

ARE FAMILY PETS A FACTOR IN WOMEN STAYING IN ABUSIVE RELATIONSHIPS?

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Abstract

Whether or not family pets are a factor in women staying in abusive relationships is an understudied and undervalued research topic in today's society. The current study therefore highlights the issue through conducting empirical research, whereby questionnaires have been sent out to Domestic Violence refuges in the Staffordshire and West Midlands areas and completed by refuge staff regarding knowledge of the problem. Previous literature on this topic has been assessed and criticised as well as surrounding themes of the human-animal bond and how these factors would correlate to the current study. This combination of empirical and theoretical study has helped to gauge the extent of animal abuse within violent households. Results supported the notion that pets are a factor in women staying in abusive relationships and that pets are frequently abused by violent partners. The study highlights the need for a wider acknowledgment in addressing the problems and ensuring that more women become aware of the support available, resulting in less women feeling there is no alternative but to stay with their partner and less pets becoming abused in the future.

¹ Hannah Cooksey submitted this dissertation for the BSc (Hons) in Criminology at University of Chester, UK

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my dissertation supervisor Dr. Jane Jones for her help and guidance whilst carrying out the study. With her assistance, my organisational skills and level of confidence has risen and has enabled me to complete my dissertation to the best of my ability.

The support, advice and guidance from Lynn Laughton, and all who work at the Pathway Project has been invaluable. Without her help, I could not have undertaken this research.

I would also like to thank my family, Mom, Dad and Louise and housemates, Joanne and Sian for their support and help throughout the year.

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Introduction

This area of study regarding Pets and Domestic Violence is important as the impact a family pet can have in Domestic Abuse households has been largely ignored and forgotten in previous literature (Flynn, 2000). Making the decision to leave the perpetrator can be stressful and traumatic but the dependence and responsibility a woman may feel towards a pet can strongly influence this decision. Many women facing domestic abuse have emotional ties to the animal and do not want to leave for fear it may be harmed or worse (Ascione, Weber, Thompson, Heath, Maruyama and Hayashi, 2007). Women may also not leave due to their children having a strong bond with the pet (Stenius and Veysey, 2005). The main aims of this study are to conduct empirical research on the question of whether pets are a factor in women staying in abusive relationships. Previous research regarding this area will be explored and any schemes that have been set up in the chosen area in order to eliminate the problem, such as the RSPCA's Pet Fostering Scheme. By studying this topic in greater detail therefore, it can act as bridging the gap in the knowledge, increase awareness of this hidden crime and reveal the effects of the forgotten voices of Domestic Violence. If it is recognised as a serious issue then measures can be put into place where a woman need not feel under pressure to protect their pet if there are other avenues available.

The method used to uncover this information will be in the form of a questionnaire to refuge workers asking for their knowledge of known cases where a pet has been a factor in the decision to leave the perpetrator. These questionnaires were sent out to refuges in the Staffordshire and West Midlands areas, under the supervision and guidance of a Gatekeeper (Giulianotti and Robertson, 2007), in this case, a refuge manager who had close links to the researcher and could offer access to sources and support in gaining the results needed. The main problems and issues to be investigated were whether the refuge support workers had any prior knowledge of pet abuse, what help the refuge offered the woman in such circumstances and whether any animal agencies or pet foster care organisations were contacted. Problems to be raised also included whether children were witnesses to the animal cruelty, and whether the support workers in this field regarded animal abuse as an issue and if so, what they would like to see happen in the future. This study will go further by looking at the extent of the problem, the effects on all involved (women and children) and the services that are currently being used to support women in the situation of leaving a pet, in and outside of refuges.

A literature review on previous research has also been included, highlighting the methods used to uncover the extent of Pet Abuse, the samples chosen and the results found. Although there are a few texts that briefly mention the effects on companion animals, there is limited literature available on this topic. Surrounding themes and aspects have been studied therefore to engage a deeper knowledge of the topic. The purpose of this literature review was not only to study any previous research in comparison to the current study and to establish extent, but to gain the deeper meanings and awareness of the human-animal bond and to evaluate this relationship in times of emotional distress. From doing this, researchers will achieve a greater insight of why women choose to stay with pets rather than seeking safety and the psychological, unrecognised effect it can be when having to leave them behind. This theoretical understanding of the topic can therefore, by using the means of induction, as stated by Hart (1998), develop knowledge on whether pets are a decisive factor, by gaining evidence to assert the research questions probability.

The overall approach of the study is therefore a balanced one, providing empirical and theoretical means to a problem that is largely un-discussed and highlighted in today's society and yet is increasingly becoming an area of concern for many of those working and researching in this domain. From not only studying previous work, but by conducting an empirical study of one's own, the researcher achieves first hand, primary data on the issue and

can therefore comment on the problem conclusively and provide recommendations for the future to eliminate the dilemma that many women may face daily.

The structure of this study will cover the basis of understanding pet abuse in relation to domestic violence. Chapter One will be a literature review covering the main themes of the study and areas that have been researched extensively. Chapter Two will discuss the methodology of the research, grounded in theoretical discussion. Chapter Three will present the results of the returned and completed questionnaires and Chapter Four will cover an analysis of the findings and subsequent conclusions found from these results.

Chapter One – Literature Review

Literature covering Domestic Violence is vast. However, when concerning the effects upon women and their pets, there are limited resources available. Surrounding themes and aspects have been studied therefore to engage a deeper knowledge of the topic. Findings from books and journals have resulted in three main themes running parallel to the core issue; previous research that has been undertaken in this field, the relationship humans have with animals and child abuse and pet abuse. These areas not only overlap in places but have similar central themes and understandings, in assessing the line of argument that pets *are* a key factor in women remaining in abusive relationships. The purpose of this literature review was not only to study any previous research in comparison to the current study and to establish extent, but to gain the deeper meanings and awareness of the human-animal bond and to evaluate this relationship in times of emotional distress. From doing this, researchers will achieve a greater insight of why women choose to stay with pets rather than seeking safety and the psychological, unrecognised effect it can be when having to leave them behind.

Cazaux and Beirne (2006) define animal abuse as “any act that contributes to the pain, suffering or unnatural death of an animal or that otherwise threatens its welfare” (p. 10). They note it can be physical, psychological or emotional. They link the ‘battered child’ and ‘battered woman syndrome’ with such suffering, acknowledging the connections and comparisons. They review leading specialists in the field, such as Regan and Singer (1989, as cited by Cazaux and Beirne, 2006) who recognise the moral significance of animals in their own right, “because animals are sentient living beings, with interests and desires, and are ‘subjects-of-a-life’, animals are taken into the circle of moral consideration” (p. 11). This statement causes researchers to look further into the issue, as it is not just the practicalities of owning a pet that cause women to stay but something much deeper. This notion of animals being given human qualities and attributes is furthered by scholars throughout the literature review. This extended definition provides the current study with a sense of direction as the themes of extent, links to child abuse and moral relationships and responsibility will be covered and included in the three main themes to follow.

Previous Research regarding Pets and Domestic Violence.

