the accounts as disincentives to women to escape the abusive relationship.

Examples from this study illustrate how this is intensified for minoritised women, both in terms of the greater fear and stigma in approaching services, alongside the acknowledgement that such fears – e.g. that children will be taken away from mothers – are well founded, especially in the case of minoritised families. Issues around contact as an arena for abusers to trace and identify women as an opportunity to abuse women further were particularly highlighted. Beyond this, our research material also highlighted how immigration status intersected with abusers' tactics, such that children could be abducted to countries of origin and in some cases not returned. Here the vagaries of differential national application of different treaties and agreements come into play, with clear scope for particular institutional racisms to figure in the pursuit of these custody claims. It was disturbing to note that several women who had initiated divorce proceedings had ex-partners who were pushing for them to be deported and contesting custody.

As well as highlighting how children figure in the regulation of women's negotiation and resistance to violence, there are clear implications from this study for provision for children. This includes how children are provided for in refuges – since refuges are a provision for children as well as women leaving violent relationships. Given scarce resources it was pleasing to hear accounts of how dedicated child workers were invaluable, also in providing some respite to women who would otherwise have continuous care of their children in often very crowded environments **(Recommendation 19).** However there are also indications from the study about the need to attend to the severe distress that exposure to violence and dislocation can generate for children **(Recommendations 10 and 11).**

One potent idea that circulates in popular and professional accounts concerns 'cycles of abuse', and this was evident in both professional and survivor accounts. We have offered a critique of this as a theory, and would seek to challenge the ways this notion enters into professional, parental and sometimes children's own anxieties. One key and unhelpful aspect of this concerns its gender and aged aspects that forms part of the rationale for the exclusion of male children over 13 from refuges **(see Recommendation 12).**

10.8 'Why doesn't she leave'/'Why does she go back?'

Much of the debate that permeates domestic violence appears to focus on two central questions: 'why doesn't she leave/why does she go back?'. The survivor accounts informing our analysis challenge the view that women are only independent or show strength when they leave abusive relationships, and we have documented a range of strategies that women use for survival *within* abusive relationships. Supporting women to stay if that is what they feel would best meet their own and their children's needs can present challenges to workers who may feel that in some way they are colluding with the abuse. However, it is very clear from the survivor accounts that spaces where they can think and maintain control over their help-seeking processes are crucial.

Survivor accounts report refuges as both enormously helpful and supportive as well as problematic. We have documented these experiences in Chapter 7 and for now would wish to stress that attending to the physical environment of refuges, as well as to the nature and extent of support available is vital **(see recommendations 14, 15 and 16).** We also recognise that this will not be feasible unless a substantial financial investment is made to improve refuge and related domestic violence services.

Issues of cultural identifications also figure within survivor accounts, and again these are mixed. So whereas on the one hand the oppressiveness of community structures are commented on by both survivors and agencies, survivors were also more likely to discuss feelings of loss and abandonment associated with having to leave their communities. So in the design of service interventions to support minoritised women and their children (as cultural identifications also emerged as a salient issue in discussions about children) surviving domestic violence, both the oppressiveness and more positive involvement in community life need to be engaged with. Further, it needs to be noted that for some minoritised women, losing all contact with their community can intensify isolation and lead to them returning to violent relationships. Alternatively, this anticipated loss may be a powerful factor in why minoritised women may stay in an abusive relationship.

The barriers facing minoritised women accessing domestic violence are enormous and we have documented these in Chapters 4 and 5 – whether they stay or leave relationships. These include material disadvantages such as poverty, housing, racism, sexism etc. Furthermore, the fear of being found and fear of further attacks is also well founded as evidenced by the 1996 BCS where women who have left an abusive relationship are at increased risk of attack from their perpetrators. For minoritised communities, the smallness of community networks makes this well founded fear more acute. Hence the notion that the abuse would stop if only she were to leave the relationship is based on a false premise.

