



**Life
Course
Centre**

WORKING PAPER SERIES

No. 2025-14

July 2025

The transformative power of domestic and sexual violence support agencies

Leading change at an individual and
societal level

Madison Lloyd
Alice Campbell
Amie Carrington
Janeen Baxter

The Australian Research Council Centre of Excellence
for Children and Families over the Life Course
Phone +61 7 3346 7477 **Email** lcc@uq.edu.au
lifecoursecentre.org.au



Australian Government
Australian Research Council



**THE UNIVERSITY
OF QUEENSLAND**
AUSTRALIA



THE UNIVERSITY OF
SYDNEY



THE UNIVERSITY OF
**WESTERN
AUSTRALIA**



THE UNIVERSITY OF
MELBOURNE

Research Summary

Why was the research done?

Domestic, family and sexual violence (DFSV) is a pervasive and growing issue in Australia. Despite government-led national plans to reduce this violence in Australia, there is evidence that rates are increasing and incidences are becoming more severe. DFSV support agencies offer a range of services to support victim-survivors including targeted support to assist clients to leave violent relationships, access housing, legal and counselling support, as well as offering emotional and social support and support to recognise and define abusive and violent behaviour. We argue that these services also have the potential to lead to social change at a structural level as suggested by a reverse dominance coalition framework.

What were the key findings?

We use data from interviews of victim-survivors to illustrate the applicability of the reverse dominance coalition framework to DFSV support services. We find that the framework offers a means of understanding how support at an individual level to victim-survivors also has broader transformative power to change societal awareness, attitudes and responses. We conclude that DFSV agencies not only assist DFSV victims to recover and heal but also play a leadership role in promoting broader changes at the community, policy and societal level.

What does this mean for policy and practice?

Previous ANROWS attitudinal research shows that the Australian public has a long way to go in improving awareness and understanding of gender inequality and DFSV in particular (Coumarelos et al., 2021). Their data show a plateau in attitudes since 2017, suggesting the need for more targeted strategies. DFSV recovery agencies provide one means of creating this change through victim-survivor support that also fills the broader function of a reverse dominance coalition. This would not only assist DFSV victims to recover and heal but may also lead to broader changes at the community, policy, and societal level.

Citation

Lloyd, M., Campbell, A., Carrington, A., & Baxter, J. (2025). 'The transformative power of domestic and sexual violence support agencies: Leading change at an individual and societal level', Life Course Centre Working Paper Series, 2025-14. Institute for Social Science Research, The University of Queensland.

The authors

Ms. Madison Lloyd

ARC Centre of Excellence for Children and Families over the Life Course

Email: madison.lloyd@uq.edu.au

www.lifecoursecentre.org.au

Dr. Alice Campbell

School of Social Sciences, University of Tasmania

Email: Alice.Campbell@utas.edu.au

<https://discover.utas.edu.au/Alice.Campbell>

Ms. Amie Carrington

Domestic Violence Action Centre

<https://dvac.org.au/>

Prof. Janeen Baxter

ARC Centre of Excellence for Children and Families over the Life Course

Email: j.baxter@uq.edu.au

www.lifecoursecentre.org.au

Acknowledgements/Funding Sources

We are very grateful to the participants in this study who generously gave their time and shared their experiences and wisdom with us. We would also like to acknowledge and thank our partner Specialist Domestic and Family Violence agency for making the research possible and for providing support to recruit and interview participants. This research was funded by the Australian Research Council Centre of Excellence for Children and Families over the Life Course (CE200100025) and supported by the Australian Research Council Laureate Fellowship (FL230100104).

DISCLAIMER: The content of this Working Paper does not necessarily reflect the views and opinions of the Life Course Centre. Responsibility for any information and views expressed in this Working Paper lies entirely with the author(s).

This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/).



We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the lands on which we work and live across Australia.
We pay our respects to Elders past and present and recognise their continued connections
to land, sea and community.

Introduction

Domestic, family and sexual violence (DHSV) is a pervasive systemic issue that disrupts the lives of millions of Australians. In 2016, Australian police received an average of 5,000 HSV related complaints per week (Hill, 2025). Since 2016, this figure has doubled to 10,000 weekly incidents; one every minute (Hill, 2025). In 2023, one in two police-reported assaults were related to HSV (excluding Victoria) (AIHW, 2024). While these figures are alarming, they likely under-estimate the true prevalence of HSV due to under-reporting (AIHW, 2024). According to the 2021-22 Personal Safety Survey, approximately 27% (2.7 million) of Australian women and 15% (1.5 million) of Australian men have suffered economic abuse, emotional abuse, physical violence, or sexual violence at the hands of a cohabitating partner since the age of fifteen (ABS, 2023). The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) (2025) reports that between 2022-23, one woman was killed every 11 days and one man was killed every 91 days by an intimate partner. Concerningly, risk of domestic homicide increases drastically when victim-survivors attempt to escape violence by separating from their abuser (AIHW, 2025).

Victim-survivors report numerous personal and systemic barriers to escaping and recovering from HSV. Personal barriers include anticipated or actual threat of violence by a partner, coercive control, financial hardship, lack of confidence in the criminal justice process, societal stigma, and legal systems abuse (manipulation of civil processes such as child custody, child support, and domestic violence orders) (Artz, 2011; Douglas, 2017; Heron & Eisma, 2021; Summers, 2022). Systemic barriers include lack of action and understanding of the complexities of HSV from legal services, lack of easily accessible information about legal processes, long wait times, and poor communication between victim-survivors and care providers (social workers, healthcare workers, police, and legal staff) (Artz, 2011; Hulley et al., 2023). These barriers contribute to high rates of unreported HSV and uniquely high rates of complainant withdrawal from domestic violence cases (ABS, 2023; Douglas & Fitzgerald, 2024).

The importance of specialist HSV services for supporting survivors' healing and recovery cannot be overstated (Howarth & Robinson, 2016; Sullivan, 2018; Hester & Lilley, 2018; Campbell et al., 2024). Victim-survivors experience a range of consequences, including trauma-related mental health problems, financial hardship, social isolation, and physical impacts (Campbell et al., 2025; Fitzpatrick et al., 2022). The Second National Plan to End Violence Against Women and Children recognises that recovery is an essential component of its holistic approach by naming 'Recovery and Healing' as a priority area (Department of Social Services, 2022). The Plan acknowledges that victim-survivors often require life-long support to recover

from the impacts of violence and prevent the perpetuation of the cycle of abuse (Department of Social Services, 2022).

Most DFSV support and recovery agencies focus on the needs of individual victim-survivors. The explicit rationale for most domestic violence recovery and support agencies is to provide trauma-informed support to facilitate recovery, healing and empowerment for individuals (Williams et al., 2024). In this paper, we contend that specialist DFSV services are not only key agents of recovery, healing and prevention at the individual level, but may also play a crucial role in broader social transformation toward gender equality by building what Evans (2023) refers to as reverse dominance coalitions. Evans (2023) argues that inequalities persist when they are normalised and celebrated by society, with cultural change only possible when large collectives of people speak out in solidarity, develop alliances and collectively establish expectations of equality. Evans labels these change-making collectives as ‘Reverse Dominance Coalitions.’ In this paper, we argue that specialist DFSV services can function as a type of reverse dominance coalition that supports progress toward gender equality, and explicitly a form of organised, collective resistance to the gender inequalities that DFSV feeds off and reproduces (Evans, 2023).

