

This is the accepted version of the following article: Bowstead JC. 2017. *Segmented journeys, fragmented lives: Women's forced migration to escape domestic violence*. Journal of Gender-Based Violence

Segmented journeys, fragmented lives: Women's forced migration to escape domestic violence

Abstract

Women's journeys to escape domestic violence can be understood both as active strategies to achieve safety, and as a forced migration during which women experience both force from the abuser, and the impact of agencies and authorities. This article explores the diverse trajectories of individual women's journeys from abuse, drawing on a mixed methods research project within the United Kingdom. It involved analysis and mapping of six years of administrative data from housing-related support services, interviews with 20 women in seven locations in the Midlands, Southern England and London, groupwork with nine women in the Midlands and South Coast, surveys with 34 women in domestic violence services and on 267 calls to the National Domestic Violence Helpline, and interviews with workers in services in eight locations. Drawing on 20 women's narratives and journey graphs over time and distance, the article presents details of three women's journeys to illustrate how complex, segmented journeys are often made more fragmented by aspects of policy and practice. More effective responses could mean that women and children only make the journeys that are strictly necessary, and are more smoothly and swiftly able to move to where they can settle and rebuild their fragmented lives.

Keywords: abused women; risk; needs; housing; mobility

Introduction

Women's domestic violence journeys away from abuse and towards safety and autonomy can be considered in both metaphorical and literal ways. This article focuses on women's literal journeys away from domestic violence, and examines the extent and nature of these journeys, from the perspectives of individual women. The wider research project uses administrative data from housing-related support services in England to quantify and map the distances and directions

travelled, giving a measure of the journeys by over 18,000 women accompanied by over 18,000 children every year (Bowstead, 2015a). That large-scale analysis identified how individualised the journeys are, and this article focuses on women's accounts of their particular journeys to highlight degrees of force and agency in women's strategies (Flinck et al., 2005; Goodman et al., 2005; Mitra, 2013), and the distinctive trajectories that result. Whilst recognising women's agency in escaping the abuse (Davis, 2002; Hydén, 2005), the research also conceptualises the journeys as a forced migration (Turton, 2003), involving woman and children's internal displacement within the United Kingdom. The conceptualisation of women's relocation as a forced migration is discussed in detail elsewhere (Bowstead, 2015a; 2016), but it is important that force and agency are conceived of as opposite poles of a continuum, rather than discrete categories; recognising that women's narratives include "tightrope talk" (McKenzie-Mohr and LaFrance, 2011, p.49) in attempting to negotiate both agency and blame and make meaning of their experiences. The journeys are understood as particular stages towards women's "goals to create safe, adequate, and long-term homes for themselves and their children" (Tutty et al., 2013, p.1514), rather than just about immediate safety and protection; and as a result "diverse resistance strategies" (Ponic et al., 2011, p.1592) are recognised. Following such research from elsewhere, this research therefore draws on some of these same concerns in considering women's diverse relocation strategies within the UK.

In focusing on relocation, it is not intended to suggest that this is the only route to leaving the violence, though it is an action frequently considered by abused women to try and end the abuse (Kirkwood, 1993; Burke et al., 2001). Women are therefore recognised as active agents in resisting and responding to abuse (Hayes, 2013), though constrained by structural inequalities, as well as the abuser's behaviour. A Canadian study (Fry and Barker, 2001) explored women's regrets for inaction, and highlighted women who wished that they had relocated to start again after the abuse. However, as Ponic *et al* (2011) argue, women may be able to leave the abuse

without having to relocate and leave their accommodation; and Baker *et al* (2003, p.776) emphasise that the process is one of gaining safety, rather than leaving *per se*. Women use a wide range of strategies for safety, and will have different expectations of the possibility of safety, based on their structural positioning (Griffing *et al.*, 2002; Zink *et al.*, 2006), and potentially changing over time (Frohmann, 2005, p.1397). However, in a context of gender inequality and structural causes of violence (Paterson, 2009, p.123; UN General Assembly, 2009), men are often not held to account for their violence, and it is women and children who have to leave.

Few studies have researched the geographical journeys, being more likely to highlight emotional or healing journeys (for example, Smith, 2003). The focus here on journeys over time and distance is intended to deepen understandings of women's recovery journeys after abuse. A few studies which do consider geographical distances (Warrington, 2001, p.375; Wilcox, 2000, p.39) tend to imply that longer mileage equates with greater displacement and disruption, and this article intends to complicate that via a recognition of policies and practices which fragment women's journeys beyond simple distances and journey time.

This article therefore examines the nature of the journeys women make, if they leave. It highlights three aspects of the interplay of force and agency: It recognises the force of the abuse, as well as the degrees of agency indicated in women managing to leave. It recognises the structural positioning of women and their children, affecting their possibilities of leaving, their journeys, and their longer term outcomes. And it adds an under-recognised element of force/agency in the role of services, laws and policy in the subsequent journey trajectories after leaving, therefore highlighting why a greater understanding of women's journeys is important for policy and service responses. It draws on a research project, the methodology of which is briefly outlined in the next section. The following sections detail the findings in terms of individual women's journeys, drawing on women's accounts and the time/distance segments of three

women's journeys. The implications of such segmented journeys for three aspects of policy and service responses in the UK are then briefly discussed. Finally the article concludes by summarising the key issues raised in the trajectories of women's domestic violence journeys; and how more effective responses could support less fragmented lives for women and their children who are forced to leave.

Methodology

The analysis presented in this paper is based on a mixed methods research project involving analysis and GIS mapping of six years of administrative data from housing-related support services in England, interviews with 20 women in seven locations in the Midlands, Southern England and London, groupwork with nine women in the Midlands and South Coast, surveys with 34 women in domestic violence services and on 267 calls to the National Domestic Violence Helpline, and interviews with workers in services in eight locations. The wider research and some of the UK policy implications have been published elsewhere (Bowstead, 2015a; 2015b) and the focus of this article is on the interviews which were carried out via the specialist domestic violence service provider Refuge. Recruitment via a service provider ensured that all interviewees had access to support, and the study was approved via the ethical procedures of both the service provider and the university. The interviews with 20 women are from a purposive non-probability sample of women with a range of different ages (18-56), ethnic origins, disabilities, and with or without children (12 had children with them, aged from under 1 to 14). The focus of the semi-structured interviews was their actions and responses to the violence from their partner, husband or ex-partner, rather than the abuse itself, and their accounts are anonymised in terms of names and places to ensure their safety. First interviews were carried out whilst women were resident in women's refuges (shelters), and subsequent interviews were carried out up to eight months later with 14 of the 20 women after they had moved into independent accommodation.