Only recently have scholars begun to focus on the relationship between animal maltreatment and interpersonal aggression (Ascione, Weber, Thompson, Heath, Maruyama and Hayashi, 2007, Simmons and Lehmann, 2007). Few researchers, such as Flynn (2000), note that animal abuse is a way to intimidate, terrorise or control their female partners, “whatever the dynamics, it is clear that many batterers create a climate of terror that encompasses both human and nonhuman victims” (p. 171). This gives an initial reason as to why animals are maltreated; fear and control. A recent national survey from Ascione, Weber and Wood (1997, as cited by Flynn, 2000), of forty-eight shelters for battered women, suggests that many of those who work with this population may have ignored pet abuse as well. Although nearly 2/3’s reported hearing of pet abuse, only 13/48 (27%) of shelters asked intake questions about pet abuse and only 6 made arrangements with animal welfare organisations to provide temporary shelter (Ascione, Weber and Wood, 1997, as cited by Flynn, 2000). These types of surveys and studies are extremely important in relation to changing, adapting and influencing social policy. This gives the present study a sense of importance as it will contribute greatly to the argument that much more needs to be done to prevent inter-personal abuse reaching the levels of animal cruelty.

Historically however, animal abuse legislation has been appearing in the United Kingdom since 1824, with the foundation of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (Lockwood, 1998). Lockwood (1998) stated that:

The belief that one's treatment of animals is closely associated with the treatment of fellow humans has a long history, but despite the long history and popular acceptance of this concept, until recently there have been few attempts to systematically study the relationship between the treatment of animals and humans (p. 122).

This clearly addresses the fundamental problem of the limitations of finding appropriate literature within this field, 'despite the long history' (p. 122), causing researchers to wonder *why* it has been neglected. Lockwood (1998) discusses how in the 1980s, animal abuse and domestic violence became cause for concern. Statistics and figures are given, regarding the link with pet abuse in abusive households, and the percentages are high. However, it must be taken into account that these statistics, although gained from reliable sources, are being used to support the situation and their appropriateness can be interpreted in several ways. Hart (1998) claims, "statistics are an outcome of categorisation and decision making; they are created, and are not natural or universally true" (p. 179). Nevertheless, statistics are used widely to determine the extent of a topic and hence, cannot be ignored. Researchers are therefore encouraged to view such statistics, especially in relation to sensitive topics, with an objective eye.

Several studies have also examined the incidences of animal cruelty in families where women seek protection in shelters for battered partners. Lockwood (1998) makes reference to animal shelters that have begun to work closely with refuges for women to provide emergency housing for those at risk. There is full support in the line of argument that pets obviously are a factor in women's refusal to leave home, otherwise such initiatives would not have been set up. Studies noting the above factors have been hence appearing more and more in light of the growing concern, giving consideration to animal's and women's safety, including her decision to leave or stay with the perpetrator. An American study by Simmons and Lehmann (2007), using quantitative data, stated that a growing number of researchers have begun to find that individuals who abuse a partner can and will abuse their pets. This research explores this connection by studying reports of female pet owners residing in refuges. Their findings were based around the *types* of violence used by the perpetrator and the controlling behaviours rather than the women's decision whether to leave or stay, therefore slightly differing from the current study. From their literature study, Simmons and Lehmann (2007) have found that perpetrators will abuse pets to control their partners and more interestingly that Flynn (2000b, as cited by Simmons and Lehmann, 2007) and Ascione (1998, as cited by Simmons and Lehmann, 2007) found that women sometimes delay seeking shelter for fear of their pet's safety, clearly acknowledging the line of argument. The authors do comment on how limited the literature is on pet abuse in relation to domestic violence, however, and therefore there is little to draw comparisons on. In an evaluation of the research by Simmons and Lehmann (2007), it must be noted that the only source to rely on here is the women's reports. As the researchers note, some of the findings may be "inflated" (Simmons and Lehmann, 2007, p. 1213). In future, reports could be accessed from the perpetrator too, strengthening the argument and providing a reasoning and background as to why this abuse occurs.

F. R. Ascione (2007) is an influential, key researcher in this field, sustaining and reinforcing the idea that pet abuse is under-studied and needs to be highlighted more intensely. Ascione's research has been found to be the most compelling, with studies in America, all meeting similar conclusions, in support of the line of argument. One particularly recent study by Ascione, Weber, Thompson, Heath, Maruyama and Hayashi (2007) states that women residing at domestic violence refuges were nearly 11 times more likely to claim that a family pet had also been abused compared to women who had not experienced partner violence. These women at shelters described being emotionally attached to the pet and commented on how children were also often exposed to the pet abuse, linking all of the several themes to arise in this literature. What is most interesting is that "a substantial minority of...women

reported that their concern for their pets' welfare prevented them from seeking shelter sooner" (Ascione, et al., 2007, p. 354). Another interesting fact is that this was more so true for women without children, suggesting that their attachment to the pet was possibly stronger. Albert and Bulcroft (1988, as cited by Flynn, 2000) found pets to be important sources of affection and support during critical life transitions. If pets are granted human status, they serve as emotional substitutes for family members, especially when there were no children. Ascione et al. (2007), suggest that this is an obstacle worth addressing by domestic violence agencies.

Ascione et al., (2007) refer to pet abuse as part of the "power and control wheel" (p. 355). Pets are often viewed as companions or even family members, and some may view animal abuse as another form of family violence. They become another tool to use against a woman to inflict emotional pain, in order to gain power and dominance, which correlates with Flynn's (2000) analysis to animal abuse as a "climate of terror" (p. 171). Quinlisle (1999, as cited by Ascione, et al., 2007) notes that concern for the welfare of family pets may be an obstacle to some women seeking safety. An empirical study from Ascione, et al., (2007) was conducted whereby questionnaires were sent to shelters in America and completed by the shelter director or staff members, which allows for some comparison to the current study. The majority of respondents, 85.4%, reported that they had encountered women at their shelters who talked about pet abuse incidents. The fact that animal abuse and domestic violence might coexist in the same family was acknowledged by 83.3% of respondents. These results are high, and therefore would suggest that the current study will also achieve similar responses. This article is given extra plausibility following a method from Fisher (1993, as cited by Hart, 1998). He provides an approach for analysing systematically, and this is found to be effective as it allows the reader to think through the arguments more closely and objectively. He suggests that by highlighting words throughout the article, such as 'thus', 'therefore' and 'because', readers can extract the main aims of the argument and analyse it more thoroughly. From using this approach, it is clear that Ascione et al. (2007), do address their points with the conjunction words outlined by Fisher (1993, as cited by Hart, 1998) and this makes the argument easier to follow and therefore more plausible.