Additionally, we should point out that perpetrators frequently invite agencies to collude with them, as indicated in our study in a number of ways. Abusers were skilfully able to use multiple strategies, including many non-physical ones, in a way which emphasises the relevance of the feminist definition of domestic violence as a process of control and power. This is illustrated in our accounts via perpetrators 'using' children to 'get back' at the mother, accusations of bad mothering with ensuing threats to have the children removed, calling upon the sanctity of cultural/religious practices to control women, using male privilege to allege that women are mentally unstable, threatening to deport women if they did not behave, and scaring women into isolation for (often legitimate) fear of receiving racist treatment from agencies. An alertness to invitations to collude with perpetrators is therefore essential as many such invitations are specifically influenced by positions of minoritisation **(see Recommendation 5).**

It is very clear from the survivor accounts that, whether women stay or leave, they demonstrate resilience, resourcefulness and courage despite the barriers they face.

10.9 Transitions to independence

We challenge traditional notions of 'independence' and being 'dependent' and suggest instead that notions of *inter-dependency* may be more useful in supporting minoritised women and children. Such an approach recognises both the strengths as well as the vulnerabilities of women and children survivors of domestic violence. Hence a careful balance needs to be worked with which recognises that there may be key points where a greater dependency on workers and services is appropriate for women to move towards 'independence'. Clearly such support should not undermine the strengths of women, but respond sensitively to what may be required. Indeed many women within our study reported not having had access to sufficient practical or emotional support.

This is important to point out that notions of independence (including of bodies such as ESF) and government policy (e.g. New Deal) tend to encourage economic independence without taking adequate regard of the low wages on offer, lack of adequate childcare, racism and sexism in the workplace, and so on. Similarly, notions of emotional independence can come to be associated with isolation which is itself a major barrier to independence. These, together with under funding of domestic violence services may well contribute to services' needs to 'push' women into a certain model of independence. The paradox of women who have no recourse to public funds and therefore cannot move to independence economically, or even to access services e.g. refuges is an urgent gap and action should be taken to rectify this **(see Recommendations 1, 2 and 3).**

We provide evidence in the report which would support the promotion of interdependency based on mutual sharing and support, as was indicated by supportive relationships with women in refuges, in our group work, and in instances involving positive family interventions.

10.10 Support

The group work conducted as part of the research strongly indicates the need for such support to be developed. Even with limitations on the form and duration of the groups, there is clear evidence that supported groups are successful and desirable as being helpful to women making the transition **(see Recommendation 9).**

In addition to group work, the survivor accounts also indicate the need for more in depth emotional support such as counselling **(Recommendation 8)**. It is vital that such services attend to both domestic violence and minoritisation. Some of the survivor accounts, as well as the documented links between mental distress and domestic violence (e.g. Davar, 1999, ReSisters, 2002, Campbell and Soeken, 1999; Landenberger, 1989), would indicate that provision needs to address the severe mental health difficulties – both acute and long term - associated with domestic violence, including how experiences of racism have traditionally exacerbated such difficulties and rendered services less accessible. It is important to note such women are usually denied access to refuge provision (understandably, within existing resourcing). The need for specialist refuge provision which is equipped to respond to such needs is therefore also indicated **(see Recommendation 11).**

Women also require practical information about how the child protection system works, and how to access services. They may also need information regarding the effects of domestic violence on children as being open to mediation and not indicative of permanent psychological damage. They may also need help in understanding and enabling their relationships with their children.

10.11 Anti-racist working around domestic violence: Some research reflections

Through this study we have come to appreciate how domestic violence and anti-racist work challenge each other, highlighting what is at stake in taking seriously differences between women as structured through processes and relations of minoritisation (including its complex relations with class positions). This issue linked

not only to our experiences of conducting the research, in terms of building intercultural working relationships in complex institutional and cross-institutional contexts, but it also related to the fact that all our participants in the research (practitioners as well as users) were women. While typically women working with women has been constituted as a site of safety, anti-racist work is often perceived to be an arena of anxiety.