Analysis

Interviews were recorded and transcribed and content and thematic analysis was carried out within Nvivo software. Open descriptive coding was brought together into links and hierarchies to identify emergent themes, and representative quotations were identified to describe these themes. Interviewees also provided time and location data for their journeys since first leaving their abusive partner, enabling the time/distance graphs to be created. The three case studies presented were chosen because they most clearly illustrated journey trajectories where different segments were initiated by pressure points commonly mentioned across the wider sample.

The mixed methods approach of the overall project meant that the themes were also drawn out across the whole range of data sources to identify connections and contradictions in an “integrative logic” (Mason, 2006, p.6). Locating the individual accounts within a range of data sources enabled analysis to explore women’s journeys at a range of scales from individual to local, regional and national. The issues cut across traditional disciplinary boundaries (Messing et al., 2012) of geography, sociology and social policy, and the research methodology therefore aims to achieve stronger conclusions in terms of policy and practice. The next section outlines the research findings in terms of individual women’s journeys, and the following sections discuss aspects of the trajectories over time and space which raise particular policy and service issues, drawing on the detail of three women’s journeys. These issues are then drawn together into a discussion of the implications for three aspects of policy and service responses.

Findings

Individual journeys – diverse strategies

This research confirms that a wide range of women make domestic violence journeys. The large-scale administrative data collected demographic characteristics via standardised variables to

enable comparison with other datasets, such as the census (Bowstead, 2015a). The interviewed women were therefore asked to self-categorise according to these same variables. However, it is also important to recognise that categories around race and ethnicity are not stable or uniform (Malley-Morrison and Hines, 2007).

The domestic violence literature (for example, Mama, 1989; Rai and Thiara, 1997; Minhas et al., 2002; Burman et al., 2004; Amanor-Boadu et al., 2012) highlights the additional difficulties faced by ethnic minority women in leaving abuse. However, in this research, the ethnic profile includes a higher proportion of ethnic minorities than the general population. An important factor in this is likely to relate to ethnic minority women having, on average, fewer personal resources, such as wealth (Barnard and Turner, 2011), and therefore being more likely to access public resources, such as support services, when they do leave (Menard, 2001, p.708; Paterson, 2009, p.131).

Research outside the UK with women from a range of ethnic origins seeking help has indicated that structural factors shape women's options (Bhuyan and Senturia, 2005) as well as women being subject to the judgements and expectations of professionals in services (Dunn and Powell-Williams, 2007; Briones-Vozmediano et al., 2014; Brickell, 2015). In addition to prior structural positioning, Larance and Porter (2004, p.676) highlight that women who have been victimised by domestic violence often have diminished options – and “social capital” – precisely because of the abusers' actions of isolating them from supportive family, friends and community.

What is striking in this research is the lack of strong association of any demographic categories with distinctive journey trajectories or distances, and it finds instead the importance of far more individual factors in women's options, constraints, mobility and outcomes. These did include particular factors for ethnic minority women, such as one women's abusive husband using her insecure immigration status to restrict her options, and another women talking about the difficulty of challenging abuse which her family and friends said she should accept as normal in her

culture. This complexity of factors, rather than cultural stereotyping, supports the conclusions of Velonis *et al* (2015) on the cumulative effect of life-course factors and intersectionality in shaping life direction. Interviewed women's accounts indicate that where and how far they went were determined by a range of factors including their judgement of where they could be safe, the availability (or not) of refuge spaces, and the practicalities of travel. In contrast to Ponic *et al*'s findings (2011), all had made multiple moves – up to ten moves so far – and many were still in temporary accommodation; giving a total of over eighty moves by the twenty women.

The women and children experienced considerable changes of circumstances over these journeys, including changes of place – only four had initially relocated within their Local Authority – and changes of housing rights. Although four women had left owner-occupied housing, all were in rented accommodation at the time of the research; including rented social housing, private rented housing, supported housing and women's refuges (shelters). After initial moves to escape an abuser that women were living with, further moves were for a range of reasons. Some were to escape continuing harassment from the abuser, or to escape again after returning to that relationship. Other moves were away from community and networks that were not safe; and more were required by authorities, policies and the (lack of) availability of services. There were some positive moves – more of women's agency than force – as women relocated to be nearer friends or family, or to be rehoused. Overall, the distances ranged from under ten miles in total, to thousands of miles for two women who had left partners abroad; and whilst a quarter had travelled under 40 miles so far, a quarter had travelled over 200 miles so far.

However, despite this diversity, analysis of women's accounts (in the context of the overall research project) did enable a degree of generalisability via the identification of themes and implications. The key theme focused on here is that the journeys are both segmented and fragmented. Women's journeys were functionally segmented, due to the initial force of the abuser

which meant that women could not stay put; and the ongoing risk of the abuser which meant that they had to continue to remain hidden and unpredictable. However, their journeys were additionally fragmented by pressure points which could have been reduced or eliminated by more effective service and policy responses. The next section will examine the functional segmentation of women's journeys; and the following section will look in more detail at the pressure points which further fragment the journeys.

Segmented journeys – strategies for safety

Women's initial moves were all to escape an abuser that women were living with, and many had experienced abuse for a long time before considering, or achieving, relocation. The journeys were not embarked upon easily, and many had tried formal and informal methods to end the abuse or end the relationship. Because of the ongoing risk from the abuser, who did not accept the separation, women had to make further moves. They were escaping someone who generally knew the same places and contacts as them, including their friends and family, and women therefore often had to cut all connections. Many felt the ongoing risk of the abuser, emotionally and psychologically, as well as the impact of having relocated and the consequent losses and dislocation. The first interviews with participants were carried out whilst they were in the temporary accommodation of women's refuges; but this had often not been the place they went initially, and they had already experienced segments of their journeys.