To investigate this proposition, we analyse interview data collected from women who had accessed support from a specialist DFSV service in South-East Queensland. Our analyses map these data against the functions of reverse dominance coalitions as outlined by Evans (2023). While specialist DFSV services founded in feminist principles have historically embraced social transformation and women’s collective empowerment as part of their mission (Sullivan, 2018), our review of the literature revealed a lack of explicit frameworks to explain how services can meet these dual goals and provide a bridge to explain connections between personal change at the individual level and structural change at the societal level. Our study demonstrates how drawing on a reverse dominance coalition framework enhances understandings of the transformative power of the services offered by domestic violence support agencies.

Reverse Dominance Coalitions

Evans (2023) defines reverse dominance coalitions as a group of people in solidarity, who support each other to counter dominant cultural narratives of inequality. The dominant patriarchal narrative enables violence against women, by normalising gender inequality, encouraging victim-blaming, and reinforcing barriers to escaping violence (Kreft, 2023). Although attitudinal survey data suggests that most Australian men support gender equality and reject violence against women, a minority of men endorse aspects of sexism and traditional

models of manhood (Flood, 2024; Webster et al., 2020). Concerningly, there has been little change in men's attitudes towards male aggression, male stoicism, gendered roles in domestic labour, and homophobia in the last five years (Flood, 2024). The current paper argues that specialist DFSV services may also help to build reverse dominance coalitions, by supporting victim-survivors to overcome the dominant culture narratives that trap them in abusive relationships.

At a more conceptual level, reverse dominance coalitions may also provide a framework for linking individual and social change. Empowerment to change one's circumstances is often conceptualised at a specific level – individual, community or social. Moreover, some theorists would argue that there is a tension between empowerment at different levels because a focus on power at one level diverts attention from an understanding of power at other levels (Cattaneo & Goodman, 2015; Masterson & Owen, 2006). But an alternative approach is that both are necessary. “Helping individuals to feel more personally powerful will have a limited effect without social change to allow that power to be exercised. Likewise, social change will not be empowering if individuals perceive themselves as unable to make use of those changes” (Masterson & Owen, 2006, p. 26). Further, power dynamics at the social level may be internalized at the individual level, with profound impact on how people understand their situation and the possibility of changing it (Tew, 2006). The reverse dominance coalition approach may provide a framework for understanding how DFSV services both support personal change by supporting individuals to recover from domestic violence and structural change by building coalitions and alliances that resist acceptance of abuse and inequality.

Evans (2023) describes five functions of reverse dominance coalitions: 1. Nurture critical reflection, causing people to question inequalities. 2. Reinforce righteous resistance. 3. Build sorority and protect dissenters from bullying. 4. Show wider support for equality and overcome despondency traps. 5. Shift expectations that sexism will not be tolerated. Although the reverse dominance coalition framework (Evans, 2023) has not been applied to the DFSV recovery context, existing research suggests the effectiveness of similar alliance-generating movements aiming to for social transformation toward equality (Geis et al., 2023). Below, we apply each reverse dominance coalition function to the DFSV context and summarise existing supporting evidence.

1. Nurture critical reflection, causing people to question inequalities

The first function of reverse dominance coalitions is nurture critical reflection, causing people to question inequalities. In the context of DFSV recovery services, the coalition encourages

victim-survivors to reflect on their relationship and question if the abuse they endured is acceptable. Perpetrators of DFSV often minimise and normalise domestic abuse to maintain control over their partner and ensure they cannot escape the abuse (Wilcock, 2025). This is further supported by the persistent traditional gender norms that normalise and minimise coercive control behaviours (Wilcock, 2025). Freyd (1997) defined the technique of DARVO (Deny, Attack, Reverse Victim and Offender roles) where the offender offsets blame of their wrong doings onto others, specifically the victim. DARVO techniques are effective at influencing observer's attributions of victim credibility, responsibility, and abusiveness (Harsey & Freyd, 2020). When combined with perpetrator tactics such as gaslighting and coercive behaviour, abusers can manipulate victim-survivors' perceptions of the abuse they are enduring, thereby fortifying barriers to escaping violence. Recovery services that prioritise condemning and de-normalising abusive behaviour, enable victims to question the inequalities within their relationship and desist from their abuser (Cattaneo & Goodman, 2015).

2. Reinforce righteous resistance

Building on the first function, the second function of recovery services as a reverse dominance coalition is reinforcing victim-survivors' resistance against DFSV. As outlined in the first function, reverse dominance coalitions aid victim-survivors to question the abuse in their relationships and encourages a moral rejection of these inequalities. Social support that empowers and reinforces this rejection is critical with existing literature consistently demonstrating the importance of social support (Anderson, Renner, & Danis, 2012; Greenfield & Marks, 2010; Nolet et al., 2021; Ogbe et al., 2020)

Nolet and colleagues (2021) argue that victim-survivors partially base their decisions about whether to stay or leave a violent partner on the expectations of their community and immediate social circles. Survivors' relational autonomy tends to increase after leaving their partner and receiving initial social support, but maintaining autonomy can become challenging after exiting emergency shelters and support services (Nolet et al., 2021). Informal social networks help maintain survivors' autonomy in the longer term, thus increasing their likelihood of successful recovery (Nolet et al., 2021). Anderson and colleagues (2012) also found that social support was instrumental in developing victim-survivor growth and resilience. Interview participants stressed that social support was most imperative during the first two years following separation from their abuser due to the affirmation, encouragement, stability, and resources they provide (Anderson, Renner, & Danis, 2012). Similarly, Geis et al. (2023) highlighted the importance of social networks and alliances across university communities for young people seeking to reduce gender violence on university campuses.

3. Build sorority and protect dissenters from bullying

The third function of reverse dominance coalitions is to build sorority and protect dissenters from bullying. In the context of DFSV, recovery services create a community of women who disavow violence against women and provide protection from abusers and the people and systems that enable them. Previous studies highlight human connection, belonging, and pro-social relationships as imperative to domestic violence recovery (Machisa et al., 2018; Mughal et al., 2024; Sullivan 2018; Tan, 1995). The evidence reveals that recovery services that prioritise social well-being and foster informal relationships consistently increase victim-survivor resilience, sense of self-efficacy, and optimism for the future (Sullivan 2018). The analysis revealed that informal social support helps victim-survivors identify sources of support (i.e. pro-social relationships, and support services) and sources of toxicity (those who enable abuse, and the abuser) in their environment (Alcantud et al., 2020). Informal networks increase awareness of their available resources (i.e., housing, moving, childcare, and financial aid), contribute to improved mental health and guide survivors to reflect upon their experiences (Alcantud et al., 2020).