This study has challenged two key sets of assumptions: firstly. the assumed commonality or shared experiences between women (that is perhaps one of the key cultural norms of domestic violence work), and secondly, the starting point of radical difference or assumed incomprehension supposedly constructed by culture that informs some antiracist (as also postmodern) approaches, such that cross-or inter-cultural relations are presumed to be difficult if at all possible. Working at the intersection of both these 'cultural norms' (of safety and risk perhaps) produces key opportunities for the re-evaluation of each. Privileging either gender over culture, or culture/'race' over gender can produce key barriers and obstacles for the design and delivery of services. As many feminist theorists acknowledge, spurious assumptions of similarity can be as exclusionary in their effects (in overlooking differences) as can assumptions of differences. This is irrespective of whether such differences are: presumed to make relationship impossible (with language provision as clearly only a prerequisite and not sufficient condition here); or else, secondly, arise from a failure of engagement generated by the fear of 'getting it wrong'; or thirdly, at worst of being experienced as – or accused of being - racist.

We recognise from our own experiences that working around either domestic violence or racism is often uncomfortable if not distressing. Working around both (as either a culturally mainstream or specific, or generic or domestic violence-specialist service) may so challenge workers' senses of any safe space from which to build working relationships that they may disengage (or refer on) rather than intervene. However this study also documents the effects of this crucial intersection, such that service defences interact with (and often fulfil) minoritised women's anxieties about approaching services and so prevents access to and delivery of appropriate support.

The implications from this therefore concern not only how mainstream agencies need to be sensitive to how community responses are also structured by minoritised position within local contexts (i.e. avoiding explanations that are culture or religion-blaming), but also how they understand, and warrant, their interventions.

Hence there is a need therefore for services to avoid replicating gender oppression by subscribing to supposed culturally specific norms that justify women's oppression. Equally there is a need for services to avoid replicating racism in relation to domestic

violence for fear of being racist, and so not intervening.

10.12 What we have achieved

This has been an intensive study of a complex set of issues that was conducted over a very condensed timeframe. In addition to all the other policy and practical recommendations we have generated that relate to the claims and achievements of the study, the following pointers are relevant:

1. Some experiences of previously invisible minoritised women (e.g. Jewish and Irish women) have been documented.

2. We have challenged certain stereotypes through the conjoint attention across different minoritised groups. Hence shame emerged as not only an attribute (if at all) of South Asian women; nor (to counter another commonly held view) were only African-Caribbean women strong and fought back.

3. The design of the study in crossing the traditional black/white divide and instead focusing on minoritisation rather than culture, while not without some risks (for example of de-emphasising particular forms of racism/oppression), does appear to offer fruitful strategies for overcoming 'race' anxiety.

4. The study has challenged notions of in/dependence that currently circulate within economic and psychological models by situating them in relation to culture and critiquing cultural stereotypes, and the ways that agencies collude in them.

5. The study has shown a clear demand for culturally specific as well as mainstream services, and how these are not alternatives but rather should both be assumed to be necessary. (Indeed the fact that some women participants in the group work accessed more than one group simultaneously, and so indicated preference for both culturally-specific and intercultural services, should be taken into account here.)

6. We have benefited from the constitution and committed participation of a steering group that brought together key 'players' within the local context around domestic violence service provision. Such cross agency and cross-institutional arenas – especially where they are not focused around resource allocation - seem to be particularly fruitful for generating and sustaining partnerships.

7. Last but definitely not least, through the work of the study, in addition to indicating

some ways forward to service development we have also added to provision, not only during the lifetime of the project but also beyond it. Thus our research interventions have become sustainable through facilitating better partnership arrangements between existing agencies who have come forward to take over at least one of the support groups, (42nd Street, Hosla and Saheli) with indications for development for the others currently under negotiation e.g. the Black women's refuge and Chrysalis.

10.13 Areas for further research

In the course of this study, we have identified key themes, some of which we have highlighted in this report, but which merit further research.

1. In this report we have not specifically focused upon or addressed service responses to or needs around sexual violence, although it should be noted that the study has generated much evidence about this that time constraints have prevented us from making a specific focus of analysis. This is clearly a key area calling for further work with important service implications.

2. Within this study we have not documented the needs of disabled women and children experiencing domestic violence. We are also aware that the wider domestic violence literature is remarkably silent on this issue, rendering their needs as invisible. This is a significant gap which needs further work.