Though second (and third) interviews were carried out with some women, over a period of many months, few women had achieved permanent resettlement – either practically or emotionally. These research findings are similar to other studies, outlined in the introduction, which explore the interplay of force and agency in women leaving domestic violence, and in differences in structural positioning which affect their options for leaving, and their longer term outcomes. However, this research into the detailed journey trajectories between leaving and resettlement

highlights an additional aspect to be considered. A key finding of this research is that, in addition to the aspects of journeying forced on them by the abuse, women were experiencing additional pressure points on their way towards safety and autonomy.

Fragmented lives – additional pressure points

Though diverse women employ diverse and individual strategies to escape the abuse, interviewed women emphasised that the disruption of their journeys did not simply relate to distance, or number of moves; but also to practical and emotional pressure points regardless of mileage or time. These pressure points make journeys more fragmented and disruptive, but they are also aspects which could be addressed more effectively by policy and services.

Three key pressure points identified by the research will now be outlined: a lack of information on rights and services, a lack of continuity of services and loss of momentum, and a loss of possessions and housing rights across administrative boundaries. These themes featured across the sample, but will be discussed via the details of case studies of three particular women's journeys, so as to enable a more in-depth account of their perspectives and experiences.

Cathy's journey – lack of information on rights and help

Cathy was aged 46 at the time of the first interview, of Black Caribbean ethnic origin, and she had no children. Though she had been in an owner-occupied house with her partner, he had taken control of all the finances and she was left with no savings. Her journey (Figure 1) included periods of sleeping rough, and returning to her partner, because she was not aware that she could access a refuge.

I didn't want to go home; but I didn't have anywhere to go. So some of the things I did was crazy – like sleeping in parks... what the hell was I thinking? Walking on streets in the early hours of the morning – two, three o'clock. I ask myself now – what was I doing?

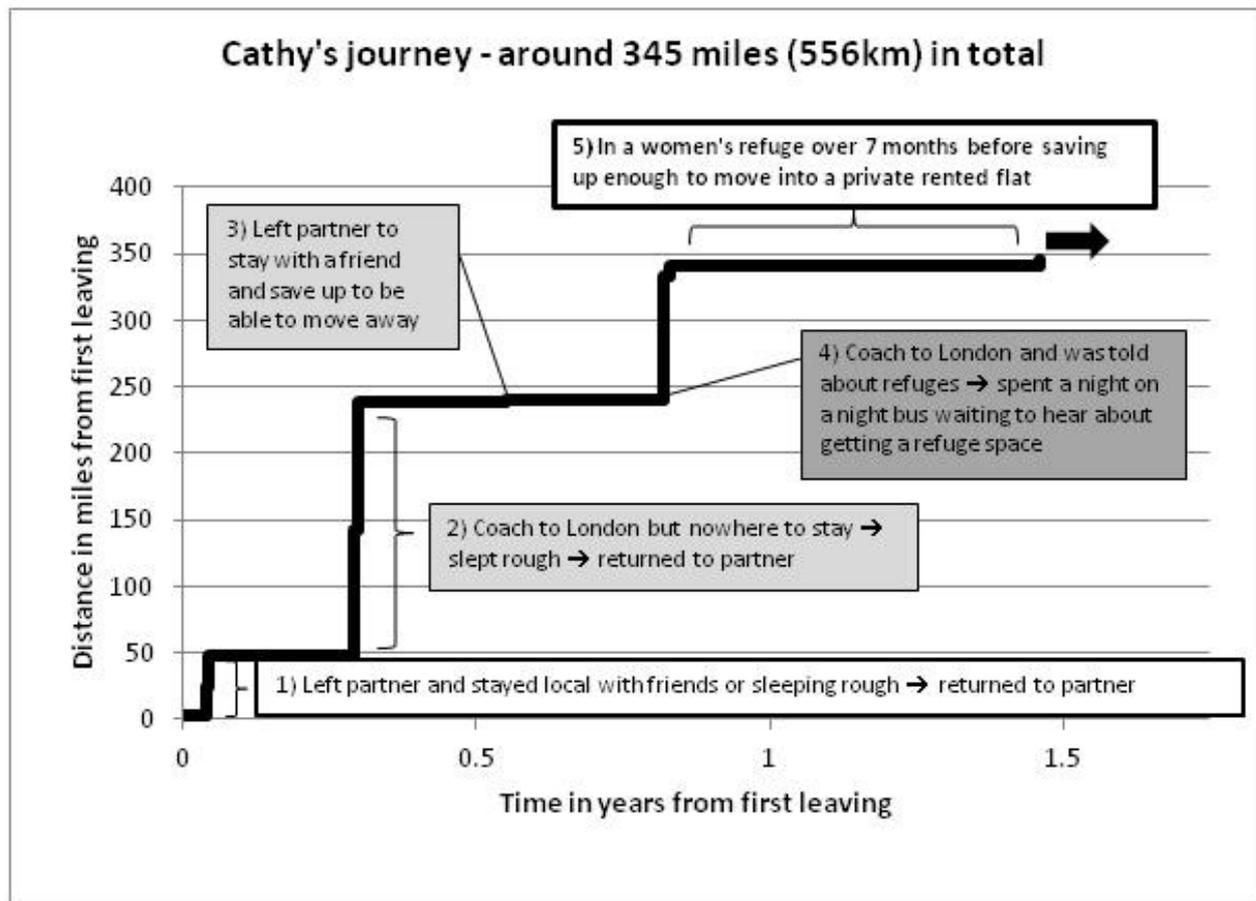


Figure 1: Graph of Cathy's journey over time and distance

She had spent much of her adult life in the United States and worked once she returned to the UK, so only gradually became aware of some of her options for benefits and support.

I'd already made my decision years ago to go; but I always ended up going back – not because I liked him, but because I had nowhere to go.

I didn't know that I'd be able to be accepted into a refuge because I don't have children; so I didn't think I'd be able to find any help at all.

Rather than finding out about the possibility of a women's refuge from any kind of formal public information, she found out from a chance conversation whilst she was keeping warm in a late-night restaurant (Figure 1, Label 4).