4. Show wider support for equality and overcome despondency traps

The fourth function of reverse dominance coalitions is demonstrating wider support for equality and overcoming despondency traps (Evans, 2023). Domestic violence does not end once victim-survivors escape their abuser, and the systems in place to protect them may be retraumatising (Douglas & Fitzgerald, 2024). For victim-survivors, “violence has two key stages: what is done to them by the perpetrator, and what is done to them by the “system”” (Hill, 2025, p. 99). These barriers to achieving justice may cause victim-survivors to become discouraged and lose hope due to a lack of progress. Unfortunately, this despondency often causes women to return to their abuser, become re-victimised, or withdraw legal complaints (ABS, 2023; Douglas & Fitzgerald, 2024). Recovery services that counter despondency traps are essential in ensuring recovery. The evidence reveals that recovery services which prioritise social wellbeing and foster informal relationships increase victim-survivor resilience, sense of self-efficacy, and optimism for the future (Sullivan, 2018).

In a meta-analysis of domestic violence recovery services, Alcantud and colleagues (2020) find that informal social support is essential in ensuring the longevity of desistance from the abuser. Additionally, recovery services that foster a sense of community and belonging improve victim-survivor mental health, and desistance from further abuse (Greenfield & Marks, 2010; Ogbe et

al., 2020). In their systematic literature review, Ogbe and colleagues (2020) find that domestic violence interventions which utilised strong community linkages and community networks had a significant positive effect on victim-survivors' mental health. Ogbe and colleagues (2020) suggest these interventions are successful as community acts as a source of support, allowing survivors to develop healthy coping strategies.

5. Shift expectations that sexism will not be tolerated.

The last function of recovery services as a reverse dominance coalition, is to shift expectations that sexism, specifically violence against women, will not be tolerated. Research by the Australian National Research Organisation for Women's Safety (ANROWS) shows that community attitudes to DFSV are gradually shifting over time to recognise and reject abuse and violence, but there is still a long way to go (Coumarelos et al., 2021). Their research shows that Australians have a significantly broader understanding (greater recognition that certain forms of behaviour are a form of violence and should not be condoned) of DFSV than in the past, and are more likely to reject gendered violence and inequality in 2021 compared to 2013. But the trends plateaued between 2017 and 2021 suggesting that further specific measures are needed to further shift attitudes (Coumarelos et al., 2021).

Recovery services can play a key role here, including shifting attitudes of victims themselves to help them recognise their circumstances as part of an abusive relationship. Supporting abuse victims to critically reflect on their circumstances and then take steps to change it or leave an abusive relationship is an important first step in recovery. For some women, a key motivation for commencing DFSV recovery is protecting children from further abuse, and to increase understanding of DFSV to avoid it in future (Evans & Feder, 2016). Recovery services can also mobilise awareness amongst other groups, including legal, housing, financial, schools and medical services, that brings broader awareness and rejection of DFSV. Lobbying government to raise awareness and increase funding is also an important component of recovery services role in highlighting the existence of DFSV and shifting attitudes.

In the remainder of the paper, we use data collected from interviews with clients of a specialist domestic and family violence organisation in South-East Queensland to examine whether the reverse dominance coalition framework outlined above is appropriate for explaining and understanding the services provided by the organisation. In doing so, we hope that this framework might then provide a foundation for the development and organisation of other domestic violence service organisations, enabling them to structure and prioritise their services

as well as use the framework as a basis for generating funding, resources and support for their operations. More broadly, we hope to provide greater understanding of the role of service agencies such as domestic violence recovery organisations or others supporting socially disadvantaged groups in not only supporting their clients, but also in advocating for social change and countering disadvantage and inequality more broadly.

Data and Methods

In 2023, a team of researchers conducted semi-structured interviews with eleven victim-survivors of family and domestic violence who had engaged with and were close to exiting a specialist DFSV service in South-East Queensland. These interviews aimed to gain insight into how survivors were supported, the challenges and barriers they encountered, and any additional supports they needed to facilitate their journeys to recovery. Semi-structured interviews were conducted as they allowed research participants to tell their stories in their own words while still enabling researchers to compare across cases and identify common themes. See Campbell et al. (2024) for a report detailing early findings.

Given their expertise and existing relationship with their clients, the agency staff identified and invited survivors to participate in this research. This was crucial for ensuring that only survivors in a safe and stable environment would be approached to participate. The agency provided potential participants with information sheets explaining the research in an accessible manner. Once survivors expressed interest in participating, the agency connected them with the research team.

Considering the potential vulnerabilities of the women who engage in these services, the interviews were conducted in a sensitive and trauma-informed way. Measures were taken to ensure the ethical inclusion of participants, including emphasising the voluntary nature of the research, reiterating that participants were welcome to withdraw at any point, purposefully implementing a two week period before agreeing to participate and the scheduled interview to allow participants the time to reflect on their involvement with the study, ensuring all participants remained anonymous outside the research team, and ensuring that participants understood the purpose of the study. Survivors were connected with their agency support worker to debrief following the interview, if they chose to. In appreciation of their contribution to the research, survivors who participated received a \$50 gift voucher.

With the participants' consent, the interviews were recorded and later transcribed. All identifying information was redacted from the interview transcripts. One participant opted not

to be recorded, and in this case, detailed notes were taken by the interviewer. Prior to commencing the research, the study was approved by our institution's Human Research Ethics Committee (number: [removed for peer review]).

A deductive thematic analysis was conducted by the research team. In the first instance the data were examined and coded gain an understanding of survivors' experiences engaging with a specialist DFSV service, the most useful aspects of the support received from the service, and the major challenges that survivors face on their journeys to safety and healing (Campbell et al., 2024). A deeper and more targeted coding exercise was then undertaken utilising the five elements of Reverse Dominance Coalitions outlined above. The data were examined to see if the framework was useful for explaining participants' experiences. Drawing on the five functions of reverse dominance coalitions as potential themes, the data were coded and analysed to identify whether there was evidence to support these themes. After coding was completed, interview examples for each of the core themes were extracted, synthesised, and are presented in this paper. Given the small number of participants and high risk to them if they are identified, we have made the conscious decision not to include participant numbers when presenting interview quotes. We see this as a necessary measure to ensure the participants' identities remain confidential.

A note on intersectionality of oppression

Acknowledging and respecting the diversity of women's experiences, beliefs, culture and background is an important step in ensuring anti-oppressive and awareness practices. We also need to acknowledge that many people may experience oppression or inequality on a number of fronts – for instance, they may experience sexual oppression, racism, or be treated violently or unfairly due to level of ability, sexual orientation, age, marital status, class or income level. When this happens, victim survivors are experiencing multiple forms of oppression. The multiple types of oppression can intersect with each other in various and unique ways and may be experienced as “layering” on top of each other. The victim-survivors involved in the current study came from diverse backgrounds. Some were Caucasian, some from First Nations and others were migrants from countries other than Australia. All the participants were mothers. We acknowledge the limitations of the research sample and emphasise the importance of recognising the diversity of experiences and voices in our data. Our analyses do not amplify or unpack this diversity, focusing instead on the unifying elements that fit with the main elements of the reverse dominance coalition framework. Future studies, perhaps with larger and more diverse samples, would be well-placed to examine the applicability of reverse dominance coalitions from an intersectional perspective.