Flynn (2000) is another prominent and leading researcher in the field of pet abuse and his previous research is worth mentioning. One particular study examines the 'role' of pets, and how they are viewed as "important sources of emotional support" (Flynn, 2000, p. 162). Flynn (2000) questioned clients who sought shelter in South Carolina from March-August 1998. Questions focused on whether they delayed taking shelter sooner, whether pets caused worry after seeking shelter, the nature and extent of pet abuse and the importance of pets as emotional support. Flynn (2000) found that, "the negative emotional and psychological impact of experiencing animal cruelty is likely to have been great, particularly because more than 80% of the shelter women indicated that they were "very close" to the pet that was victimised (p. 164). Although this would be in strong support of the line of argument, Thonless and Thonless (1990, as cited by Hart, 1998) would question the use of phrases and words used here. They notice fallacies in an argument and provide a list of techniques that make an argument seem more convincing. It can be questioned here for example, that by using 'loaded' emotional language and 'special pleading', such as "is likely to have been great"; Flynn (2000) is playing on the reader. Flynn (2000) is implying that witnessing animal cruelty can have a psychological effect on a woman, and the term "very close" is too vague for any deep analysis. This statement therefore tells the readers what they want to hear, without allowing for their own thinking. Nevertheless, Flynn's (2000) results stated that nearly one fourth of the shelter women delayed coming to the shelter and 73.2% found their pets to be very important as sources of emotional support. It is also suggested in some cases that pet abuse occurs to punish the child (Flynn, 2000).

Human and animal relationships

This research leads on to studying texts which emphasise the human-animal relationship and these evidently build up support for the notion that an attachment to a family pet would be a decisive factor in staying in abusive households. Stenius and Veysey (2005) explore the healing process of 18 women who have histories of violence. They mention how common domestic violence is becoming, with 20-30% of the general population of women in the U.S., experiencing sexual and/or physical abuse during their lifetime. However, researchers such as Gracia and Herrero (2007) and Lee (1993) have highlighted how under reported this crime is and therefore these statistics become questionable, being used only for the purpose of strengthening the argument. Gracia and Herrero (2007) highlight in their research how uncommon it is to report a domestic violence occurrence to the police. Bradburn and Sudman (1979, as cited by Lee, 1993) claim that, “where survey responses were compared against official records, under-reporting of ‘socially undesirable’ behaviour occurred whichever method of questioning was used” (p. 99).

Stenius and Veysey (2005) noted that from the studies and interviews with these women, a strong theme emerged; the importance of the family pet, as “pets are fully accepting of their owners and give love unconditionally. They are not fickle and can be relied on to always be there” (p. 1162). This statement is emotionally loaded and should be viewed objectively, as stated by Hart (1998). Hart (1998) notes that scientists should not concern themselves with morality and ethics and should only be motivated by, “the pursuit of knowledge” (p. 83). In relation to the topic of animal cruelty however, it may be argued by some that it is highly difficult to remain objective. Some women also used pets through their trauma as a type of control mechanism. By being responsible for another being, they claimed this kept them from getting ill, or “forced them to continue despite emotional turmoil” (Stenius and Veysey, 2005, p. 1162).

Ryan DeMares (2002, as cited by Kistler, 2002) is a writer and scholar specialising in the human-animal bond and how it relates to consciousness and communication. An interesting point, in relation to animal-assisted therapy, is that stroking animals is known to have a “mutually calming effect” (p. 93). This is very important in relation to domestic violence as abusive households may be tense and stressful places and it is easy to see how having a pet can be a calming factor, for the children as well as the women. This idea is furthered by Dolan (1999) who focuses on the emotional attachment one may feel towards a pet, as “throughout the ages and in the present day, most humans have developed their own individual pattern of relationships with animals, for example...The emotional attachment to a favoured pet” (p. 126). Dolan (1999) talks about the dependency humans have to animals and the responsibility they feel for them, by arguing; “the greater the dependency, the more serious the responsibility” (p. 149). Such responsibility arises when someone takes an animal in their protection. In relation to Domestic Violence, a woman can become greatly attached to a pet, through their own suffering and therefore are more reliant on them, compared to owner-pet relations under normal circumstances. A woman may feel therefore, that by leaving the pet she is responsible for, this will place the pet in further danger and so she decides to stay. Scruton (2000) would go even further into this by stating that,

...when we become attached to an animal we see it as an individual and as a result we lift it from its species being...endow it with an honorary personality...In doing this thing to an animal we undertake an obligation towards it. For we remove from it all ability to fend for itself (p. 44).

Scruton (2000) argues that “pets and other domestic animals are usually entirely dependent on human care for their survival and well-being” (p. 82). Can the statement also be true when turned around, as women victimised by Domestic Violence may rely on the pets for their continued existence, as they are surviving for them? Scruton (2000) goes on to say there have

been arguments over whether keeping a pet is morally right. This point touches on many of our modern concerns as the increasing dependence of animals on human decisions is recognised. The *decision* element here is interesting as in relation to a woman deciding whether to leave her partner, a pet can be a factor and therefore would she be acting morally right if she puts her own safety above the pet she is responsible for?

The moral obligation towards a pet is furthered by Midgley (1983), who expresses thoughts on the symbolic meaning of women and animals and looking at the deeper relationship between the two species. She explains that in Rousseau's (n.d., as cited by Midgley, 1983) mind "a woman is an internal part of a man's life. How can that part assume independence and start to act on its own?" (p. 78). This point can also be turned towards animals. C.G. Jung (1946, as cited by Midgley, 1983) comments on what women and animals have in common, through psychological factors and claims that "they are mysterious – that is, things not fully understood and integrated into a safe, conscious, daytime existence. They are therefore frightening" (p. 79). Another interesting point lies in how humans view the suffering of animals. People who harm animals are accused of setting up a "psychological defence" (Midgley, 1983, p. 80) which enables them to change sentiments. In relation to a perpetrator who will abuse an animal, it is interesting as they will not see an animal as an animal, a living creature, but merely as a device used for punishment and for others suffering:

... what matters is not our sentiments, but the facts in the world, to which our feelings as well as our thoughts should be appropriate... the inability to see the real, suffering animal for a haze of aestheticism, misplaced piety and emotional projections (Midgley, 1983, p. 80).

Animals are considered differently in this state and their consciousness ignored.

In his book, Taylor (2003) uses the term "companion animals" (p. 80), rather than 'pets'. This would automatically suggest that a pet is more than merely an animal, but a friend, immediately highlighting the emotional attachment. Taylor (2003) talks in depth about suffering that animals endure and obligations that we as humans have towards this pain. Taylor (2003) describes how animal distress is viewed in a similar way to human suffering and therefore humans feel a need to interfere wherever possible, whether it is with domesticated or wild animals. However, it is interesting to note that Nel Noddings (1984, as cited by Taylor, 2003), a feminist writer, believes that animal suffering is acceptable and justified if it prevents human suffering and pain. She strongly rejects the claim that animals have "the same level of moral claim upon us that human beings do" (Taylor, 2003, p. 81), thus providing an opposing angle towards viewing human-animal relationships.