3. Contact arrangements between fathers and mothers over access to children emerged as a key site for men to attempt to coerce women to return to abusive relationships. This clearly poses key dilemmas for maintaining women's (and children's) safety alongside children's and parents' rights and needs for maintaining contact. The abuse enacted through contact arrangements documented within this study was made possible in part by virtue of the women's minoritised position, making this a key area of intersection between domestic violence and minoritisation. Further study to inform appropriate policy and service intervention is clearly indicated to inform better formulation of and application of cross-national custody and extradition arrangements.

4. While we are not in a position to draw any conclusions about this, the secret location of refuges and the possibility that this might in itself be replicating abuse (Haaken and Yragui, in press) merits further research. The key rationale for secrecy is to protect women and children from further attacks and this needs to remain

the central priority. Furthermore, Haaken and Yragui's work is based in the US and clearly the UK has a different context, especially around discourses and practices of minoritisation. Most immediate of these is to do with scale and size. The fear of further attacks, especially for women who come from minoritised communities where networks are normally smaller would need to be balanced against the benefits of greater openness of refuges. This may link with ideas around broadening responsibility for domestic violence interventions.

4. A key topic for further study indicated here is what happens to those women who are evicted from refuges.

5. Our study also indicates the need for a further exploration of inter-dependency as current notions of 'independence' and being 'dependent' appear to have particular cultural and gendered meanings. Linked to this are possibilities that such notions may also vary between different generations, histories of immigration and settlement, level of 'acculturation' and so on. How such an analysis might then contribute to refuges, outreach and after care services (as well as other institutions) understandings of 'independence' would also merit further work.

6. Given the perspective elaborated above on the gendered and racialised meanings of risk and safety which are of particular relevance in relation to current notions of asylum (which bring together immigration and emotional support issues), more detailed analysis of women's accounts of refuge provision could focus in particular on how the meanings accorded notions of 'refuge' and 'asylum' structure their accounts.

7. A clear methodological as well as psychological question posed within this study is whether or how to analyse women's accounts of using refuge provision in relation to the emotional states they were in at the time. This question engages with provision issues relating to the needs for refuge provision to be resourced to deal with women in acute states of distress including severe mental health difficulties.

8. Since we have drawn on our analysis of researcher dynamics to inform our understand of workers' positions and experiences in working around (racialised and sexualised) abuse, there is clearly much more work to do on this.

B. Recommendations

The following recommendations have been formulated on the basis of the discussions, evidence and analysis presented in this report. Whilst they have emerged from the positions and process of four minoritised groups of women in relation to domestic violence, clearly there are links with wider issues of 'race', gender, class and domestic violence policy and practice. Specifically, attention is drawn to the need to challenge racism, sexism and class oppression at all levels, both locally and beyond, including legislation and national policies which disadvantage and oppress minoritised women and children. This will also have the effect of improving services for all women and children in violent relationships who are seeking support. Hence some of our recommendations will have a wider applicability.

Our recommendations are aimed at a variety of organisations a) key statutory organisations such as health services, social services, education, housing and the police and b) Women's Aid Federation and domestic violence services (mainstream and culturally specific).

Recommendation 1

To provide services to women who have no recourse to public funds

Aim: Women who have no recourse to public funds are unable to access refuges and other services. This leaves them and their children extremely vulnerable. Changes in the law are needed and refuge provision should be extended. Women also require information about how to use current legal frameworks to protect themselves and their children.

Recommendation 2

To develop a national and local immigration welfare fund to support women experiencing domestic violence who have no recourse to public funds

Aim: To counter the discriminatory effects of the current exclusions to public funds via the establishment of a non-stigmatising, accessible source of funds, to respond to the needs of women who have no recourse to public funds.

Recommendation 3

To identify children whose mothers have no recourse to public funds as a 'child in need' as defined in the Children Act and to make mandatory the use of Section 17 monies to support them

Aim: To try to ensue the safety and well being of children and their mothers and to

counteract the inconsistencies in the use of Section 17 monies in relation to children within this group.