Findings

The participants were at different stages of their recovery journeys. Some participants were currently experiencing abuse, others had left their abuser and were still using the DFSV service, while others had recently finished their journeys with the agency. Similarly, the abuse described by the participants differed significantly, demonstrating the diversity of DFSV experiences. Despite this diversity we found considerable evidence to support the reverse dominance coalition as a potential explanatory framework to explain the experiences of the participants and the work of the agency. In most of the interview excerpts reproduced below we see the participants primarily explaining how the domestic violence agency supported their own personal journey of survival, change and recovery. But we also see evidence of the possibilities of broader social transformation at a societal and structural level.

The analytical results are presented below.

1. Nurture critical reflection, causing people to question inequalities

The first function of reverse dominance coalitions is to nurture critical reflection, causing people to question inequalities. During their sessions, the domestic violence agency nurtured victim-survivors' critical reflection on their abusive relationships and supported them to understand their experiences as domestic violence. This recognition allowed victim-survivors to begin their journey to recovery.

A significant aspect of these services involves educating victim-survivors about domestic violence, coercive control, and patterns of abuse helping them to recognise their experience as domestic violence. Learning how abusers manipulate their partners allowed some victim-survivors to recognise coercive control in their own relationships, allowing them to begin recovery.

"She's [agency counsellor] also helped me to understand a lot of things that I wouldn't have thought were abuse, sort of thing. Like just really unpacking it all...that was a big thing, helping me to realise the cycle and now it's plain as day now."

And from another participant:

"Now that I'm out I'm learning about trauma bonds. I think that's what the problem for me was. That's what the problem was with me not being able to – feeling like I couldn't leave."

Both examples above indicate individual questioning and change. But there is also evidence of questioning of inequality at a broader level. Some participants identified that prior to engaging

with the domestic violence recovery agency they did not understand the nature of domestic violence and coercive control. One participant highlighted that although they were familiar with domestic violence, they did not understand how women become trapped in abusive relationships and believed that DFSV was not something that could happen to her.

“I came from a background – I had never understood DV before. I mean, I came from a really good family, private school, I’ve got ... degrees...so for me, I never really understood – you heard about DV, and this is back in 2020, 2021. Then I met someone who basically became my worst nightmare and was everything that ticked the boxes of what a perpetrator of DV was... I think until that happens to you, you don’t realise what it is until you’re in that situation. From now, I would never judge anyone.”

For this participant then, there is evidence of a rethinking about the causes of violence and recognition that victims should not be blamed. The objective framing of domestic violence from the agency allowed them to view their experiences through a new, unbiased lens. For victim-survivors, this new perspective disempowered the abuser’s manipulation of abuse as normal relationship behaviour.

The agency also gave victim-survivors the language to describe what they had experienced, which allowed them to communicate with community and service providers outside of the domestic violence recovery service to ask for the help they needed. Two comments from different participants on this theme are:

“[Domestic violence recovery service] was that first step. That first step to being able to open up and wake up and realise that everything that I did go through was real and was domestic violence.”

And from another:

“That was really eye opening for me because, you know, you have a perception of domestic violence as I...recognise so many people do, that it’s this thing, you know. Seeing it in black and white on paper of, well this is actually what domestic violence is. That coercive control and how that can be applied – like how that occurs in so many different areas, or different ways of controlling people. Then that helped me to start processing the other ways what had been happening to me prior ...

Coming to terms with their victimisation was often empowering for victim-survivors, allowing them to question and remove the negative self-beliefs instilled by the abuse that they had experienced.

“Particularly because I didn’t realise some of it had been domestic violence to start with. Then when I realised it had been, that’s kind of where it all came and everything is just there. It all makes sense. It all falls in. I’m not stupid.”

Another commented:

“She gave me a lot of advice so she just, I guess, brought me out of my shell for me to be able to talk about what had happened to me, but also for me to realise more so what I’ve been through as well. Because you don’t always realise that it is a domestic violence situation until – I mean, I knew it was but I just didn’t realise how badly it had affected me as well.

The realisation that they had experienced domestic violence was confronting for one participant. She noted the importance of the unwavering support from her agency support worker, which allowed her to process the realisation of the extent of her abuse.

“She made me realise a lot more of what was going on that was domestic violence related. It was very heavy stuff to process, and she helped me through that. She was always checking me.

Realising their experiences of domestic violence enabled some victim-survivors to reflect on the inequalities that enabled their abuse. The victim-survivors reflected on the role of generational violence and the transmission of gender attitudes in their abuse.

“I think the biggest thing was you don’t see, because when you live in abuse as such in your childhood, you never see the red flags of what potential issues could arise. You don’t see them, and so...It’s normal ... The little – the insidious, just all the time and you just start to believe – but yes, from my parents too, because the woman just has to follow on...and that was what women grew up in. But to have someone who could add clarity to that has been a saving grace, but I would – otherwise you just spiral and end up being in a little hole. That’s been really, really great to have that sounding board.”

Again, we see in the above quote, some evidence of how the victim-survivor’s personal journey of self-realisation is reflected in a broader questioning of the ways childhood experiences influence adult patterns of behaviour and outcomes, including across generations. It is this critical self reflection that enables the broader questioning of the transmission of inequalities.

2. Reinforce righteous resistance

Aligning with the second function of reverse dominance coalitions, reinforcing righteous resistance, the agency cultivated connections that empowered victim-survivors to resist their abuser’s dominance. The connections built with agency support workers allowed victim-survivors to feel safe and confident to resist their abuser and begin recovery.

“I just think I’ve grown exponentially and feeling just so much stronger. So much more strength than we all did nine months ago. Being heard. Being seen. Feeling validated in choices made, stands taken. Just yeah, I think that it’s just helped me to take a completely fractured self and just to start to mould it back together again and go forward. “

The participants stressed that the domestic violence recovery service encouraged them to find safety that was unique to their own life circumstances. In many cases this included leaving their abuser with a safety plan, however the agency also stressed that ultimately this decision

was theirs to make. This autonomy was empowering for survivors and contributed to their decision to escape their abuse. An important role of the specialist service is to reinforce the belief that victim survivors are the experts in their own lives, and have the capacity to make their own decisions on issues that affect them.

“What I loved from the start, she said, they’re not here to make the decisions for us, but that they’re here to support us in whatever decision we chose to make. That was really empowering.”

Another commented:

“I feel like that's how it was with [domestic violence recovery service]; you know what I mean? They kind of agreed with me but didn't agree with me, you know what I mean? Even if I've just made it up in my own mind but that ultimately has given me enough like - more, say, strength or like confidence to just be like, I can do this, I can get out of the situation.”

Other participants emphasised that the agency helped them find the strength

“Seeing her every week - which I did for nearly six months - she gave me the tools that I knew I had that I just need to, say, dust off and know that - and the confidence to be able to deal with anything thrown my way. So, the support through her, through [domestic violence recovery service] was amazing.”