Merchant (1996), a leading thinker in environmentalism, focuses on feminism and the environment. She looks at modern day social movements, which have forced women into addressing ideals that go against nature and themselves. Cultural feminists and cultural eco-feminists have consciously recognised the difference between animals and humans; females and males; people and nature, leading to dominance and submission, as "the advent of patriarchy initiates a long decline in the status of women and nature" (Merchant, 1996, p. 52). Domination is a concept that is clearly established by Merchant (1996), as throughout time, women have become submissive to man:

Feminism, postmodernism and critical theory all suggest alternatives to totalizing histories, while attempting to move beyond problems of the domination of nature and people. Liberation entails recognising that nature is a real autonomous actor rather than a passive object of experimentation and utility (p. 72).

Women and minorities should therefore be recognised as independent, existent beings. Plumwood (1993, as cited by Merchant, 1996) recognised that women's tasks, skills and knowledge have real value and significance in the ecological way of life. Plumwood (1993, as cited by Merchant, 1996) links animals with women, as both share similar characteristics, such as needs for food, shelter, space and freedom and have abilities to feel pain and suffer.

Domination is again emphasised by Merchant (2004), by re-inventing the natural world and women's place within it, with an emphasis here on partnership. By recreating earth, according to Merchant (2004), humans can all live more harmoniously. She draws on the words of Thomas Huxley (1824-95), a Darwinian who also expressed desire to re-create the world. He envisioned a land; "where every plant and every lower animal should be adapted to human wants" (Merchant, 2004, p. 110). This will hence create, "an earthly paradise, a true garden of Eden, in which all things should work together towards the well-being of the gardeners" (Merchant, 2004, p. 110). 'Gardeners' here could be seen to be men, as all women are included in the term 'nature'. Dominance is again given further emphasis as Merchant (2004) explains, "the principle that savagery could progress to civilisation was embraced by many post-Civil War Americans to justify their taming of nature through domination" (p. 110). If women and animals are included in the term 'nature', it is interesting to note how they are referred to as needing to be 'tamed', an aspect still obviously rooted in certain aspects of today's society, as women and animals still suffer in the hands of their male counterparts. This leads on to Merchant's (2004) definition of 'domestic partners' and for sustainable partnerships to exist, Merchant (2004) suggests, "equity between the human and nonhuman communities...moral consideration for both humans and other species [and] inclusion of women, minorities, and nonhuman nature in the code of ethical accountability" (p. 224). Feminists have also contributed to the concept of a partnership ethic. In the 'Chalice and the Blade', Riane Eisler (1988, as cited by Merchant, 2004) uses the dominator model and the partnership model to illustrate how one sex is ranked higher than the other. The Chalice, however, represents a notion of male-female linking and "its recovery offers hope for an egalitarian political and economic society in the future" (p. 232).

Child Abuse and Pet Abuse

The final theme, which in some areas has already been addressed, is the link to child abuse, an area that has resulted in growing concern, when in relation to family pet relationships. Brinegar (1992) briefly touches upon the mistreatment of pets, giving an example of how a boy once had to eat his pet rabbit for dinner, forced upon him by his father. This makes it very easy to see the link between pet abuse and child abuse. According to Brinegar (1992), violence against pets usually represents "a prelude to physical violence" (p. 16) and that victims should take precautions to prevent the escalation of this violence.

A study by Baldry (2003) focuses on how children are affected by witnessing animal abuse through interpersonal violence. Results are in line with the social learning theory model. According to Baldry (2003), children exposed to domestic violence are at a high risk of developing psychological maladjustment, including aggressive behaviour or withdrawal, poor school performance, depression and anxiety. Seeing animals suffer in the hands of parents can therefore be truly damaging. Women were asked about the prevalence of violence against their pets, committed by their partners and whether the children witnessed violence against their pets. Results indicated that 71% of the women said pets were abused by partners and 32% said children were exposed (Baldry, 2003).

Conclusions

From extensively studying this literature, there is a clear and compelling case for the current study's line of argument. It will add to recent knowledge as well as filling the gap of addressing *why* a woman will not leave a pet, making it easier to understand and therefore provide recommendations for the issue. This research will therefore make a strong contribution to understanding the phenomenon of the family pet. The history of the previous research provided a precedent for carrying out the current study. A willingness to question statistics, however, has been included, especially those that have been used to further an

argument and support a particular situation. The appropriateness of interpretation has also been assessed. As this is such a sensitive and emotional issue, it can be argued that it is difficult to remain objective when assessing literature, as those studying it may be inclined to agree and support it immediately, given the nature of the topic (Lee, 1993). However, ultimately, it should be remembered that all previous work has its limitations and these cannot be ignored. This extensive study, regardless of the flaws however, provides a full analysis of domestic violence and pet abuse, and has provided a clear pathway for the current study to occur, as Chapter Two, the methodology shows.

Chapter Two – Methodology

In order to research into whether pets are a decisive factor in women staying in abusive relationships, the subsequent study will locate and clarify the research question by undertaking primary research and analysing previous literature and the findings produced. By combining previous literature with an empirical study, the research is grounded in a better understanding and knowledge of the topic, and the researcher is able to comment first hand on any issues raised. This type of study is outlined by Dixon, Bouma and Atkinson (1987), who stated that, “observable, tangible, countable evidence or data can be gathered which is relevant to the question” (p. 18). This aim has been clearly covered in the literature review and empirical study. This information, using qualitative data, has been gathered through using questionnaires sent to refuge workers across the Staffordshire/West Midlands area.

This method will obtain the ‘sensory’ information required to make a detailed analysis of the extent of pet abuse and the effects and will provide discussion that relates back to previous literature. Using questionnaires and a literature review allowed the researcher to test data handling and analytical skills. The literature review covered books and journals from the Sage Online Journal database, found using the keywords; ‘domestic violence and pets’. This data was used for critical analysis and evaluation. The rationale for choosing the literature was to look at different ways the topic had been treated and the opposing angles and perspectives it can be viewed from, that is the human-animal bond (Dolan, 1999, Scruton, 2000, Midgley, 1983), and how this particularly relates to women with a family pet when experiencing domestic abuse. Studying the previous research enabled the researcher to analyse their own study, to compare and contrast, and to recognise pitfalls and areas of success. The literature review for the current study draws on both knowledge based elements and argumentational based elements (Hart, 1998). The literature covers an analysis of previous work on the topic, identifying leading researchers and concepts, definitions and theories and addressing and describing matters and arguments that other researchers have found important.

Refuges in the Staffordshire/West Midlands area were contacted by means of a Gatekeeper. A Gatekeeper, according to Giulianotti and Robertson, (2007) will advise and recommend throughout the research. The Gatekeeper for the current study came into contact with the researcher through a Work Based Learning placement, as the manager of a Domestic Violence refuge in Staffordshire. She therefore had knowledge of the topic, and was chosen as a Gatekeeper, due to her enthusiasm shown for combating abuse to animals in violent households. As a refuge manager, the Gatekeeper gave the research a good grounding as she was able to point out any problems and give advice and guidance in an area familiar to her. Subsequent phone calls informed the respondents of the researchers’ aims and purpose in undertaking such research and whether they would like to be involved. Fifty-nine questionnaires (*Appendix B*) were sent out to fifteen refuges with an information sheet (*Appendix A*) and covering letter (*Appendix C*). A covering letter is found to be useful when contacting respondents, for example, Goode and Hatt (1952) see it as an “appeal” to respondents as to why they should take part in the study and explaining the facts (p. 176). The covering letter in the current study was posted with the questionnaires reminding respondents of the previous phone call, and again stating the reasons for assisting with the study and how the results will be used.