Recommendation 4

To broaden responsibility for the provision of domestic violence services

Aim: To better share the work of supporting women and children experiencing domestic violence amongst key agencies, reflecting the multi-dimensional nature of effective domestic violence support.

Such a strategy should focus on working in partnership with refuge, outreach and after-care workers to enhance support being offered to women in contact with domestic violence services. To make this partnership concrete and tangible, it is further recommended that:

Recommendation 4A

Workers should be nominated from relevant agencies (health, education, social services, housing, police) to work with specific refuges, after-care and outreach services

Aim: To work towards providing more holistic services taking into account that many women experiencing domestic violence may have complex needs involving a range of organisations. Hence, for example, a named health visitor or community psychiatric nurse with a domestic violence brief can facilitate appropriate referrals and access support services, and build trust between statutory agencies and minoritised women and children.

Recommendation 5

The development and implementation of a staff development strategy

Aim: To help workers in a range of organisations develop sound gender-sensitive, anti-racist practice and to work competently and confidently with minoritised women experiencing domestic violence. Such a strategy should enable workers to understand the inter-sectionality of racism, sexism, class and other oppressions (on themselves and others), contextualising issues of 'culture' and domestic violence within these structures, developing ways of working which neither privilege culture over gender, or gender over culture. These understandings can make a significant contribution to working inter-culturally. Training and development should be seen as an ongoing activity that feeds back into review and revision of policy. Further, detailed policy and procedures that specify practice in respect of the needs of minoritised communities should be seen as central to the development of good practice.

Recommendation 6

The adoption of a shared definition of domestic violence at multi/ inter-agency levels that explicitly reflects diversity within communities

Aim: To use definitions of domestic violence creatively (rather than in restricting and pathologising ways) to extend services to marginalised groups and to make explicit that domestic violence includes family violence as well as violence within same sex relationships.

Recommendation 7

To consider ways in which emotional and psychological abuse can be made more visible

Aim: To find ways to ensure emotional/psychological abuse is 'counted' - as these are currently made invisible by court, police, immigration etc processes in favour of physical and sexual violence.

Recommendation 8

The development of a minoritised women's counselling and complementary therapy service

Aim: To respond to the needs of minoritised survivors for emotional support, and confidential counselling by developing and drawing upon non-medicalised, gender-sensitive and anti-racist ways of working, ensuring that staff reflect a range of minoritsed backgrounds. The development of such services needs to go hand in hand with mainstream initiatives, so that minoritised women are offered choice about the sort of provision they want to access.

Recommendation 9

The development of women's survivor groups

Aim: To enable women to develop and sustain supportive networks with other women to combat isolation, share experiences and build on survivors' strengths. The development of such groups should include both 'mixed' (in terms of cultural heritage) as well as culturally specific groups. Particular attention also need to be paid to issues of transport and childcare to facilitate women's access to support.

Recommendation 10

The development of a minoritised children's and young people's therapy service

Aim: To acknowledge and respond to the effects of domestic violence by developing an gender-sensitive, anti-racist, child-centred approach to working with children and young people. Children can be deeply affected by their experiences of domestic

violence. Current refuge provision for play therapy, group work and individual counselling should be extended to accommodate the range of needs children will have. The aim of this provision is to mediate the effects of domestic violence through enabling space for reflection and through challenging the assumption of inevitable and enduring harm. See also Recommendation 8 for mainstream/specialist issues.

Recommendation 11

Specialist refuge provision for women and children who exhibit extreme behaviours

Aim: Women and children who may be the least able to negotiate independence because they have severe mental health problems and exhibit extreme forms of behaviour are currently excluded from refuges. Whether their difficulties are primarily related to their experiences of domestic violence or not, it is crucial to provide specialist support during this time.

Recommendation 12

Refuge provision for women with older male children

Aim: Women with older male children cannot currently access most refuges and as such these children are excluded from a range of services that may be crucial to ensuring their future well-being. They may also be left to reside with the abuser. In order to extend the opportunities for all children who have lived with domestic violence provision should be extended to include older male children as well.