And later in the same interview:

“That I’m a damn good mum and I’m a good person and what he did was wrong. I can’t wait to have my say in court. Finding my voice, that’s the word. They helped me – [domestic violence recovery service] and my counsellor - find my voice. I felt like I was heard.”

Another participant stated:

“Oh, absolutely. I wouldn't have been able to do this without the help I have had from people I didn't know. It takes - as they say with raising children, it takes a village and I find in this situation it's the same.”

And from another:

“I felt every time after I'd left here, I felt enlightened and I felt that I've learnt something from our time spent with our sessions, and I always walked away knowing that I had some sort of direction as to what I needed to do next.”

Participants highlighted isolation as a tactic for abuse used by their partner to maintain control. Support from the domestic violence agency to build the skills and confidence to develop friendships during their recovery journey supported victim survivors on their continued recovery.

“it was difficult because [abuser name] had isolated me so much. Even though I had friends, it was hard to have really, really close friends. But through this process, some of those friends have now become really, really close friends.”

And the same participant also commented:

“It sounds a bit corny, but I feel really rich in friendship. I’ve never had friends like this before, so that’s one thing that has come out of it. I’ve made some really beautiful, life-long friends who’ve just stepped up for me and changed my life. Yeah.”

Deep and respectful professional relationships between the clients and specialist staff were an empowering dynamic that was found to be long lasting in impact beyond the time that service provision ended. One participant explained that even after their journeys with the domestic violence recovery services had come to an end, the relationships built with support workers allowed them to feel less alone while navigating legal processes.

“So by just having that contact with [domestic violence recovery service] I was able to just be like, at least I wouldn’t be alone. Even though I’m doing it all by myself.”

Similarly, another reported that even when the domestic violence recovery agency personnel were not present, they never felt alone.

“But you’ve got to eventually – they [domestic violence recovery service] can’t be there the whole time, does that make sense?... But I still know that I’m not alone.”

However, the research also identified the need for more space to create peer-led connections and recovery support after service delivery. One participant expressed a desire for a support group for victim-survivors, where victim-survivors could discuss their experiences without feeling like they are burdening their friends. She expressed the importance of building relationships between victim-survivors, as they understand each other’s experiences and this support network for survivors is a missing link.

“I think it would be great if there were some kind of program or support group for victims, because we get each other. Because you don’t want to just sit down and burden your friends with everything that’s going on in your head.”

These excerpts show how the agency supported their clients to individually resist abuse and violence through providing social support, advice and connections to relevant services. The final quote also points to possibilities for broader coalition-building and alliances that will not only continue to support survivors but also raise awareness and resistance of abuse in an ongoing way beyond the domestic violence agency.

3. Build sorority and protect dissenters from bullying

The domestic violence recovery service created a safe space for victim-survivors to connect with a support worker who had a thorough understanding of the victim-survivor experience.

“I'm not the person that I was four months ago. I'm not - I didn't have the strength that I have now. I didn't have the inner personal confidence and esteem. That's been from my journey from being able to rebuild my confidence, esteem and life simultaneously with just the sisterhood of (the service).”

And similarly from another participant:

“...it's knowing that there's people out there to support you is a big thing that you have those girls [support workers]. They become like second family to you ... When you have the engagement and support of a team like these girls here, you don't feel - you shouldn't feel ashamed to speak up.”

This was often contrary to experiences with other institutions, such as the criminal justice system, which victim-survivors felt lacked understanding of the nature of domestic violence. Creating a safe space for victim-survivors allowed them to speak openly, feel heard, and receive help safely.

“[She'd say], okay, that is DV and you're a lot more alert than what you realise to it, and I knew more. She made me feel that bit confident that I can open up, I can say what I want as long as it's the truth about what was going on in my house ... It's not about persecution with [domestic violence recovery service]. It's about recovery. It's just so much of those little things that we, as victims, we need. We need the support. We need to feel listened to. We need to get confidence back. We need to be able to open up and realise a lot more than what we may have done was domestic violence ... They are such a supportive network. They don't make you feel silly. They make you feel like, yes, you're a victim but we can help you recover. You can make those steps to recover with our help.

The service provided an important role in building knowledge and awareness within the participants community. A participant reported that her domestic violence recovery support worker met with her pastor after she expressed dissatisfaction with the support she was receiving from her church. The support worker provided the pastor with tangible directions on how to support women recovering from domestic violence.

In another case, a participant spoke about the importance the agency played in educating her family about DFSV. She said that at the start her family did not understand DFSV.

“Like for me and my family, I hid a lot from them because they never understood DV. It was that, ‘why didn't you leave? Why did you let it happen to you?’”

But after the domestic violence recovery service came to her home where she was living with her parents and spoke to them she felt they were more understanding:

“It's one of those things, I look at it and I've come quite a long way, but it's just like, if you don't have - if it wasn't for my family, and I think the girls here also allowed my family to understand a lot more and it brought us closer together... “

These data indicate that the domestic violence recovery service was instrumental in building sorority for the victim-survivors beyond the walls of the agency by educating the broader community and particularly key institutions – in this case the church and family – on how to support the victim-survivors. The domestic violence recovery agency was thus playing two key roles by both expanding the women’s support networks and fostering broader social and attitudinal change through education about DFSV.

The domestic violence recovery services also provided strategies for protecting survivors from continued abuse. Three participants reflected on the safety planning the agency provided, which allowed them to feel protected from their abuser. Participants reported that the agency provided security cameras, safety housing, medication, and practical safety advice. This safety planning protected victim-survivors from continued abuse and provided confidence that they would be safe if the abuser returned.

“Yes. Yeah, they gave me some security cameras for the home, which has been really good. Just peace of mind a little bit. At least I can see he hasn’t been there. It’s helped with, you know, keep an eye on the front door, kind of thing. Also, different other ways, things that I should be considering, which you don’t, make sure your meter box is locked and removing other access to tools and ladders and just these little things. It makes you quite frightened though, I have to say, when they go through, okay, safety plan, so we need to think about this, this, this and this. There are all these things that you didn’t consider. Ways that you were vulnerable. It is frightening in a way, but it is also about being pragmatic, I guess, about the needs that you have. Very practical advice.”

Another stated:

“They’ve helped me with security cameras for my new house. Because halfway through - no fault of [domestic violence recovery service] - the courts accidentally released an address.....from the paperwork and they found the address. [Domestic violence recovery service] acted very quickly. They put me in a motel for seven - for five days or seven days. They bought some blankets, some toys for the kids. “

Similarly, from another participant:

“They were able to help by providing security cameras [inaudible] and counselling... So the security cameras were an absolute godsend ... So particularly for my son, being able to hop on his phone and just get notifications and he'd be able to go on there and check. It's really - he just feels a lot safer and a lot calmer knowing that those are installed and providing just that extra level of security and safety.” (interview 9)

The women reported a new-found confidence in their journeys to resist abuse and plan for safety.

“The old me would’ve been like, oh my God, I can’t do this. But then I’d still do it. Whereas I noticed that I didn’t feel that bad. I thought, this is stuffed, but let’s just do it. You got to keep your kids safe and yourself safe.”