When compiling the questionnaire for the current study, Sudman and Bradburn (1974, as cited by Lee, 1993) were focused upon, using their systematic framework for asking about sensitive topics on surveys. These suggestions and recommendations, they argue, will reduce under-reporting of, “behaviours normally regarded as threatening or sensitive” (p. 76). They advise researchers to use open rather than closed questions as respondents will be allowed to describe activities in words that are familiar to them. Whilst they agree that closed questions

on surveys do offer advantages in terms of reliability and ease of processing, they found that when 'pre-coded' questions are produced, respondents tend to avoid the most extreme answers, therefore under-reporting may occur. Sudman and Bradburn (1982, as cited by Lee, 1993), in a further study, advised using long questions when asking about behaviours and short questions when asking about attitudes. Longer questions can be used to provide the respondent with several cues and can simulate recall. However, it is not made clear from their discussion whether length alone encourages the reporting of 'sensitive' topics. The questionnaire used included a mixture of long and short, open and closed questions and no answers were pre-coded which offered respondents flexibility in their answers.

The advantages of using anonymous questionnaires have also been highlighted by Maynard and Purvis (1994), who stated that "the anonymous questionnaire is useful for gaining personal and confidential information that a respondent would be reluctant to tell an interviewer" (p. 112). The comparison used here against the interview technique, recognises the success of the anonymity of a questionnaire. This opinion is expressed by Judd, Smith and Kidder (1991) who state that questionnaires avoid the potential "interviewer bias" (p. 216). They also place less pressure for an immediate response on the subject. Refuge staff may require time to search through personal records for information and a questionnaire provides this opportunity. Issues concerning domestic violence combined with animal abuse are very sensitive and, as Maynard and Purvis (1994) suggest, respondents need to be assured of confidentiality. Hence, an information sheet was included outlining these issues to the refuge staff completing the questionnaire and asking them not to disclose any names, reminding respondents of anonymity and safeguarding the results; an important factor in any research regarding sensitive topics.

Before sending out the questionnaires, they were looked at by the Gatekeeper to make sure all information had been included and the phrasing of questions was accurate. Refuge workers were asked to fill in the questionnaire, not the women and children currently residing at the refuge. This was for reasons of ethical consideration and to gain approval. The ethical consideration of social research is assessed by Bulmer (2001). When dealing with sensitive topics, ethics of the study must be given the utmost importance:

In survey research, one important area concerns what the respondent is told about the auspices and purpose of the study, what are the conditions under which the addresses and names of respondents are used, how the data will be published, how anonymity of individual respondents will be preserved, and how the confidentiality of the final dataset will be safeguarded (Bulmer, 2001, p. 53).

All of these areas were covered in the information sheet. The areas covered on the questionnaire were employment details and background, whether they had knowledge of pet abuse being a recurrent factor in abusive relationships, schemes set up for Pet Fostering, any links with child abuse and future hopes and recommendations. This would provide the researcher with a fuller understanding of the problem, viewed by people working in the field. There was also a pre-paid stamped addressed envelope provided to boost the response rate. However, this caused difficulties as without knowing how many questionnaires were being returned from each refuge, an estimated guess had to be taken for postage prices, a problem studied by Goode and Hatt (1952). They suggest using a stamped addressed envelope but do highlight the problem of the included envelopes being thrown away, or the cost being incorrect. However, it has only recently been introduced that postage should be paid in terms of weight; therefore it was impossible to assess and recognise this pitfall in previous literature. In future only one questionnaire would be sent out but respondents would be encouraged to photocopy more and simply an addressed envelope provided for return. The questionnaires were returned to the Gatekeeper who informed the researcher, who could collect them.

When focusing more specifically on the research topic and question, social surveys have been used extensively in criminological research. Fraser and Francis (1998, as cited by Jupp, Davies and Francis, 2000) focus on such advantages of using a survey questionnaire:

...questionnaires are commonly accepted as an invaluable source of data about attributes, attitudes, values, personal experiences and behaviour; ...they generate data in a systematic fashion...and...they address the issue of reliability of information by reducing and eliminating difference in which questions are asked and how they are presented (p. 44).

They are arguably the best method therefore of collecting data on a sensitive issue. Their use will provide data essential for a fully grounded evaluation of the area under study. However, response rates of the mailed questionnaire presented a problem. The current study received fourteen out of a possible fifty-nine responses. The importance of a good response rate is outlined by Judd, Smith and Kidder (1991) as “response rate is the chief index of data quality in a survey because it defines the extent of possible bias from non response” (p. 216).

Therefore, a low response rate calls into question *any* conclusions based on the data, highlighting reliability and validity. However Judd, Smith and Kidder (1991) do note that although mailed surveys may present a low response rate, when they are targeted at specialised populations, as the current study is, response rates can reach respectable levels.

Research in general of violence in marriage against women has been studied by Hanmer and Leonard (1984). From having observed developments in this field of research, they believe that:

...good research questions (i.e. those which extend the analysis and our understanding and which suggest fruitful changes in policy) come only from working with those involved in trying to improve their situations, and with continuing study of a particular area over an extended period of time (p. 33).

The researchers are stating here, that it is only through empirically studying the focus group that problems can be addressed and changes made in accordance, possibly going as far as to say, regardless of the pitfalls that may occur due to such research. Addressing this problem came from research in women’s refuges, amongst other spheres. Hanmer and Leonard (1984) came to find that the state had a decisive bearing on what the extent of domestic violence was, especially in the early stages of how it was portrayed in statistics and in the media. Studies by Women’s Aid (n.d., as cited by Hanmer and Leonard, 1984) in particular aimed to reflect the truth behind how common domestic violence was becoming.

An interview with the RSPCA was to be arranged; nevertheless the people contacted did not get back in touch with the researcher. There are several reasons for this refusal to participate. Gillham (2000) stated that interviews are expensive and sometimes questionnaires are preferred as; “unless there is some very good reason or very strong appeal, people tend not to bother” (p. 14). Gillham (2000) suggests better planning beforehand. This reason is furthered by Devine and Heath (1999) who stated that refusals can be due to the nature of the topic itself or a general reluctance to participate in *any* survey. The e-mail sent to the RSPCA representatives was detailed and informative however to ensure maximum co-operation, and explained the purposes and rationale of the study, as Devine and Heath (1999) suggest. Wellings (1994, as cited by Devine and Heath, 1999) notes that, “some of the refusals were made indirectly but were nonetheless tantamount to an outright refusal. For example, people who made appointments only to subsequently break them” (p. 112). This scenario occurred in the current study, leading the researchers to believe that they did not want to ‘lose face’ or appear awkward or obstructive.