Recommendation 13

Specialist refuge provision for minoritised communities

Aim: In order to support women and children from the range of minoritised communities then existing specialist refuge provision (i.e. for African, African Caribbean women and South Asian women) must be maintained and better resourced. Early indicators suggest the need for a Jewish women's refuge to be developed locally. Women should have greater choices regarding culturally specific and culturally generic refuges and services.

Recommendation 14

To invest in improving the physical environment of refuges

Aim: To consider upgrading refuge provision so that amenities such as kitchens and bathrooms do not have to be shared and to ensure that refuges are able to accommodate larger families, as well as women or children with disabilities.

Recommendation 15

To ensure staffing levels in outreach, refuges, after-care and

related domestic violence services reflect the needs of women and children at various stages in their transitions to independence

Aim: To counter the traditional under-funding of domestic violence services, particularly of black refuges, and to offer more intensive support at key transitional points such as when women enter refuges and when they leave, and to consider the provision of workers after hours.

Recommendation 16

To consider the setting up of second stage supported housing for minoritised women and their children

Aim: To provide additional practical and emotional support for women who face additional barriers, for example in relation to no recourse to public funds, English as a second language, women with mental health difficulties etc.

Recommendation 17

Non-managerial case-work supervision and support for domestic violence workers

Aim: To support workers and ensure safe practice to address the complexities of working not only with issues of 'race', gender and class, but also domestic violence.

Recommendation 18

To improve ways in which minoritised women can access the labour market by facilitating training opportunities without benefits becoming affected

Aim: To remove the disincentives that prevent women from participating in training which would support their transitions to economic independence, including the provision of training grants for women in as well as out of violent relationships.

Recommendation 19

Affordable, accessible child-care

Aim: To develop networks of support for minoritised children, to break down isolation, encouraging participation in local communities, and to support mothers.

Recommendation 20

To include 'Jewish' as a category for ethnic monitoring

Aim: To counter the current invisbility of Jewish people within current service monitoring procedures.

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APPENDICES

Compiled by Hindene Shirley McIntosh

Appendix 1:
Participating organisations and interview schedule

List of primary organisations invited to participate in the research

1. Drug Liaison Midwife, Health
2. Greater Manchester Police
3. Health Visitors - North Manchester
4. Homeless Families Section (Manchester City Council)
5. Irish Community Care
6. Irish Workers Group (Formed For The Purposes Of The Research Project)
7. Jewish Women's Aid Refuge
8. Manchester Jewish Federation
9. Manchester Women's Domestic Violence Helpline
10. North Manchester Refuge (Women's Aid)
11. Saheli Asian Women's Refuge
12. Social Services (Manchester City Council)
13. Sojurners House: Refuge For African And Caribbean Women

List of secondary contacts

1. 42nd Street
2. Accident & Emergency (Manchester Royal Infirmary)
3. African-Caribbean Mental Health Services
4. Commission For Racial Equality
5. Health Authorities
6. Homelessness Agencies
7. Hosla (Asian Women's Domestic Violence Outreach Project)
8. Jalna Hanmer (International Centre for the Study of Violence and Abuse, University of Sunderland)
9. Jewish Women's Aid
10. Manchester CAB
11. Manchester Inter Agency Project
12. Manchester Rape Crisis

13. Manchester Refugee Support Network
14. Partners Of Prisoners
15. Phoenix Project
16. Safe In The City
17. Saheli's Outreach Project
18. Saint Mary's Sexual Assault Centre
19. Salford Multi-Agency Forum
20. Salford Victim Support
21. Salford Women's Refuge
22. South Manchester Law Centre
23. St Mary's Sexual Assault Centre
24. The Bibini Centre Project
25. The Chrysalis Project
26. The Winnicott Centre

Interview schedule for organisations

Outline of project and target group, including our understanding of minoritisation - (highlighting the needs of African-Caribbean, South Asian, Irish and Jewish women).