Here there is evidence of the agency providing specific advice and equipment to protect victims from further abuse, but also play a role in educating the broader community to safeguard against lack of understanding, or at its worst, bullying, from others in the victims networks.

4. Show wider support for equality and overcome despondency traps

Isolation, negative feedback loops, loss of confidence and loss of independence create a risk to victims survivor's autonomy, confidence and independence. This can lead to acceptance of gender-based violence as status quo, normalisation of abuse and a reduction in expectations for future relationships. The support from the specialist service was helpful to remind victim survivors of their rights to be safe and equal. For example, one woman in our sample stated:

"That has been really very helpful, because it makes me now – it's allowed me to kind of see what led to that point, because the first thing was, oh my God, I'm never going to be in another relationship again. I can't handle that I could make that choice again... That thought that – I guess it's a little bit of self-blame. How did I get to this point? How did I allow it to get to this point? What choices did I make?"

And from another:

"Because that's the biggest thing is, once you have experienced DV, the biggest thing at the end of it is you want to feel safe again. That's for me - I wanted to get back to how I was, in a relationship where I have the ability to feel safe and not afraid that someone's going to perpetrate against me. It's happened twice, what's to say it's not going to happen again? But also, it's about learning of skills and those barriers and having that self-control again."

Some participants reported that the domestic violence recovery service helped alleviate financial burdens that had been left by the abuser, including parking fines, rent payments, utility bills, and childcare. In other circumstances, the agency provided women with vouchers for essentials such as prescriptions, groceries, and infant care items. This financial support helped address the financial abuse and control experienced by the victim-survivor.

"Something like a packet of wipes meant so much to me at that time. Little things like that just to help. All of it together gives you hope."

And another participant stated:

"The fact that she would take time out of her day to go and do that, and resource them, and give them tangible things on how to help somebody. Not just for me, but for other women in the future. I think that's amazing."

The agency also provided participants with financial advice, such as how to navigate financially as a new single mother.

“They were actually able to help just with managing and working up to - because I have teenagers. Like child support for [son] stops at the end of this year.... So they were good in just helping me get my head around what that's going to look like. So when that goes, oh my goodness, we're going to be on one fifth of what we're living on now. So four fifths of it are going.”

For other women, speaking with the domestic violence recovery service about their experiences gave them the confidence to resist power structures that were creating difficulties in their recovery journeys. Including their employer, government departments, police, and court processes.

“The counselling and talking to [domestic violence recovery service] and [domestic violence recovery service] primarily, to start with, has really, really helped me be able to have that confidence to speak up to my employer on what's going on ... They've been there every step of the way. They've given me every bit of confidence and every bit of you're okay, you're doing well, we're here.”

Victim-survivors consistently described the court process as daunting, inaccessible, and re-traumatising. They reported feeling anxious during court process as participants were often unaware of the next steps or what was required of them. Once the domestic violence recovery service became involved, the participants became more confident in their ability to navigate the process.

“And you know the court process—I'll call them and just find out what's happening, and just being that person because sometimes you just don't feel like you've got the strength anymore to stick up for yourself like that. You're running so on empty that to make a call and say, hey, tell me what's going on – to have someone else do that for me was being helpful. Just that little legwork...sort of a bit of advocacy on my behalf there I suppose ... Explaining kind of the process of things too, because it can be quite bamboozling – what happens next and what the process is just for the court system. It seems like it's such a big beast, the whole court system, that you feel pretty lost in it.”

And similarly from another participant:

“Then the solicitors had spoken to [domestic violence recovery service] and the support from my solicitors, from the police, from [domestic violence recovery service support worker], from domestic violence recovery service, it was just amazing. I felt very supported through everything as best you can because it's traumatic for anyone. [Domestic violence recovery service] also helped me when another organisation called [name or organisation] came in with legal advice. They were great. They were absolutely awesome and I met them in at [domestic violence recovery service]. That's where we had our meeting. That was phenomenal. That was such a great, great opportunity to be offered. Because yeah, I was right in the middle of the trial and getting pretty worried about that.

Navigating out of an abusive and violent relationship is not only traumatic at an emotional level, but also can be financially devastating and complex. There is no clear roadmap with everyone's journey likely to be different depending on their personal circumstances. Showing support for

future equality for the women by providing guidance about a pathway to safety, pragmatic help (for example a packet of wipes, or a secure location to meet legal services), helping to decipher the “bamboozling” nature of the court system, and help with financial planning are evidence of the fourth element in the reverse dominance coalition framework.

6. *Shift expectations that sexism will not be tolerated.*

The domestic violence recovery service allowed victim-survivors to reflect on the power structures and attitudes that allow gender-based violence to persist and shift expectations that allow sexism. This shift included changing the expectations of victim-survivors as well as the expectations of their immediate family and support networks. This shift was empowering for victim-survivors, who described feeling optimistic about themselves and their experiences.

“I’ve never liked myself, before, but I feel like I like me for the first time. I’m not who I used to be. I feel content and I’m excited about the future for the first time.”

And from another participant:

“I need to do everything and that’s who I am, but everyone is like, no, you need help sometimes. That’s what I got. I’ve got that feeling I could help - I could ask for help... I could swallow my pride because it’s nothing to be ashamed of ... It’s also given me that feeling that you know what? I am being listened to. I’m not being called a liar. I can say this was going on and I don’t feel like I have to justify or feel like an idiot or feel stupid. I just feel like I’ve made a mistake, and I am a victim and victims come in all shapes. We do – not all victims come out the same. Not all victims recover the same. We recover differently, but we all have one main goal and that is to recover from the domestic violence and not go through it again.”

The domestic violence recovery service also shifted expectations of what victim-survivors should tolerate from their abuser.

“Well, I came back in for my next appointment, and I said to her – she’s like, so what are we doing for safety planning? I think she assumed we were doing safety planning for me to stay in the house. Then, just all of a sudden, just really randomly I said, let’s do it. Let’s just get him out.”

And another stated:

“The support from the police, and then the support through [domestic violence recovery service] and [domestic violence recovery service support worker] helping me with my grieving. It helped me know that it doesn’t matter who you are or what your position or persona is in the community or power, domestic violence is not on and it’s not okay...”

As noted in the previous section, victim-survivors face several challenges – escaping the abuse from a partner or family member and navigating the system to enable support and a pathway forward that is safe and free from violence. The agency supported victim survivors to

understand and shift expectations of systems and institutions to support their human rights, safety and recovery and healing, so that they can live a life of their choice and dignity.

“I think, find your voice. I think women need to know that they’ve actually got this, that they can actually do it. They’re stronger and braver than what they think they are. I know for me, I’ve never been proud of myself or anything. But for this, I’m so proud of myself. I think women have no idea of how strong they actually are, and how resilient they are. Don’t let these men hold you back and stop you, because – just get out. If you’ve got an opportunity to get out safely, link in with a DV service and get out.”

This final quote highlights the resilience, strength and optimism that came through in most of our interviews. It suggests that for this woman there is no turning back. Moreover, there is a clear element of determination to not only move forward personally, but also to support others by showing that there is a positive way forward.