I was in McDonald's in Marble Arch, and I was just talking to a person in there – just a regular customer – and she said – why don't you call the Domestic Violence shelter? So I called the Domestic Violence shelter, and they told me to put myself up for the night because the refuge wasn't open.

So I travelled the bus [all night and day], and later on in that evening I got a phone call and they said - you can come to this shelter.

Cathy ended up travelling over 300 miles, despite only ultimately moving from an East Anglian town to West London. Once she was in a refuge she took courses to update her qualifications, and did not dwell on how long it had taken for her to find the help she had needed. She immediately focused on saving up for a deposit to be able to rent privately. She was so determined to have her own place where she could begin to settle, that she was able to leave the refuge after seven months: the equal-shortest stay amongst the interviewed women who went on to tenancies (Figure 1, Label 5).

I can't say a bad thing about my journeys – apart from that they've been cold, hard and sometimes I've been hungry; and during those journeys I've sometimes been miserable – but it had a good outcome!

Helen's journey – lack of continuity and losing momentum

Helen was aged 52 at the time of the first interview, of White British ethnic origin, and disabled. She had adult children who were not living with her, and had been living with her partner in the

outskirts of London. Helen’s partner had initially said that he wanted the separation; but then repeatedly tracked her down, harassed her, threatened her at work, and reported her to the police. Her journey included over a year and a half of staying very local, as she tried to keep her job and keep contact with her friends (Figure 2, Label 1); before moving to her daughter’s (Figure 2, Label 2) and then to a women’s refuge (Figure 2, Label 3); making a journey time of over three years in total.

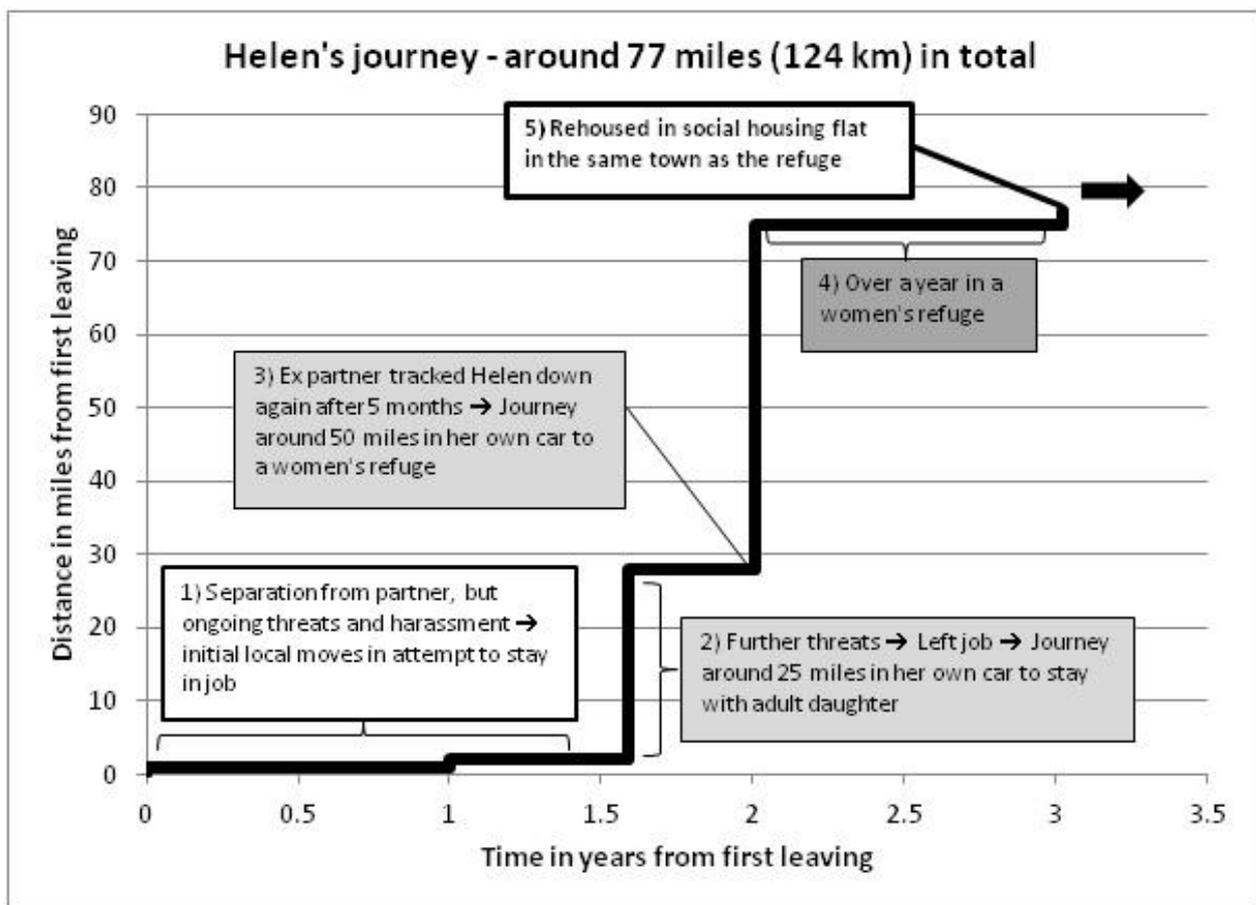


Figure 2: Graph of Helen’s journey over time and distance

She was relieved when the refuge space she was offered was in a very rural place that she had never heard of; and – now she knew how persistently abusive her ex-partner would be – wished that she had moved to an untraceable place sooner. Helen felt angry at how she had had to cut so many connections.

He ripped my life apart. Completely and utterly ripped my life apart. It's been so – I'm starting to feel quite angry with him now. I've got no friends, I can't see my family – I can't do this, I can't do that – all because of one man.

She had difficulty finding suitable accommodation to be able to move out of the refuge, and, whilst she valued the support she received in the initial six to nine months, ended up staying there over a year (Figure 2, Label 4), which she found frustrating.

I was so ready to move out of the refuge – I'd been in there just over a year; and I was just so ready to move out! [laughs] I think – if I'd been in there much longer – I'd have started going downhill. And it was almost as if – towards the end – you were just treading water; because there were things you could no longer do to move on – until you are actually in your own place.