Understanding of domestic violence

1. What is your organisations understanding or definition of domestic violence?
2. Thinking about your agency that works with eg .....
   a) What do you think the impact of domestic violence is on these women?
   b) What do you think the impact of DV is on women of African-Caribbean, Jewish and Irish origin?
   c) In what ways are these experiences similar and different to women from majority groups?
3. How do you think issues of domestic violence impacts on children?

Access to services

4. What services does your organisation provide for minoritised women and children escaping domestic violence?
5. What barriers do you think minoritised women and their children experience in accessing your service?

6. Are there any specialised services within your organisation for children? If so, what are they?
7. What do you experience as the gaps in service provision for minoritised women and children?
8. Does your organisation do ethnic monitoring, if so, how do you keep records?

Transitions to independence

9. We are particularly interested in looking at what helps women in their transition to independence, therefore, what type of support do you feel minoritised women and their children escaping domestic violence need in their transition to independence?
10. In what ways do you think your organisation supports women towards independence?
11. How does your agency work with short and long term needs of women and children?
12. Which of these services or networks do you think are particularly helpful? Do you think that services could be improved, if so what would help in this process?
13. Do you have any final comments, or want to add anything that you feel is relevant.
14. Is there anything you want to ask us?

Appendix 2:
Profile of survivors interviewed and interview schedule

Profile of survivors interviewed

Ethnicity	Age	Where they were born	Children	English spoken	Immigration Issuess/ No recourse to public funds
African	20-30	African country	2	Yes	Yes
African	30-40	African country	3	Yes	Yes
African-Caribbean	40-50	England	3	Yes	No
African-Caribbean	20-35	Caribbean country	1	Yes	Yes
African-Caribbean and English heritage	20-35	England	1	Yes	No
Black (ethnicity not known)	20-30	England	None	Yes	No
Irish	40-55	Ireland	2	Yes	No
Irish	40-55	Ireland	5	Yes	No
Irish	40-55	Ireland	None	Yes	No
Irish/ Jewish	50-60	Northern Ireland	8	Yes	No
Jewish	40-55	Withheld	1	Yes	Yes
Jewish	40-55	Withheld	2	Yes	Yes
Jewish	30-40	Eastern Europe	1	Yes	No
Jewish	50-60	Britain	1	Yes	No
Jewish	30-40	South America	1	Yes	No
South Asian	30-35	England	2	Yes	No
South Asian	35-40	Bangladesh	1	No	Yes
South Asian	35-40	Pakistan	4	No	Yes
South Asian	20-30	Britain	2	Yes	No
South Asian	35-45	Pakistan	1	No	Yes
South Asian	35-40	Bangladesh	4	Yes	No
South Asian	30-35	Pakistani	2	Yes	No
South Asian	20-25	Britain	None	Yes	No

Survivor interview schedule

Pathways into/access to services

Introducing the research area and asking how interviewee would identify herself.

1. I was wondering in what ways if any your being a ... woman has affected getting help from organisations?
2. Who did you go to for help (informal and formal) and how did you contact them?
3. How did you know where to go/who to go to?

Current Provision/present status

4. How are you being supported now?
5. We are particularly interested in what might support you to independence and would like to know what your present needs are.

Children

6. How do you think your experience might be different from women with children/without children and how do you think this affected the support you have received from agencies and service providers?
7. What help do you think children need when escaping domestic violence?
8. Which services did you find helpful in supporting you and your children and how?
   a) what were the difficulties and;
   b) what could have helped?

Barriers and Gaps

9. In your experience what were, and are, the barriers and what are the gaps to getting support from organisations (short and long term needs)?
10. What did you find useful, what didn't you find useful, and what would have helped (past, present and future)? (to include contact with services, what improvement services can make etc)

Groups

11. Would you be interested in being part of a support group and who would you like to be in that support group?
12. What would be useful for you/the group to focus on?
13. What issues would be of concern to you in accessing a support group? (Transport, location, childcare, confidentiality, etc.)

Experience

14. While we've been talking you've mentioned... as being part of domestic violence. Is there anything else you think helping agencies should consider as being part of domestic violence?
15. Is there anything you would like to ask or any comments you like to make?

Thanks

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