Discussion

This paper examined what works to support DFSV victims using data collected from clients in a specialist DFSV service. There is increased recognition that domestic violence support agencies operate in constrained resource environments with limited financial and workforce resources to draw upon to respond to arguably some of the most complex and traumatising challenges facing women (Department of Social Services, 2022). As discussed above, the rate of DFSV is growing in Australia and effective responses are essential to mitigate the consequences not only for the immediate victim but also for their children, families and broader communities. The Australian government has released a Second National Plan to End Violence Against Women and Children with a goal of ending gender-based violence in one generation (Department of Social Services, 2022). The plan recognises the need for both individual person-centred change where the diverse lived experiences of victim-survivors are at the forefront of recovery services and structural change where institutions (housing, criminal justice, legal, financial, workplaces) work together to recognise DFSV and remove barriers to recovery and eradication of DFSV.

Recovery and healing is one of the four domains in the Australian Government National Plan to End Gender Based Violence in the next 10 years ([National Plan to End Gender Based Violence | Department of Social Services](#)). Our paper provides insights into some of the key elements of what works to aid recovery and healing for DFSV clients and how service agencies can orient and frame support services to these ends. Furthermore, our paper prioritises the voices of DFSV clients to highlight their goals and their lived experience of domestic violence support services. Their voices provide key insights into the experiences and outcomes of using domestic violence support services and by implication what might be prioritised when developing such services.

While many of the themes identified in our data, such as the importance of social support, legal and financial advice and pathways to desist abuse have been identified in previous literature, we are not aware of other studies that have developed an overarching framework to explain how these support practices fit together to create a unified change-making approach at the individual and societal level. The reverse dominance coalition framework outlined by Evans (2023) offers one such potential framework. We drew on the framework to understand if reverse dominance coalitions provide a useful way of understanding how DFSV support services can promote both individual and structural change. The framework has 5 main components: Nurture critical reflection, causing people to question inequalities; reinforce righteous resistance; build sorority and protect dissenters from bullying; show wider support for equality and overcome despondency traps; and shift expectations that sexism will not be tolerated.

Our data analyses highlighted evidence of each of the five components from our interview material. In fact, when applied as a potential coding framework for our data, the reverse dominance coalition components were able to be fitted seamlessly as an overall thematic approach to our data. We found many examples from our interviews which embody each of the five elements of the framework and as such it appears to well-encapsulate the experiences of our participants. Although the women in our sample were speaking about their personal journeys and experiences, we see evidence in their stories of potential broader reach and ways in which the domestic and family violence agency is sowing the seeds for broader social transformation.

We argue that the framework enables a broader conceptualisation of the functions of the DFSV agency. As argued above, the reverse dominance coalition framework offers a potential means of understanding the links between services supporting individual recovery and healing and transformation of social systems at a structural level. The services offered by the agency support individual recovery and healing through enabling women to leave violent relationships, supporting them to find housing or make their current housing safe, provide financial support for essentials, access counselling and legal services, and providing friendship and emotional support. In doing so, the agency is also helping to promote structural change at the societal level by advocating for the needs of victim-survivors with other agencies such as legal or financial services, by supporting the victim-survivors and their families and friends to recognise and define their experiences as abuse, and rejecting this behaviour and by encouraging critical reflection about pathways into DFSV and strategies to ensure that both the victim-survivors and their children do not follow these pathways.

While our paper has a number of potential limitations, including the small sample size, and possible bias in responses given our sample recruitment from a single DSFV agency, the results are nevertheless informative and may provide opportunities for further research with broader samples and across multiple agencies offering support to DSFV clients. By outlining the different levels of change possible from reverse dominance coalitions, our paper provides insights into some of the key elements of what works to aid recovery and healing for DSFV clients and how service agencies can also work to reduce DSFV at a structural level. In addition, our paper prioritises the voices of DSFV clients to highlight their goals and their lived experience of domestic violence support services. Their voices provide key insights into the experiences and outcomes of using domestic violence support services and by implication what could be prioritised when developing such services. While many of the themes identified in our data, such as the importance of social support, legal and financial advice and pathways to desist abuse have been identified in previous literature, we are not aware of other studies that have developed a framework to explain how these support practices fit together to create a unified change-making approach. The reverse dominance coalition framework outlined by Evans (2023) offers one such potential framework. The framework may also extend to other service providers supporting disadvantaged groups, including people who are experiencing homelessness or unemployment.

As recent data from an ANROWS attitudinal survey shows, we have a long way to go in improving awareness and understanding of gender inequality and DSFV in particular (Coumarelos et al., 2021). Their data show not much change since 2017 suggesting the need for more targeted strategies. DSFV recovery agencies provide one means of creating this change through victim-survivor support that also fills the broader function of a reverse dominance coalition. This would not only assist DSFV victims to recover and heal but may also lead to broader changes at the community, policy, and societal level.

References

- ABS (Australian Bureau of Statistics) (2023). *Personal Safety, Australia*.
<https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/crime-and-justice/personal-safety-australia/latest-release>
- AIHW (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare) (2024). *FDV reported to police*.
<https://www.aihw.gov.au/family-domestic-and-sexual-violence/responses-and-outcomes/police/fdv-reported-to-police#findings>
- AIHW (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare) (2025). *Family, domestic and sexual violence*.
<https://www.aihw.gov.au/family-domestic-and-sexual-violence/responses-and-outcomes/domestic-homicide>
- Alcantud, P. M., Campdepadrós-Cullell, R., Fuentes-Pumarola, C., & Mut-MontalvÀ, E. (2021). 'I think I will need help': A systematic review of who facilitates the recovery from gender-based violence and how they do so. *Health Expectations : An International Journal of Public Participation in Health Care and Health Policy*, 24(1), 1–7. <https://doi.org/10.1111/hex.13157>
- Anderson, K. M., Renner, L. M., & Danis, F. S. (2012). Recovery: resilience and growth in the aftermath of domestic violence. *Violence Against Women*, 18(11), 1279-1299.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1077801212470543>
- Artz, J. (2011). Fear or failure: Why victims of domestic violence retract from the criminal justice process, *South African Crime Quarterly*, 37. <https://doi.org/10.17159/2413-3108/2011/i37a855>
- Campbell, A., Kuskoff, E., Baxter, J., & Loxton, D. (2025). The road to unfreedom: violence and multidimensional poverty among young Australian women, *Violence Against Women*.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/10778012251347607>
- Campbell, A., Kuskoff, E., Lloyd, M., Baxter, J., & Harper, M. (2024), Engaging with the domestic violence action centre: survivor experiences, *Life Course Centre Working Paper Series*.
<https://doi.org/10.14264/ee0ba1a>
- Cattaneo, L. B., & Goodman, L. A. (2015). What is empowerment anyway? A model for domestic violence practice, research, and evaluation. *Psychology of Violence*, 5(1), 84–94. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0035137>

Coumarelos, C., Weeks, N., Bernstein, S., Roberts, N., Honey, N., Minter, K., & Carlisle, E. (2023). *Attitudes Matter: The 2021 National Community Attitudes towards Violence against Women Survey (NCAS), Findings for Australia*. Sydney, NSW: ANROWS.