Helen's literal journey was under 80 miles in five moves; and she felt she had lost momentum by staying too long in the refuge. However, she ultimately felt that she had travelled much further in terms of confidence, safety, and being able to be herself.

I've just come so far – I'm a different person – a completely different person; I've started to be outgoing again, smiling at people in the street – and not thinking – oh my god – do they know him? Not looking at cars – not jumping at my own shadow – having my own opinion; and being able to voice my own opinion. Little things like that. I've come miles – absolutely miles.

I'm still who I am – I'm just able to be who I am. Because you kind of forget who that person is when you're in a relationship like that.

Louise's journey – losing possessions and housing rights

Louise was aged 28 at the time of the first interview, of White British ethnic origin, and she had a 7 year old daughter. She had been living with her partner in a city in Wales, and had a secure social housing tenancy, but felt increasingly unsafe.

It got to the point where I'd know – after taking my daughter to school and coming back home – just by the way he'd get out of bed in the morning; and just his footfalls. Just from like the time he'd get out of bed and I could hear him walking along the bed to come out the bedroom door upstairs to go across to the toilet – I could hear what the day was going to be like.

Her journey included an initial long journey from where she lived with her partner to go to the support of family (Figure 3, Label 1), but also further long distances travelled to the support of other family. She also reunited with her partner, but had to leave again when he became abusive (Figure 3, Label 3, Label 4); and she stayed in four different refuges during a total journey time of over three years.

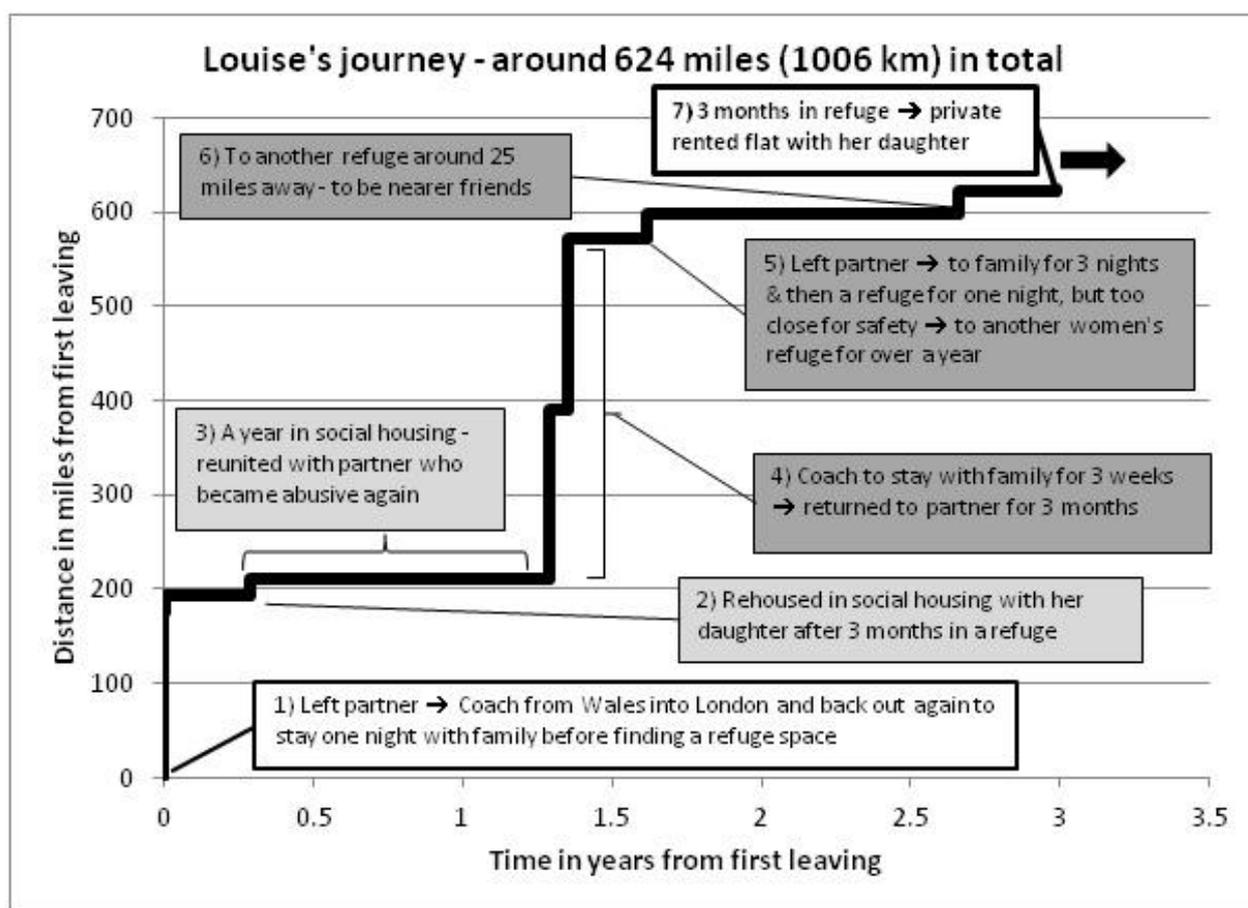


Figure 3: Graph of Louise's journey over time and distance

During this she had to give up the tenancy of the house in Wales, and lost all the contents.

I left all my possessions – everything – just a house-full of stuff. And once I was actually in the refuge and they were saying – well you're definitely not coming back; so I was like – no, I'm not coming back; you know I can't live like that any more. And they said – well what about all the stuff in the house? So I said – well, just sell it; I said – get what you can for it, and the rest just chuck it; you know it's no good to me any more.

Further abuse meant that she had to leave her partner again, and leave her possessions again (Figure 3, Label 5). At the time of a third interview, Louise had moved to a rural town to be close to a friend she had made in the refuge (Figure 3, Label 6); and because their children had become

friends she hoped it would help her daughter settle into school. But over three years she had gone from having a secure social housing tenancy of a house, to having a short-term tenancy of a private rented flat (Figure 3, Label 7), and she reflected on having to start again.