When focusing on the previous literature and the results obtained, Felthous and Kellert (1987, as cited by Merz-Perez and Heide, 2004) note problems faced when researching animal cruelty and human violence, especially when arguing the case for a link between the two. They found inconsistent findings shown in such a literature review of correlating research and

suggested possible remedies to address these problems, as “their review served as a critique to facilitate future research that might ultimately either validate or negate the proposed relationship” (Merz-Perez, 2004, p. 22). Felthous and Kellert (1987, as cited by Merz-Perez, 2004) assess problems with methodologies, especially those that do not define the behaviour of cruelty to animals. More importantly, they noted that a clearly articulated definition of personal aggression was seldom presented. Studies also only relied on one source of data; interviewing or records. This suggests that the current study may fall into this pitfall, as no interviews with refuge staff were included

This chapter has outlined the processes and strategies involved in pursuing this research regarding pets and domestic violence. The combination of a literature review and an empirical study has enabled the researcher to balance the line of argument, in assessing what has already been accomplished and how the current study will add to the existing knowledge. The techniques used in the current study have been critically analysed, and some methods were found to be more successful than others, as the mailed questionnaire did not achieve a high response rate, as the literature suggested, although the use of a Gatekeeper was rewarding for the researcher to gain access to information and a wider knowledge on the topic. In any further study, changes could be made accordingly. Chapter Three will move on to present the results from the returned questionnaires and the findings produced.

Chapter Three – Presentation of Findings

Out of a possible fifty-nine questionnaires sent out, fourteen were returned from Worcester, Stonham, Coventry and Wolverhampton (24%). The staff that filled out these questionnaires varied in the job titles and in the number of years in the profession. There were Support and Advocacy Workers, Independent Domestic Violence Advocates, Project Workers, Managers, Floating Support Workers, Hostel Co-ordinators, Senior Referrals and Admission Administrators. In general, many of the questionnaires reflected a knowledge and awareness of pet abuse within the home. The results were not formatted within a table, as there were several responses and answers given, as many open questions were included, where answers cannot be confined to a particular viewpoint or stance. The period of work varies between the refuge workers from 3 months to over 20 years, with the ages also varying.

Are you aware of any cases where a woman did not come to the refuge due to having pets at home?

Many cases were disclosed where the refuge workers were aware of cases where the woman would not leave her home due to having pets (71%). Many of the reasons were due to not wanting pets to go into shelter; (60%), not wanting pets to go to another home; (20%), and because they feared too much for their safety; (20%). It was interesting to note that there were some refuges in the area that accept pets, and this was previously unknown. The women are sometimes referred to these refuges, although spaces were mentioned to be limited.

Are you aware of any cases where there have been pets left behind when the woman moved to the refuge?

Cases were mentioned where pets were left behind when a woman moved into the refuge (71%), as well as examples in incidences where the women had found her own foster care (64%). The foster care found by the women themselves was usually a family member, friend or neighbour, and the refuges were informed of this.

Are you aware of any cases disclosed where there had been abuse to pets? In these cases, were children present in the home?

Pet abuse was mentioned in 8 of the questionnaires (57%), a total of 14 cases were cited and in nearly half of the cases mentioned, children were present (43%).

How much of an issue do you think the leaving of pets is for a woman experiencing domestic violence?

The end of the questionnaires gave the respondents the opportunity to give their views and opinions on whether leaving pets is an issue for women experiencing domestic abuse, and if it is regarded as a problem, what they would like to see happen. In 100% of the questionnaires received, the respondents felt that pet abuse was a problem and all provided recommendations or suggestions for what they would like to see happen to reduce the concern. The answers here were very encouraging and thorough, especially in terms of proving that pet abuse obviously is an issue as so many people in the field of work recognise it as such. All respondents saw pet abuse as problematic due to the following reasons. One respondent claimed that it could be an issue for women who have no other support available, for example from friends. Another respondent acknowledged the viewpoint that pets are considered as part of the family unit and this has an impact on the women and children, as they do not want to leave the pet behind as they feel responsible for the pets well being. The next respondent talked about how the women may have suffered domestic abuse and as a result, have become very isolated and hence, their pet is their only companion. Another respondent recognised how it was difficult for children as they do not understand why their pets cannot come to the refuge with them. A respondent from the Wolverhampton refuge stated that pet abuse was a “huge problem” and claimed it was a strong reason for women remaining in the abusive

relationship. One Coventry respondent even went as far as to compare leaving a pet to the same level as leaving a child, stressing how distressing it would be. Another respondent also compared leaving a pet to leaving a child, stating that the women may feel guilty and upset. A third respondent stated that pets are like children and therefore it is a major issue. She stated that in most cases the women really miss their pets and are very worried for their safety, as they fear the perpetrator will maltreat the pet. A respondent from Stonham stated that it was a big issue, especially as women are vulnerable when leaving and worry that by leaving the pets they will suffer abuse and neglect. She also looks at the effects on the children as pets are important sources of emotional support for them, which make the move to a refuge even more distressing.

If you do regard it as a problem then what would you like to see happen?

Many recommendations for the future were given, some of which had not been previously addressed or thought of. A general consensus is that the hostels could provide, or have contacts of those who could provide, foster care. They also propose more links with animal agencies and one respondent suggests possibly having a database of people willing to foster pets. This is a very interesting idea that has not been highlighted and could provoke further research. Another respondent stated that the animal shelters should advertise and publicise their services more widely, for example with leaflets. If links and partnerships are built with pet agencies and fosterers, women will be reassured of the security of their pets' well-being until a time when she is in a safe environment and is able to have the pets returned to her. One particular respondent focuses on the financial aspect, claiming there needs to be a free service (or at least at a minimal charge) for pets to be temporarily housed as most women experiencing domestic abuse flee with no money. To another respondent it was a problem and she suggested there should be a purpose built refuge to accommodate the pets or more foster homes. Overall, the respondents wanted to see more support in general for women experiencing domestic violence where their pets are concerned. A particular refuge worker stated that in most cases the women are torn as they cannot bring pets to refuges and they often cannot afford to put their pets into a temporary home. If they could put their pets somewhere safe which was free/inexpensive, then, according to this respondent, this would make the woman's decision to leave easier. She proposes services in line with pet fostering, and also advocates a system where pets can be looked after during the day if women need to attend court hearings or solicitors meetings. A Coventry respondent highlighted the issue that even if women get relocated, some landlords and local authorities will not accept pets in their accommodation, an issue again not previously thought of. She also mentions the financial aspect, as women cannot afford a service that looks after pets.

Therefore, although the limited response rate may initially be damaging to the results, the returned questionnaires do prove conclusively that pet abuse, within an abusive family home, is an increasing problem that needs to be established. As the responses given withheld the same general consensus, it can lead to assumptions that even if there had been a higher response rate, the results would have still been the same; revealing that pet abuse does occur and is a factor in a woman's decision to leave the perpetrator. Chapter Four will discuss and analyse these findings at length, and how they correlate to the previous literature and research discussed in Chapter One.