Department of Social Services 2022, *National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022-2032*, accessed 8 July 2025.

<https://www.dss.gov.au/system/files/resources/national-plan-end-violence-against-women-and-children-2022-2032.pdf>.

Douglas, H. (2017), Legal systems abuse and coercive control, *Criminology & Criminal Justice*, 18(1), 84-99. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1748895817728380>

Douglas, H., & Fitzgerald, R. (2024). Prosecuting strangulation offences: understanding complainant withdrawal using a social entrapment lens, *Current Issues in Criminal Justice*, 37(1), 1–18, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10345329.2024.2336717>

Evans, A. (2023, June 21). Reverse dominance coalitions. *The Great Gender Divergence*. <https://www.ggd.world/p/reverse-dominance-coalitions>

Evans, M. A., & Feder, G. S. (2016). Help-seeking amongst women survivors of domestic violence: a qualitative study of pathways towards formal and informal support. *Health Expectations : An International Journal of Public Participation in Health Care and Health Policy*, 19(1), 62–73. <https://doi.org/10.1111/hex.12330>

FitzPatrick, K. M., Brown, S., Hegarty, K., Mensah, F., & Gartland, D. (2022). Physical and emotional intimate partner violence and women's health in the first year after childbirth: an Australian pregnancy cohort study, *Journal of interpersonal violence*, 37(3-4), 2147–2176, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260520934426>

Flood, M. (2024). Norms of manhood among young men in Australia. In The Men's Project and M. Flood, *The Man Box 2024: Re-examining what it means to be a man in Australia*. Melbourne: Jesuit Social Services, 109-127. <https://xyonline.net/content/norms-manhood-among-young-men-australia>

Freyd, J. J. (1997). Violations of power, adaptive blindness, and betrayal trauma theory. *Feminism & Psychology*, 7(1), 22–32. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0959353597071004>

Geis, G., Melgar, P., Vidu, A. (2023). When David Defeats Goliath. The Case of MeToo University: The Solidarity Network of Victims of Gender-Based Violence in Universities. In: Rivers, I., Lovin,

C.L. (eds) *Young People Shaping Democratic Politics*. Palgrave Macmillan, Cham.

https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-29378-8_6

Greenfield, E. A., & Marks, N. F. (2010). Sense of Community as a Protective Factor against Long-Term Psychological Effects of Childhood Violence. *The Social Service Review*, 84(1), 129–147. <https://doi.org/10.1086/652786>

Harsey, S., & Freyd, J. J. (2020). Deny, Attack, and Reverse Victim and Offender (DARVO): What Is the Influence on Perceived Perpetrator and Victim Credibility? *Journal of Aggression, Maltreatment & Trauma*, 29(8), 897–916. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10926771.2020.1774695>

Heron, R., & Eisma, M. (2021). Barriers and facilitators of disclosing domestic violence to the healthcare service: A systematic review of qualitative research, *Health & social care in the community*, 29(3), 612-630. <https://doi.org/10.1111/hsc.13282>

Hester, M., & Lilley, S. (2018). More than support to court: Rape victims and specialist sexual violence services, *International Review of Victimology*, 24(3), 313-328. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0269758017742717>

Hill, J. (2025). Losing it: Can we stop violence against women and children?, *Quarterly Essay*, 97, 1–121.

Howarth, E., & Robinson, A. (2016). Responding effectively to women experiencing severe abuse: identifying key components of a British advocacy intervention, *Violence Against Women*, 22(1), 41-63. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077801215597789>

Hulley, J., Bailey, L., Kirkman, G., Gibbs, G. R., Gomersall, T., Latif, A., & Jones, A. (2023). Intimate partner violence and barriers to help-seeking among black, Asian, minority ethnic and immigrant women: a qualitative metasynthesis of global research, *Trauma, Violence & Abuse*, 24(2), 1001–1015, <https://doi.org/10.1177/15248380211050590>

Kreft, A. (2023). “This Patriarchal, Machista and Unequal Culture of Ours”: Obstacles to Confronting Conflict-Related Sexual Violence. *Social Politics*, 30(2), 654–677. <https://doi.org/10.1093/sp/jxac018>

Machisa, M. T., Christofides, N., & Jewkes, R. (2018). Social support factors associated with psychological resilience among women survivors of intimate partner violence in Gauteng, South Africa. *Global Health Action*, 11(3). <https://doi.org/10.1080/16549716.2018.1491114>

- Masterson, S., & Owen, S. (2006). Mental health service user's social and individual empowerment: Using theories of power to elucidate far-reaching strategies. *Journal of Mental Health*, 15(1), 19–34. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09638230500512714>
- Mughal, F. B., & Saint Arnault, D. (2024). Protective factors affecting trauma recovery among female South Asian immigrant intimate partner violence survivors: A scoping review. *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse*, 25(4), 2927-2941. <https://doi.org/10.1177/15248380241231602>
- Nolet, A.-M., Morselli, C., & Cousineau, M.-M. (2021). The social network of victims of domestic violence: a network-based intervention model to improve relational autonomy. *Violence Against Women*, 27(10), 1630-1654. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077801220947169>
- Ogbe, E., Harmon, S., Van den Bergh, R., & Degomme, O. (2020). A systematic review of intimate partner violence interventions focused on improving social support and/mental health outcomes of survivors. *PLoS ONE*, 15(6). <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.023517>
- Sullivan, C. M. (2018). Understanding how domestic violence support services promote survivor well-being: a conceptual model, *Journal of Family Violence*, 33(2), 123-131. <https://doi.org/1007/s10896-017-9931-6>
- Summers, A. (2022). *The Choice: Violence or Poverty*, University of Technology Sydney, <https://doi.org/10.26195/3s1r-4977>
- Tan, C., Basta, J., Sullivan, C. M., & Davidson, W. S. (1995). The Role of Social Support in the Lives of Women Exiting Domestic Violence Shelters: An Experimental Study. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 10(4), 437–451. <https://doi.org/10.1177/088626095010004004>
- Tew, J. (2006). Understanding Power and Powerlessness: Towards a Framework for Emancipatory Practice in Social Work. *Journal of Social Work*, 6(1), 33-51. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1468017306062222>
- Webster, K., Diemer, K., Honey, N., Mannix, S., Mickle, J., Morgan, J., Parkes, A., Politoff, V., Powell, A., Stubbs, J., & Ward, A. (2018). *Australians' attitudes to violence against women and gender equality. Findings from the 2017 National Community Attitudes towards Violence against Women Survey (NCAS)*. Sydney, NSW: ANROWS
- Wilcock, A. (2025) "It's just men taking an interest': Obscuring understanding and recognition of coercive control. *(De) Constructing Criminology An International Perspective*, 1(2), 76-101.

Williams, K., Harb, M., Satyen, L., & Davies, M. (2024). s-CAPE trauma recovery program: the need for a holistic, trauma- and violence-informed domestic violence framework. *Frontiers in Global Women's Health*, 5, 1404599. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fgwh.2024.1404599>