You don't actually realise how much you do until everything gets so messed up that you have to restart again – pick up and go through things bit by bit by bit. And if you're in an emotional state anyway, it just seems that much harder; because everything is enormous – it's like huge stones that you've got to keep picking up and try and reassemble something out of what's just crashed down around your ears.

Discussion

Policy and practice to enable the continuities in women's journeys

The individual journeys outlined above highlight three key issues on women's journeys. In the isolation of the abusive relationship, many women – like Cathy – do not know about support services, refuges, or their rights. In the course of complex and segmented journeys, many women – like Helen – try a range of safety strategies, but end up having to cut connections to support at crucial pressure points. They experience both forced mobility and forced immobility as they are unable to maintain momentum or control the trajectory of their journeys. This lack of recognition by agencies and authorities of women's actions as connected stages of a journey also means that many women – like Louise – lose possessions and housing rights on the way. Potential policy and practice responses to these issues will now be briefly outlined.

Route maps for the journey – providing information on rights and services

In general, women stay put if they can, some using protection orders (Baker et al., 2003, p.760; Durfee and Messing, 2012); they stay local if they have to move; and they only move to unknown

places if they have to. At every stage, and with every option, they are weighing up the possibilities and making judgements about safety. From a woman's perspective, these judgements and actions are part of complex journey strategies, rather than unconnected incidents of contact that they may be seen as by services and authorities. The language of "pathways" to or from homelessness (Thurston et al., 2006; Tutty et al., 2013) implies a route previously travelled by someone else – even a route explicitly provided by custom or the state; however, these routes are generally embarked upon with no such knowledge.

Many interviewed women wished they had known more about their rights and options and the implications of their actions and choices. Sometimes, at the point of leaving, they had received an overwhelming amount of information, for example, from a Police or Housing officer; but they had then relocated to a safe area and had no further contact with that agency. As a result, they needed to try and recall information and advice they had been unable to take in at the point of crisis. In the metaphor of journeys, they needed to continue to refer to "route maps".

The complexity of women's domestic violence journeys means that a wide range of frontline agencies could outline such "route maps" to women, rather than just focusing on delivering their specific responsibilities. An understanding of the long-term nature of women's journeys also highlights that women need more than just a map. Even if women had a sense of where they could go initially, they also needed practical and emotional support – the equivalent of road signs and roadside assistance – to help them continue to navigate through unfamiliar areas, and provide continuity through difficult junctions.

Continuity of support – to maintain momentum

In the absence of route maps and road signs, women often encountered key pressure points on their journeys. In the course of escaping an abuser who knows the people and places they know,

women often have to go to a completely unknown place and cut connections (temporarily or permanently) with friends and family, despite these people often having been the first source of support and assistance (Stanko, 2006, p.547). Some women had also received intense formal support to enable them to leave a dangerous situation, with statutory and voluntary sector services focused on responding to high-risk cases. However, by relocating to an unfamiliar area, women significantly reduced their level of risk – as measured by Risk Assessment tools (SafeLives, 2015) – whilst actually increasing their level of need as they were now alone in an unknown place. The shift in the UK to a focus on risk assessment has, seemingly, led to a neglect of need assessment; both in terms of agencies' awareness, and in terms of funding for more holistic services. At a time when continuity of support from friends and family may be difficult or impossible for safety reasons, it is therefore all the more important that services provide more continuity of support.

Interviewed women particularly raised two key pressure points when they had felt a severe break in support: at the point of leaving the abuse if they crossed an administrative boundary, and at the point of leaving a women's refuge if the refuge had no staffing to support resettlement. What was, for the woman, the next small step in an ongoing journey, was therefore experienced as a severe cut-off, and therefore far more fragmented and difficult.

Portable rights and possessions across boundaries

Even if women are able to maintain, or re-establish, a momentum in their journeys towards safety, they often experience their journeys as loss after loss after loss. In achieving personal security away from the abuse, they can lose many other securities of housing, employment, education (for themselves and their children), and possessions to which they had practical and emotional connections (Baker et al., 2009, p.460). Many interviewed women had been in

employment, including well-paid employment, but their economic circumstances were drastically reduced by having to move and leave work, study, accommodation and possessions.

By making these relocation journeys, women are utilising space to achieve safety. However, they are typically not met by administrative systems and legislation that understand, allow, enable or actively facilitate such safety strategies. In the UK, under successive Housing Acts local authority boundaries are generally designed as ‘moats’, sealing each authority off from its neighbours in terms of access to social housing. However, in law, ‘drawbridges’ were created via an exception for individuals who are unable to remain safely in a local authority where they have a local connection; and women can therefore be rehoused in another local authority (HM Government, 1996, sec.177, 198 (2)). However, interviewed women were often not aware of their rights, and had given up tenancies – like Louise – to escape the abuse. In addition, under an emphasis on ‘Localism’ (DCLG, 2011), women’s refuges are being required by funders to prioritise local women in access to support and accommodation, as well as experiencing cuts in funding (Towers and Walby, 2012).

As a result, it is increasingly difficult for women to travel to where they could be safe and begin to resettle in relatively long-term housing. Beyond the difficulties of the journeys, neither the local authority they arrive in, nor the one they have left, offer continuity of housing tenancy rights. Similarly, it is rare for either local authority to provide any support to secure possessions, such as removal costs or storage; so women are forced to abandon both personal possessions, and furniture and household equipment. Local authorities could be far more proactive in offering such financial and practical support for homelessness applicants’ personal property, as they are actually empowered in the Housing Act to “take reasonable steps to prevent the loss of the property or prevent or mitigate damage to it” (HM Government, 1996, sec.211 (2)). None of the interviewed women received any such support.

Conclusions

This article has focused on women's literal journeys away from domestic violence, as a strategy for achieving safety. Women's voices, from the interviews, help us to see the diversity and complexity of their strategies rather than just the discrete short-term segments that each professional or service typically sees. The journeys are found to be complex and segmented over time and space, both because of the initial force from the abuser, and because of the ongoing degrees of force, constraint and agency as women try to achieve safety and autonomy.

Recognising force and agency in the experience of abuse, and in the structural positioning of women and their children, the article also examines an under-recognised element of force/agency in the role of services, laws and policy in affecting journey trajectories after leaving abuse.