Chapter Four - Analysis and Discussion of Findings

The findings presented in Chapter Three not only support the existing knowledge discussed in the Literature Review but also contribute towards new knowledge. It is widely acknowledged by these professionals that women do not want to leave their pets behind, and therefore they are, and will continue to be, a factor when a woman makes the decision to leave the perpetrator. The findings are very much in line with the expectations, outlined by theorists such as Judd, Smith and Kidder (1991), who stated that the mailed questionnaire does achieve a low response rate. The suggestions from Maynard and Purvis (1994) and Fraser and Francis (1998, as cited by Jupp, Davies and Francis, 2000) however were followed, in relation to achieving a high response rate which brings into question why the response rate was not higher. Respondents were assured about anonymity, and were given a considerable amount of time in order to return the questionnaires, therefore giving them time available to search through records or files, for example. As Sudman and Bradburn (1974, as cited by Lee, 1993) stated, using closed questions would have made the results easier to format, as opposed to open questions, as the current study portrayed a variety of answers that were difficult to limit into certain categories.

As discussed in Chapter Two, Felthous and Kellert (1987, as cited by Merz-Perez, 2004) stated that 'pet abuse' or 'cruelty to animals' was hardly ever defined in research of this nature and therefore results concerning the topic come under scrutiny, as people have differing opinions on what constitutes as animal abuse. The results in the current study may fall into this drawback, as pet abuse was not defined. In future research, a leading sentence would define pet abuse and therefore the results would correlate as some instances may be ignored or included, if they did/did not fall under the definition outlined. Following Felthous and Kellert's (1987, as cited by Merz-Perez, 2004) recommendations, this current study may also have benefited from interviewing refuge staff to gain an overall understanding and better knowledge of the issue, avoiding the critique of only using one source of data.

The extent of pet abuse was not as high as possibly expected but this could be due to the low response rate. According to Arber (2001), a 60% response rate is acceptable for self-completion questionnaire surveys and anything lower will increase the likelihood that "the achieved sample will be biased" (p. 60). The response rate in the current study was 24% however, and therefore the results gained come under speculation. The low response rate can relate to the findings from Ascione, Weber and Wood (1997, as cited by Flynn, 2000) who stated that many of those who work with this population may have ignored pet abuse. With many respondents, therefore, it may not be an issue worth addressing. Ascione, Weber and Wood (1997, as cited by Flynn, 2000) also asked refuge workers questions regarding whether they asked intake questions about pet abuse or made conscious arrangements with animal welfare organisations. If this research was to be undertaken again, these questions would be included on the questionnaire, enabling researchers to find out whether the refuges do ask about pet abuse, and if not, this system could possibly be introduced, to make a conscious effort to eradicate the problem. Policies and systems could be adapted purely based on these findings.

Fourteen cases were mentioned concerning pet abuse, and considering that these were objectively and factually correlated, it does seem a high number when such a small amount of questionnaires were returned, and therefore would support the work of Hart (1998) who stated that sensitive topics should obtain objective responses. One particular respondent mentioned the 'fear' that a service user felt when arriving at the refuge, worrying that her partner would maltreat the animal she left behind. This was clearly explained by Flynn (2000) as he stated that the fear mechanism could be often used by the perpetrator in order to control their victim. This was a notion also strongly supported by Simmons and Lehmann (2007). As many of the researchers acknowledged the line of argument that pets are a factor in a woman's decision to

leave or stay with the perpetrator, the findings from the questionnaires completely supported this.

The research from Ascione, Weber, Thompson, Heath, Maruyama and Hayashi (2007) fell into complete comparison with the current study and achieved similar findings. They too questioned refuge staff members and found that women at shelters had emotional bonds with their pets and that children were often exposed to the violence (although children were only present in 43% of the cases mentioned in the current study). They found that a substantial amount of women delayed seeking shelter sooner due to owning a pet and many of the refuge workers in the current study also acknowledged this problem. A percentage of 85.4% of the respondents from the Ascione et al., (2007) study, reported that they had encountered women at their shelters who talked about pet abuse incidents, whereas in the current study the percentage was slightly lower; 71%. This could be due to the low response rate, or the fact that these surveys took place in different countries, as Ascione et al., (2007), conducted their study in America. These findings could promote further research into assessing how pet abuse is treated in different countries, and what provisions they have in place. Interestingly, only 83.3% of respondents from the Ascione et al., (2007) study, acknowledged that pet abuse may occur in the home, whereas this was acknowledged in the current study by 100% of the respondents. This could be due to cultural differences, as British studies have shown how pets are viewed in this country as family members and loyal companions (Dolan, 1999, Scruton, 2000).

The respondents, when assessing whether pet abuse was a problem, continually mentioned how pets are part of the family sphere. This shows a correlation with many of the findings and research undertaken in the literature review, such as Regan and Singer (1989, as cited by Cazaux and Beirne, 2006), Albert and Bulcroft (1988, as cited by Flynn, 2000) and Quinlisle (1999, as cited by Ascione et al., 2007). An interesting result in the current study however is that only 20% of women did not want to leave their pet due to fear for their safety, the highest reason being that they did not want them to go into shelter. Earlier discussions in Chapter One however, stated that the fear factor proved to be an overriding consideration when deciding to leave pets and this was not reflected in the current studies findings. Many of the respondents however, do comment on the guilt and responsibility women feel towards pets and this is mentioned frequently in the literature review (Stenius and Veysey, 2005, Taylor, 2003).

Those that work in this field advise a number of recommendations, such as pet friendly refuges, free, or inexpensive temporary shelter and more widely publicised services. Animal welfare services are mentioned frequently, which would support the findings from Lockwood (1998) but they often have limited spaces or do not publicise their services well enough and therefore are unheard of. In 64% of the cases mentioned in the current study, the women found foster care themselves which was not an option explored or highlighted in the previous literature. This is a high percentage and gives rise to the argument that the women would only feel the need to do this if her connection with the pet was strong, supporting the literature concerning humans and their relationships to pets.

The links to child abuse have also been explored as in 43% of the cases in the current study, children were present. This draws a parallel with the literature whereby theorists clearly associated pet abuse with child abuse; Brinegar (1992), Baldry (2003). Results from Baldry (2003) indicated that 32% of the women questioned said children were exposed, whereas the results in the current study were higher. As this research took place in 2003, it could be possible that pet abuse is increasing as a form of manipulation and as a result, more children are witnessing this act of cruelty, or perhaps child abuse was less visible in the literature or under researched.

From discussing the results obtained from the returned questionnaires, it is clear to see how similar they are to previous findings, giving rise to their validity and reliability. Although in some circumstances there are slight differences, possible explanations have been given into why these differences may have occurred. The themes that were covered in the literature review guided the questionnaires, without prior prompting, such as recognition for the existence of pet abuse, links to child abuse and the emotional ties and bonds women feel towards their pets. Having a higher response rate would have achieved a more balanced argument but it is without doubt that pet abuse and how it affects a woman's decision to leave the home is recognised by these professionals working in the field of domestic abuse.