The limitations of the research are in the purposive sampling of the interviewees, and the small sample size, which limits the generalisability of the conclusions. This was partially addressed by the larger sample size of the overall study (including over 18,000 administrative records per year over six years) and by interviews with workers in domestic violence services in eight locations, who could compare the research findings to their professional experience. The evidence on complex segmented journeys is therefore strong, whilst the detail of the interplay of force and agency leading to further fragmentation is more indicative and would benefit from further study, and from comparisons elsewhere.

Given these limitations, the findings are illustrative of women's relocation due to domestic violence in England. They provide a greater understanding of the diverse trajectories of these journeys, and highlight that, whilst they may be functionally segmented, they do not need to be so fragmented. Not only could more effective actions to hold abusers to account help prevent the

need for relocation and/or multiple moves; but further moves and pressure points are also caused by actions or inactions of agencies, and by administrative boundaries.

Policy and practice could smooth those transitions – even make some of them unnecessary – by relieving the pressure points, and enabling the continuities. Firstly, women could be given greater guidance along their journeys, from accessible public information and from agencies which have a better understanding of the routes and the signposting needed. Secondly, particular pressure points could be eased by continuity of support, and assistance for women to maintain momentum on their journeys, regardless of whether they cross administrative boundaries. Thirdly, specific policies and practice could ensure that women who have been forced to relocate do not lose significant rights and possessions in their displacement.

Overall, domestic violence journeys are made more fragmented by the lack of recognition – in law and practice – that they are journeys; and this makes them more risky, more costly and more disruptive for the women and children involved. Understanding them as journeys – in all their complexity – could enable more effective responses so that women only make the journeys that are strictly necessary, and are more smoothly and swiftly able to move to where they can settle and rebuild their fragmented lives.

Acknowledgements

This work was funded by Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) [grant number ES/I903275/1]. Administrative data from Supporting People Client Records were provided by the Centre for Housing Research at the University of St Andrews and used with permission from Communities and Local Government. Thanks to the specialist domestic violence service provider Refuge, which assisted with arranging and carrying out the interviews, group work and surveys; and to all the women who shared their experiences and insights. Thanks to the editors of *Journal of Gender-Based Violence* and anonymous referees for their very constructive feedback.

References

- Amanor-Boadu, Y., Messing, J.T., Stith, S.M., Anderson, J.R., O'Sullivan, C.S. & Campbell, J.C. (2012) Immigrant and Nonimmigrant Women: Factors That Predict Leaving an Abusive Relationship. *Violence Against Women*, 18 (5), pp.611–633.
- Baker, C.K., Cook, S.L. & Norris, F.H. (2003) Domestic Violence and Housing Problems: A Contextual Analysis of Women's Help-Seeking, Received Informal Support, and Formal System Response. *Violence Against Women*, 9 (7), pp.754–783.
- Baker, C.K., Holditch Niolon, P. & Oliphant, H. (2009) A Descriptive Analysis of Transitional Housing Programs for Survivors of Intimate Partner Violence in the United States. *Violence Against Women*, 15 (4), pp.460–481.
- Barnard, H. & Turner, C. (2011) *Poverty and ethnicity: A review of evidence*. York, Joseph Rowntree Foundation. Available from: <<http://www.jrf.org.uk/publications/poverty-and-ethnicity-review-evidence>>
- Bhuyan, R. & Senturia, K. (2005) Understanding Domestic Violence Resource Utilization and Survivor Solutions Among Immigrant and Refugee Women: Introduction to the Special Issue. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 20 (8), pp.895–901.
- Bowstead, J.C. (2015a) Forced migration in the United Kingdom: women's journeys to escape domestic violence. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 40 (3), pp.307–320.
- Bowstead, J.C. (2015b) Why women's domestic violence refuges are not local services. *Critical Social Policy*, 35 (3), pp.327–349.
- Bowstead, J.C. (2016) Women on the move: theorising the geographies of domestic violence journeys in England. *Gender, Place and Culture*, 24 (1), pp.108–121.
- Brickell, K. (2015) Clouding the Judgment of Domestic Violence Law: Victim Blaming by Institutional Stakeholders in Cambodia. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, pp.1–21.
- Briones-Vozmediano, E., Goicolea, I., Ortiz-Barreda, G.M., Gil-González, D. & Vives-Cases, C. (2014) Professionals' Perceptions of Support Resources for Battered Immigrant Women: Chronicle of an Anticipated Failure. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 29 (6), pp.1006–1027.
- Burke, J.G., Carlson Gielen, A., McDonnell, K.A., O'Campo, P. & Maman, S. (2001) The Process of Ending Abuse in Intimate Relationships: A Qualitative Exploration of the Transtheoretical Model. *Violence Against Women*, 7 (10), pp.1144–1163.
- Burman, E., Smailes, S.L. & Chantler, K. (2004) 'Culture' as a Barrier to Service Provision and Delivery: Domestic Violence Services for Minoritized Women. *Critical Social Policy*, 24 (3), pp.332–357.
- Davis, R.E. (2002) 'The Strongest Women': Exploration of the Inner Resources of Abused Women. *Qualitative Health Research*, 12 (9), pp.1248–1263.