Conclusions

Pets and the effects they face at the hands of perpetrators, in abusive households, is an area of study that evidently requires further research, especially as they have been conclusively found to be a strong indicator of why women choose to stay in such relationships. The previous literature has highlighted this and the empirical study has further evidenced the line of argument. In order to provide the current study with a structure and deeper understanding of the moral significance of pets, a review of previous literature was undertaken to engage with the main areas of study; previous research that has been undertaken in this field, the relationship humans have with animals and child abuse and pet abuse. The previous research drew attention to how under represented the topic was and gave plausibility to referring to pets as being forgotten in the literature. Underlying notions of why this abuse occurs were presented, namely that it is a way to control and further punish a partner. The use and prevalence of animal support organisations were also mentioned, although the current research did not achieve the aim of incorporating a conducted interview with such an organisation, due to difficulties faced in gaining access. Studies and consequent findings from several key researchers were found to be invaluable in establishing the extent of pet abuse and how this leads to women remaining in violent relationships, giving the current study strength and reasoning behind continuing the research into this area. The current study added to the knowledge already presented as it concentrated on the decision element of being in a violent partnership and established how pets could be, and are, a factor. Although this preceding research was criticised and sometimes flawed in its methodologies, on the whole it was found to be further proof of the extent and nature of pet abuse that occurs. It provided an insight into what results the current study may achieve.

Many researchers and theorists withhold the notion that humans have a strong emotional connection with their companion animals. This bond may be stronger in times of distress and therefore has a bigger impact. It was extremely important to include the moral significance of pets as this explains the reasoning behind the decision a woman has to make, as discussed in Chapter One. Nevertheless, it was established early on that many of these accounts and contributions to pet abuse in the family were frequently 'emotionally loaded' and therefore had to be viewed objectively, to see the true meanings and results that they produced, as discussed by Hart (1998) in Chapter One. As it is an under-reported crime, some subjective contributors may appear to make the topic seem more extensive than it is and this was recognised when analysing the literature. Nevertheless, the dependency and responsibility humans feel towards pets was discussed concurrently.

The empirical study aimed to address many of the issues raised in the literature review. The questionnaire formulated sought to address many concurring problems, such as what refuges and animal organisations did to help women and their pets, whether children were exposed to the animal violence and what prior knowledge those working in the field had of the topic. Some problems were addressed, such as the negative response from RSPCA representatives. In future, this could be solved, through possibly using other forms of communication, as a phone call and letter may have achieved a better response, rather than an e-mail which can be easily deleted or forgotten. There were also issues regarding postage as although a stamped addressed envelope was included for the return of questionnaires, depending upon how many were being returned, this may have required a higher postage amount being paid, as was shown in Chapter Two. In future, this setback could be prevented, through using an e-mailed questionnaire or simply providing an addressed envelope, giving the respondent the freedom to send back as many questionnaires as they felt necessary. Interviewing refuge staff may also be beneficial for future study, as a wider knowledge of the topic could be gained, given the low response rate of the mailed questionnaire.

Undertaking this study has enabled the research to gain a better understanding and knowledge of this hidden crime. It showed a degree of originality as no other studies have specifically addressed how pets relate to a woman's decision when in an abusive relationship. In order to tackle the problem, possible suggestions begin and end with a wider acknowledgment of this type of abuse and wider publicising of the services that are available. Similar research of this nature was undertaken by the Gatekeeper (Laughton, 2007), and results found that many of the support staff working at refuges, had little or no knowledge of the pet fostering schemes available in their areas. If more people became aware of the fact that pets are a factor in a woman's decision to leave home, then more could be done to help her. A wider acknowledgement and recognition needs to take place. Therefore the animal support agencies perhaps need to advertise their services more because if a victim of domestic abuse knows there are channels and options available, they may not feel an obligation to stay with the perpetrator, and henceforth, fewer animals will suffer at the hands of abusers.

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APPENDIX A

Information Sheet for Participants

My name is Hannah Cooksey and I am a 3rd Year Criminology student at the University of Chester. This questionnaire will be used towards a Dissertation, regarding Domestic Violence and the effects on Family Pets. The particular focus will be on whether or not family pets are a factor in a woman's decision to leave an abusive relationship. I became interested in this topic after a Work Based Learning Placement at the Pathway Project, an organisation committed to providing practical and emotional support to women and children who have experienced Domestic Abuse.

In any cases mentioned, all individuals will remain anonymous for confidentiality. All questionnaires will be kept in a locked cabinet and destroyed when the assignment is completed. None of the women or children residing in the refuges will be contacted, asked to fill in a questionnaire, or named, nor will the location of the refuges be identified. If you have any queries or concerns please contact my supervisor, Dr. Jane Jones, on 01244 511180 or email jane.jones@chester.ac.uk or Lynn Laughton at the Pathway Project on or email.....

APPENDIX B

Questionnaire

This questionnaire will aid my Dissertation to assess whether pets are a factor in a woman's decision to leave her abusive partner. The term; 'pets' is used here to refer to all types of animals, not just cats and dogs.

Could you please answer this questionnaire in relation to any existing knowledge you may have on the issues mentioned, not just recent cases.

1) What is your job title and role within the refuge?

2) How long have you worked at the refuge?

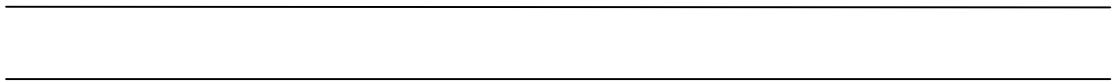
2a) Have you worked at any other refuges, and if so, for how long?

3) Please tick which age range you are in?

<input type="checkbox"/>	Under 20	<input type="checkbox"/>	20-29	<input type="checkbox"/>	30-39
<input type="checkbox"/>	40-49	<input type="checkbox"/>	50-59	<input type="checkbox"/>	60 +

4) Are you aware of any cases where a woman did not come to the refuge due to having pets at home?

<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>	Don't know
<input type="checkbox"/>	if yes, how many?	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	



4b) Were there any other services offered to the woman?

4c) Were any animal agencies contacted? If so, were they able to help?

5) Are you aware of any cases where there have been pets left behind when the woman moved to the refuge?

Yes

No

Don't know

5a) If yes, how many?

6) Are you aware of any cases where the woman found foster care for her pets?

Yes

No

Don't know

6a) If yes, where was this found?

7) Are you aware of any cases disclosed where there had been abuse to pets?

Yes

No

Don't know

7a) If yes, how many?

7b) In these cases, were children present in the home?

Yes No Don't know

8) How much of an issue do you think the leaving of pets is for a woman experiencing domestic violence?

9) If you do regard it as a problem then what would you like to see happen?

Thank you for taking your time to complete this questionnaire. Please return to:

F.A.O. Hannah Cooksey

APPENDIX C

Pathway Project

20th December 2007

Dear Madam,

I am writing to you regarding research concerning Pets and Domestic Abuse. Following my telephone conversation with your office on the 19th December, as discussed, please find enclosed a questionnaire for refuge and outreach workers in relation to whether pets are a factor in a woman's decision to leave or stay in an abusive relationship. Please see the information sheet for further information.

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire.

I look forward to receiving your response in due course.

Yours faithfully,

Hannah Cooksey