- DCLG (2011) A plain English guide to the Localism Act. Available from:
<<http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/localgovernment/localismplainenglishupdate>>
- Dunn, J.L. & Powell-Williams, M. (2007) 'Everybody Makes Choices': Victim Advocates and the Social Construction of Battered Women's Victimization and Agency. *Violence Against Women*, 13 (10), pp.977–1001.
- Durfee, A. & Messing, J.T. (2012) Characteristics Related to Protection Order Use Among Victims of Intimate Partner Violence. *Violence Against Women*, 18 (6), pp.701–710.
- Flinck, A., Paavilainen, E. & Åstedt-Kurki, P. (2005) Survival of intimate partner violence as experienced by women. *Journal of Clinical Nursing*, 14, pp.383–393.
- Frohmann, L. (2005) The Framing Safety Project: Photographs and Narratives by Battered Women. *Violence Against Women*, 11 (11), pp.1396–1419.
- Fry, P.S. & Barker, L.A. (2001) Female Survivors of Violence and Abuse: Their Regrets of Action and Inaction in Coping. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 16 (4), pp.320–342.
- Goodman, L., Dutton, M.A., Vankos, N. & Weinfurt, K. (2005) Women's Resources and Use of Strategies as Risk and Protective Factors for Reabuse Over Time. *Violence Against Women*, 11 (3), pp.311–336.
- Griffing, S., Fish Ragin, D., Sage, R.E., Madry, L., Bingham, L.E. & Primm, B.J. (2002) Domestic Violence Survivors' Self-Identified Reasons for Returning to Abusive Relationships. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 17 (3), pp.306–319.
- Hayes, B.E. (2013) Women's Resistance Strategies in Abusive Relationships: An Alternative Framework. *Sage Open*, pp.1–10.
- HM Government (1996) *Housing Act 1996*. Available from:
<<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1996/52/contents>>
- Hydén, M. (2005) 'I Must Have Been an Idiot to Let it Go On': Agency and Positioning in Battered Women's Narratives of Leaving. *Feminism & Psychology*, 15 (2), pp.169–188.
- Kirkwood, C. (1993) *Leaving Abusive Partners: From the Scars of Survival to the Wisdom for Change*. London, SAGE.
- Larance, L.Y. & Porter, M.L. (2004) Observations From Practice: Support Group Membership as a Process of Social Capital Formation Among Female Survivors of Domestic Violence. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 19 (6), pp.676–690.
- Malley-Morrison, K. & Hines, D.A. (2007) Attending to the Role of Race/Ethnicity in Family Violence Research. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 22 (8), pp.943–972.
- Mama, A. (1989) *The Hidden Struggle: Statutory and voluntary sector responses to violence against black women in the home*. London, London Race & Housing Research Unit.
- Mason, J. (2006) *Six strategies for mixing methods and linking data in social science research*. Southampton, ESRC National Centre for Research Methods. Available from:
<www.ncrm.ac.uk>

- McKenzie-Mohr, S. & LaFrance, M.N. (2011) Telling stories without the words: 'Tightrope talk' in women's accounts of coming to live well after rape or depression. *Feminism & Psychology*, 21 (1), pp.49–73.
- Menard, A. (2001) Domestic Violence and Housing: Key Policy and Program Challenges. *Violence Against Women*, 7 (6), pp.707–720.
- Messing, J.T., Adelman, M. & Durfee, A. (2012) Gender Violence and Transdisciplinarity. *Violence Against Women*, 18 (6), pp.641–652.
- Minhas, N., Hollows, A., Kerr, Y.S. & Ibbotson, R. (2002) *South Asian Women's Experience of Domestic Abuse: Pillar of Support*. Sheffield, Sheffield Hallam University.
- Mitra, N. (2013) Intimate Violence, Family, and Femininity: Women's Narratives on Their Construction of Violence and Self. *Violence Against Women*, 19 (10), pp.1282–1301.
- Paterson, S. (2009) (Re)Constructing women's resistance to woman abuse: Resources, strategy choice and implications of and for public policy in Canada. *Critical Social Policy*, 29, pp.121–145.
- Ponic, P., Varcoe, C., Davies, L., Ford-Gilboe, M., Wuest, J. & Hammerton, J. (2011) Leaving ≠ Moving: Housing Patterns of Women Who Have Left an Abusive Partner. *Violence Against Women*, 17 (12), pp.1576–1600.
- Rai, D.K. & Thiara, R.K. (1997) *Re-defining Spaces: The needs of Black women and children in refuge support services and Black workers in Women's Aid*. Bristol, WAFE.
- SafeLives (2015) *SafeLives Dash risk checklist*. Available from: <<http://www.safelives.org.uk/practice-support/resources-identifying-risk-victims-face>>
- Smith, M.E. (2003) Recovery from Intimate Partner Violence: A Difficult Journey. *Issues in Mental Health Nursing*, 24 (5), pp.543–573.
- Stanko, E. (2006) Theorizing About Violence: Observations From the Economic and Social Research Council's Violence Research Program. *Violence Against Women*, 12 (6), pp.543–555.
- Thurston, W.E., Clow, B., Este, D., Gordey, T., Haworth-Brockman, M., McCoy, L., Rapaport Beck, R., Saulnier, C. & Smith, J. (2006) *Immigrant women, family violence, and pathways out of homelessness*. Canada, National Secretariat on Homelessness. Available from: <http://www.ucalgary.ca/wethurston/files/wethurston/Report_ImmigrantWomenViolenceHomelessness.pdf>
- Towers, J. & Walby, S. (2012) *Measuring the impact of cuts in public expenditure on the provision of services to prevent violence against women and girls*. Trust for London & Northern Rock Foundation. Available from: <<http://www.trustforlondon.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2012/01/VAWG-Cuts-Full-Report.pdf>>
- Turton, D. (2003) *Conceptualising forced migration*. Oxford, Refugee Studies Centre, University of Oxford. Available from: <<http://www.rsc.ox.ac.uk/publications/conceptualising-forced-migration>>

- Tutty, L.M., Ogden, C., Giurciu, B. & Weaver-Dunlop, G. (2013) I Built My House of Hope: Abused Women and Pathways Into Homelessness. *Violence Against Women*, 19 (12), pp.1498–1517.
- UN General Assembly (2009) Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 18 December 2008: 63/155. Intensification of efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women. Available from: <<http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N08/480/09/PDF/N0848009.pdf?OpenElement>>
- Velonis, A.J., Daoud, N., Matheson, F., Woodhall-Melnik, J., Hamilton-Wright, S. & O'Campo, P. (2015) Strategizing Safety: Theoretical Frameworks to Understand Women's Decision Making in the Face of Partner Violence and Social Inequities. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*.
- Warrington, M. (2001) 'I must get out': the geographies of domestic violence. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 26, pp.365–382.
- Wilcox, P. (2000) 'Me Mother's bank and me Nanan's, you know, support!': Women who left domestic violence in England and issues of informal support. *Women's Studies International Forum*, 23 (1), pp.35–47.
- Zink, T., Jacobson, C.J., Pabst, S., Regan, S. & Fisher, B.S. (2006) A Lifetime of Intimate Partner Violence: Coping Strategies of Older Women. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 21 (5), pp.634–651.